What brings them here, in view of Death's Black Gate?

Martyr, Monster, Maiden, Crone;

All have a place within our fancied whims.

Yet who shall rise beyond their fate?

Which of them shall take the reaper's throne?

DUNGeON • LyTe

JOE BANNER

DUNGEON • LYTE

A Tabletop Roleplaying Game of Dungeons and Heroism
By Joe Banner

Updates, adventures and other content available at **joebanner.co.uk**.

PLAYING THE GAME

THE CORE MOVE

When you do something risky, roll 2D6 and add an ability score. A 6 or less is a 'miss'; a 7+ is a 'hit'. A 10+ is a crit. This is called making a move.

On a hit, you do what you expected to do. On a 10+, you avoid the worst of the consequences. On a miss, you fail - **mark focus** and the GM will tell you how things don't quite go your way. (If you have marked focus already, you do not mark Focus a second time.)

FOCUS

If your character has marked focus, you may spend focus to pick up a die that just rolled a 1 and roll it again. The second roll stands, and may not be re-rolled under any circumstances.

After rolling, your focus is spent and may not be used until you subsequently mark focus again.

AID AND GROUP ACTIONS

When one or more of your allies helps you act, treat a result of 7- as a miss, an 8 as a hit and a 9+ as a crit. The helpers roll nothing. If you fail, anyone who helped you might also suffer consequences.

If several party members are attempting the same action, using the same or different actions, everyone rolls their own action and the highest result stands for the party. However, treat a result of 7 or more as 7.

DAMAGE AND DEATH

When you take damage, it is removed from your HP total. At zero HP, doing *anything* is considered a risky action. If you are already at zero HP and take another hit, you are mortally wounded - you'll either die right there, or very shortly (GM's choice.)

If your character dies, roll up a new Level 1 character for the GM to introduce as soon as possible. (When it comes to introducing new characters like this, gameplay is more important than realism.)

END OF SESSION QUESTIONS

At the end of the session, ask these questions. If the group answers "yes" to more questions than the highest character's level, everyone gains 1 level. Example: a party containing a level 4 character would need to answer "yes" to 5 questions in order to gain a level.

- ✦ Did one or more players roleplay their alignment?
- ✦ Did one or more players roleplay a bond?
- ✦ Did at least one player get a roll of 6- this session?
- ✦ Did we complete a momentous or significant quest?
- ✦ Did we establish something new and interesting about the world?
- ✦ Did we defeat a dangerous and exciting enemy?
- ✦ Did we claim a memorable object or treasure?

OTHER QUESTIONS

The GM may suggest or include one or two additional questions that are relevant to the party and the players: "Did we finally give Lord Valadar the death he deserved?" "Did everyone feel they had a moment in the spotlight this session?"

CREATION

You have a name: perhaps **Aventail, Bascinet, Morion** or **Schynbald**. Name and describe your character's appearance, now or later.

ABILITY SCORES

Roll 3D6 for each ability score, in order: Strength, Dexterity, Intelligence and Charisma. Keep a note of your 3D6 rolls (see *Health* below.)

- ✦ If you roll more sixes than ones, the score is +2.
- ✦ If you roll more ones than sixes, the score is -1.
- ✦ Otherwise, if you roll 10 or less the score is 0; if you roll 11 or more the score is +1.

LEVEL

Your level starts at 1. You may gain a level at the end of every session (see below).

HEALTH

Subtract your lowest 3D6 roll from your highest, and add your level (1). The result is your starting Hit Points (HP).

When your character spends five minutes or so resting in safety, roll d6 equal to their level and sum the highest two. You can take this total as your new HP value, if you wish.

EQUIPMENT AND DAMAGE

Roll d66 (roll 2 six-sided dice; the first is "tens", the other "units") and consult the weapons table below for your primary weapon.

When you attack with your primary weapon, you deal 1D8 damage. An attack with anything else is up to the GM - 1D6 damage is average. If you roll a damage score equal or less than your current level, you may re-roll (but must keep the second result.)

RACE

You have a race: Human, Dwarf, Elf, Halfling, or something of your choosing. Your race, sex, and orientation have no impact on your attributes or abilities.

It is possible characters within the fictional world may seek to abuse these traits for their own ends. On this, I will say: they are weak and foolish, and you are beautiful.

ALIGNMENT

You have an alignment - a statement which sums up what your character wants most in life. Pick one of the following, or describe your own.

- ✦ "I defeated a worthy opponent today."
- ✦ "I defended someone who couldn't defend themselves."
- ✦ "I inspired my allies to try something very brave, or very stupid."

You can postpone picking an alignment until the end of the first session, if you like.

BONDS

You have one or more bonds: links to people, places or objects that you hold significant. You should aim for at least one bond by the end of the first session. Bonds can (and should) break and change over the course of a campaign, and can be re-written in between sessions if you wish.

CREATION

RULES IN DETAIL

WHEN YOU ATTEMPT...

For the most part, the game is a conversation. The GM describes how the people, places and situations of the world put the party at risk; players describe how their characters act and react in response.

Often the players will describe actions with obvious, non-risky conclusions ("I go left", "I speak to the stablehand", "I take the chest back to my room and spend all afternoon tinkering with the lock") and no roll or deliberation is required. When the next step might result in injury, a significant consequence, or a setback, we look to the dice to see what happens next.

A RISKY ACTION

"Risk" can be something minor, and/or played for laughs ("well, you're definitely not getting any more milk from that cow..") or something major, with significant consequences ("...'very well, the pact is sealed' cackles the demon...") Sometimes an action that might not seem risky is, and vice versa. (Perhaps the left turn hides a rock trap.) The players are entitled to ask whether their characters are aware of any danger, and what the consequences might be. The GM is entitled to honestly tell them what their characters could, should, or would know.

I usually phrase a risky situation like this: "OK, the orc's charging right at you. If you do nothing, he'll be upon you in about six seconds. What do you do?" This gives a player a clear idea of how long their character has to act (6 seconds) and a good sense of the stakes (the orc's charge, which will probably lead to physical harm).

I try not to say things like "...if you don't draw your sword within six seconds..." because that makes an assumption about how the player wants to approach the situation. That being said, if they describe an action that would take longer than six seconds, I will tell them the consequences of this. "You want to study the orc's fighting style? You can definitely do that, but as you aren't doing anything to avoid the orc's charge, you'll definitely get hit as well, and take some damage. Do you still want to do that?"

Of course, the player gets more than six seconds to respond - but not much longer. If they take too long to respond, they'll take damage (and hopefully learn to respond quicker next time.) Depending on your personal tastes and play group, you'll need to tailor the pace of the game against ensuring all your players have a chance to act.

Gauging this sort of thing depends more on your players than the game - you'll want to be mindful of all your player's communication skills and confidence. That's more of a people skill than a GM'ing one, but it's useful in real life too.

WHICH ATTRIBUTE?

As a rule of thumb, if they face the danger by...

- ✦ Using intimidation, ferocity or raw power, roll+str
- ✦ Dodging aside or moving quickly, roll+dex
- ✦ Thinking fast or remembering a weakness, roll+int
- ✦ Using diplomacy, charm, or clever talking, roll+cha.

These are guidelines, with space in between. (Where does "thinking fast" end and "clever talking" begin?) This is intentional. Players might come up with all sorts of clever solutions leading to infinite edge cases and responses, and as GM you shouldn't feel constrained to keep checking the rules to see which attribute applies.

The player gets to describe their action in as much detail as they like, but they don't get to pick the attribute - that's the GM's job, and the decision is final. The player can revise their action if they want to use a different attribute, provided they've not already rolled the dice. (If there's a roll on the table and they've not waited to hear the consequences, the GM gets to say whatever they damn well please.)

USING THE SAME ATTRIBUTE; FICTION FIRST

Sometimes - maybe often - a player will angle for the same attribute for every test. This is OK to some degree, but because the GM gets to describe the consequences, no single attribute should be the answer to every encounter the party face.

Using our 'charging orc' example from before: it's perfectly acceptable to meet that test with strength, and fight the orc. However, the same response won't be as effective against a larger foe, and against something like a dragon, it's practically useless.

In this game, hitting creature A is not the same as hitting creature B, even though the mechanical rule is the same. The fictional context - a dragon is obviously bigger, tougher and more fearsome than an orc - always takes precedence over the mechanical rule.

THIS IS MY WEAPON...

The roll on the Weapons table gives a name, nothing more. Players are encouraged to discuss their results with each other, with the GM asking leading questions.

Why might a character have that weapon? What does that say about them as a person? "So you have a *Covenant with the Host* - what does that look like as an attack? Who are The Host? What do you owe them?" Or: "What does the Clatterblast look like? Who made it? How did you acquire it?"

(As an aside, results 51 and above are probably spells, implying the character is a wizard. Results 61 and above probably reference deities, implying the character is a cleric or priest.)

SIMPLER WEAPON OPTIONS

For faster creation, the GM may suggest each player choose one of the following options instead:

- ✦ Sword, Axe or Bludgeon (1D8 damage)
- ✦ Pistol, Bow or Throwing Knives (1D8 damage)
- ✦ *Magic Missile* spell (1D8 damage) and poor dagger (1D4 damage)
- ✦ *Cure Light Wounds* spell (restores 1D6 hp) and simple hammer (1D6 damage)

CONSEQUENCES

Among anything the GM might add, consequences include:

- ✦ Taking harm,
- ✦ Losing an opportunity,
- ✦ Reduced effect,
- ✦ Starting or progressing a danger,
- ✦ Something that will come back to haunt you.

Any of these consequences could be minor or serious, depending on the context in which they happen.

When you suffer harm, you lose HP. Your injuries can impact the things your character can do. Further harm could make the effect worse, or be a different injury. Harm may be physical ("twisted ankle, "blurred vision") mental ("distracted", "drunk") or emotional ("grieving.") The worst possible consequence of suffering harm is probably "unconscious, near death."

When you lose an opportunity you're no longer in a position to do whatever it was you just tried again - you'll have to change your position or tactics. The worst possible consequences of losing an opportunity might be "the rope slips from your grasp and you fall", but it could also be "the serving girl walks away offended. You'll not be served here again."

A diminished effect means your action wasn't as effective as wanted it to be. Your attack only grazed them; you haven't picked the lock yet; the guard isn't convinced, and wants more leverage or a compromise. Rarely, this will be the worst possible consequence you can suffer, unless someone else was counting on you to make the action happen. Again, this consequence will involve the dice - if there's a damage roll to be made, cut the results in half.

When the GM starts or progresses a danger, they'll write the danger on an index card in clear view of everyone, or mark another segment of progress (4, 6 or 8 segments are standard practice). When all the segments are filled in, the danger comes true, right now. The severity of this consequence depends on the danger and how close it is to happening.

Things that might come back to haunt you include an infected wound, a rival's revenge, or the cops secretly observing your actions. Unless it's a one-off kind of thing, it's likely the GM will start a danger to represent the thing as well. An important thing to remember is while it's likely all the players are aware of the thing that'll come back to haunt you, the characters aren't.

BEING THE GM: PRINCIPLES

KEEP IT SIMPLE.

Over-elucidation is extraneous and convoluted. Also, no-one will know what the f*ck you're talking about.

MAKE THE CAST DIVERSE.

Foster a world of different peoples, ages and genders working together (or highlight what happens when they don't.) Present this world to your players, as honestly as possible.

ADD FANTASTIC TWISTS.

Start simple (see above) then escalate. Don't worry about hitting a limit or making things seem unrealistic - go as far as your imagination takes you! Mix things up in a way your players won't expect.

LISTEN TO YOUR PLAYERS.

This is relevant for two reasons. Everyone's here to have a good time - if someone is not doing so, they need to be listened to so you know why (and can fix it.)

In addition, the GM holds the reins, but everyone's on the wagon. By offering players an opportunity to say something about the world, you're giving yourself more material to work with (don't forget to take notes - see below.)

ALWAYS BE TAKING NOTES.

Lean on the player's comments and ideas about the world, and make sure you've got them written down. Re-incorporate these ideas at peak moments of play.

AVOID SAYING "NO".

Aim to say "yes, and..." or "yes, but..." instead. This offers a chance to give the player what they want - at a cost. However, be cautious of when saying yes to one player might mean you're also saying no to another; also don't be afraid to put your foot down if you feel saying yes would impact the tone of the game you're playing.

LINK TREASURES AND MONSTERS TOGETHER.

At the end of a session, we ask about dangerous enemies and memorable treasures. By linking them together, you're making your task easier!

ON DUNGEON WORLD LITE

You may be aware of previous iterations of this system released under the title "Dungeon World Lite."
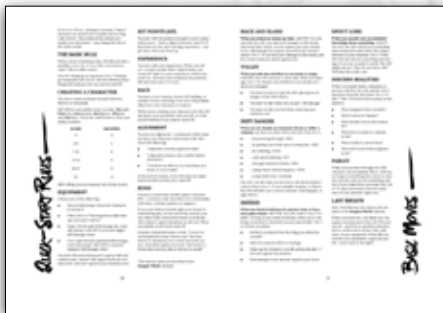
Dungeon Lyte is a step away from this. While this game is still something you could play as a lightweight alternative, or lead-in, to Dungeon World, I hope in time it will become a rules system that stands on it's own. This book also represents the culmination of all the previous versions of this rules system, replacing them to some degree and collecting the best ideas in one volume for ease of reading.

MOVES FROM DUNGEON WORLD

Most of the moves and conventions of Dungeon World should be compatible with Dungeon Lyte. The core move - *Defy Danger* - is practically identical. Obviously there are differences between the two, so a degree of forward-planning is advised. I would recommend using the rules as written at first, then introducing some of the moves and ideas from Dungeon World as you gain in confidence.

CONSTITUTION AND WISDOM

There are no scores for Constitution or Wisdom here. (Let us be honest: a character who regularly plumbs dusty tombs and foetid sewers is unlikely to maintain a stout constitution; and any character who chooses dungeon-crawling as a means of wealth or glory probably isn't the wisest of people.)

I don't see constitution used a lot in my games, to be honest. If it does come up, you could use Strength instead. For Wisdom, you could use Intelligence.

In regards to perception checks (which often key off wisdom) remember to honestly tell the player whatever their character could, should or would know; consider the character's relative expertise, prior experience, implied understanding from their tools and background, and so on.

If the player wants to ask follow-up questions, that's fine. You might want to caution them that taking up a lot of time in this way can be hazardous (see "A Risky Action" previously.)

FROM ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW...

As a simple system, Dungeon Lyte offers a lot of opportunity for customisation. What changes could you make to make this game your own? (I'd start with the weapons table.) How might your changes say something about the kind of game you'd like to play? Try it out - was it successful? I'd love to hear how it went.

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