

# OPERATION: CAVEMAN

BY ROLAND VOLZ

The author would like to acknowledge the encouragement and inspiration given to him by decades of gaming with good players and game masters; without it, he would not have been creative or confident enough to make an entry. No list of people who have influenced him could be complete, but the author would like to specifically acknowledge Mitchell Albala, Douglas Goldberg, Joann Clarke-Stein, Adrian Stein, Mark Struzzi, Genevieve Whittaker, and Mark Whittaker, who heard about this idea and felt it was just too good not to submit. You guys rock!

A beer & pretzels RPG of espionage hijinks at the dawn of time.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Notes</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Ratings</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Occupations</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Crafter</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Gatherer</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Hunters</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Shaman</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Other Occupations</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Game Mechanics</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Advantages</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Combat</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Full Defense</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Grabbing Things</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Other Actions</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Damage and Recovery</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Rewards</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Equipment</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Evolution Points</b>	<b>9</b>
<b><i>Optional Rule: Evolve Or Die!</i></b>	<b>9</b>
<b>License</b>	<b>10</b>

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## INTRODUCTION

It's a rough life out there for a caveman, especially one from a small tribe such as your own. You live in a cave, subsisting on fruits and berries, and the occasional piece of wild game. Nobody's invented pastimes yet, so you sit around telling stories to one another, trying to keep warm. That is, when you're not running for your life from some ravenous saber-toothed tiger or a raiding party from a rival tribe.

You're not the largest or strongest tribe around; that would be the Rock Crushers over in the mountains. You're not the smartest and you haven't discovered any of the basic inventions the smart tribes (like the One-Stone Tribe) are busy developing – levers, fire, the wheel. You don't have the best lands (like the Green Grass Tribe), or the best cave paintings (like the Big Mojo Tribe), or even the best luck (like those hated Red Steps from down the valley). You're not even the sneakiest and most underhanded tribe – that would be the Black Worm Tribe from the swamps. All you've got is guts and determination, and a few clubs and spears to level the playing field.

So, when the chief called you all together, everyone agreed what had to be done – you're going to have to steal all those things from the other tribes. You're going to have to copy the inventions, sabotage the rival tribes' mammoth hunts so they'll be just a little bit weaker than you when it comes time to expand the tribe's lands, and mess up their cave paintings so their shamans will have a little less mojo next year. All as the agents of the chief; but remember, if you're caught, he didn't know nothin' about it!

With a little bit of native ability and a whole lot of luck, you'll lick this “survival of the fittest” thing yet!

## NOTES

**Operation:** *Caveman* is meant to be a fairly easy game for light entertainment, when you feel like gaming but don't have anything prepared and don't feel like spending an hour working up a character that won't ever get used again. Why do all that when you can be up and running an **O:C** game in a matter of minutes!

With that goal in mind, there are a few points the author would like to make at the beginning of these rules.

- 1) This game is not serious, and no attempt made to adhere to current scientific understanding of prehistory. Paleontological research is a strict and rich discipline that has made great strides in understanding how our ancient ancestors lived in the centuries prior to the invention of civilization; none of that is meant to be represented here. The author credits as influences the *Flintstones* TV show (especially the animated movie *The Man Called Flintstone*), the *BC* comic strip, and numerous other cartoon/comic strip references.
- 2) The game is meant to be rules-light and fast-paced. There aren't a lot of specific rules to simulate different activities in a realistic fashion – instead, emphasis is on fast play and extensive leeway for the GM and players to improvise. In all cases, the GM is the final arbiter of which way to interpret or apply the rules.

In order to encourage these elements, the GM is referred to in these rules as the Darwin, as it will be his job to enforce survival of the fittest on the player characters. Similarly, the player characters will be referred to in these rules as Cavemen (with a capital “C”). Not very glamorous, but then again, no one's invented glamour yet.

This game requires a single six-sided die to play (it is recommended that each person at the table have one of their own). Maps and other such game aids may be used, but it's recommended that they be as basic and crude as possible, to retain the flavor of the game; make sure there's no scale or grid on any maps, to force the players out of the idea that this is like any tactical game. I usually dampen mine and let the ink run a little, just to retain that “cave painting” feel.

## RATINGS

In **O:C** we use three ratings to define your Caveman in general terms. They basically tell you what he can do with just native talent or sheer bravado.

- **UGH:** Representative of physical strength, stamina, and resistance to injury and death; Cavemen with a high *Ugh* Rating can lift heavier objects than most, run for longer stretches, and jump and climb higher.

In general, imagine your Caveman doing something, like taking a punch or trying to move a boulder – if the sound emerging from between his gritted teeth is “Ugh!” or something very similar, then this is the rating to use for that action; it’s what you use when you’re trying to outpace people in the later portions of a footrace, or wrestle a cave bear into submission, or even jump in front of your chief to take the spear meant for him (although it’s going to be thousands of years before anyone really invents the concept of heroism, sucker!) If you’re one of those gamers who needs a way to relate Ratings to the real world, then the number of *Ugh* points you have represents the number of stones as large as your head that you can lift at the same time while standing still.<sup>1</sup>

- **AHA:** This is your caveman’s brains, his ability to react to changing circumstances, remember details of things he saw long ago, or pick out the important elements of a situation he’s currently in. Mental ability has not yet been proven to be an actual survival trait, so it’s up to you to prove yourself to future generations of scientists. Your *Aha* Rating can be abstracted as the maximum number of syllables you can use with any particular word. For maximum game fun, the *player* should be limited to this number as well, to prevent any weaseling around this limitation.

**SPECIAL RULE:** If you choose an *Aha* Rating of 1, your brain hasn’t developed enough for true speech yet. The Caveman (and his player) should be limited to sub-linguistic grunts, pointing, and similar non-language methods of communication.

- **MMM:** This Rating represents how “suave” and “sophisticated” your Caveman is (relatively speaking – I mean, he’s still a dirty, grubby caveman). Cavemen with a high *Mmm* Rating chat up members of the opposite sex well, look good when running for their lives from angry cave bears, and sound convincing when selling swamp land futures cave-to-cave. Many walk around with rolled-up herb cylinders in their teeth, though without fire they really serve no purpose.<sup>2</sup> “Charisma” and “personality” are still really primitive concepts which most cavemen find baffling – no one has really invented complex political/social systems or hierarchies yet. The raw Rating number is roughly equal to the number of lies your Caveman can keep afloat at one time.

To generate a Caveman character for yourself, distribute 7 points among these three Ratings; this gives a range of from 1 to 5 in each Rating. Perfectly average members of your own tribe have 2 in each Rating – this represents the average ability of an adult tribesman.

It’s recommended that you pick something to be fairly good at. This is the Stone Age, bub, and no one likes a slacker! Unless it’s as bait for the saber-toothed tiger trap...

## OCCUPATIONS

There’s not a whole lot of specialization in caveman society yet – most don’t even know the one thing they do very well – but there are a few professions that cavemen practice, that are common to all tribes. Your Caveman did one of these things before the chief took him away from all of that and launched him into the high-stakes world of prehistoric espionage – maybe it’ll help your Caveman survive.

When generating your Caveman, you may select one, single Occupation for him.

## CHIEF

There’s only one of these in the tribe, and he’s almost always the toughest, craftiest, cagiest old bastard around. There’s no retirement plan, either; you’re chief until someone tougher, craftier, and cagier comes around and calls for a general election by eliminating you, probably with the old stand-by of “club him in the head until he doesn’t get up.” So, this is the only job you can’t have done prior to becoming a spy.

**Talent:** The chief is the big Kahuna, the head honcho, the boss. What he says goes. This doesn’t have a hard and fast game-mechanical effect – just remember he’s probably leading from the rear and has a lot more experience telling people what to do, than you have experience of making your own way.

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<sup>1</sup> What were you expecting, anyway? No one’s invented a system for “measuring” weights, and the whole concept of “standards” is just a gleam in some brainy guy’s eye!

<sup>2</sup> You’ve come a long way, Grog!

## CRAFTER

The state of technology at the dawn of time is woefully primitive, almost by definition. If a crafter from prehistory saw a vision of televisions, vaccines, and the internal combustion engine, it would just confuse the poor bastard. Nevertheless, there is a need for people to make pots, fashion flints into spearheads and choppers, and otherwise make the equipment your Caveman will be taking on his missions. If you manage to steal secrets like fire or the wheel, your tribe's crafters might surprise you yet with the Flintstonian creations they're capable of.

**Talent:** Crafters understand the basic principles of building stuff – they know fire makes clay hard but makes wood soft, and how to tie knots in vines, the proper way to chip flints into points, and all that sort of thing. If a crafter has a high *Aha* Rating, he might even be able to invent a technology or two for the tribe.

Crafters get to add +1 to their *Ugh* Rating for the purposes of making rolls related to constructing stuff, +1 to their *Aha* Rating for making rolls related to understanding how stuff works, and +1 to their *Mmm* Rating for making rolls related to talking about how stuff works. You also get an extra pick from the Equipment list (in the *Rewards* section) at the start of any mission.

## GATHERER

These guys roam the wilderness finding edible foliage for the tribe, raw materials for the crafters, or sources of paints and stuff for the shamans. In general, they get the food that doesn't require a lot of mental acuity or physical agility to catch – like small animals that can be trapped, eggs gathered from nests, fruits and berries, etc. Gatherers have to be careful – there's no reference works yet to tell you what's good to eat and what's poisonous, and some egg-laying animals are large, fanged, and aggressive. It's not uncommon for gatherers to fall prey to carnivorous animals that lie in wait for them.

**Talent:** Gatherers learn to pay attention to detail.<sup>3</sup> They also learn how to carry a lot of stuff with them as they wander the wilderness. They do some experimentation as they are frequently on their own away from the tribe, and so may learn more about plants and animals than the rest of the tribe. They also learn to keep news about the best foraging areas to themselves.

Gatherers get to add +1 to their *Ugh* Rating for the purposes of carrying stuff, +1 to their *Aha* Rating for making rolls related to spotting things and for finding their way around in the wilderness, and +1 to their *Mmm* Rating with regard to keeping secrets.

## HUNTERS

Hunters track and attack prey animals to provide meat for the tribe. They spend lots of time away from the tribe in small hunting parties following the game, since the animals all seem to have learned to stay away from the humans' home caves. Another worry is that the animals with the most meat seem the best able to defend themselves, such as the cave bear or the great woolly mammoth – while one hunter might be able to take a cave bear if he comes upon it while it's hibernating, a mammoth requires an entire hunting party to set a trap. Even then, the odds aren't perfect and some mammoths end up taking out a lot of hunters before they disappear back into the wilds. And some animals (such as wolves, or the dreaded saber-toothed tiger) are better at hunting men than the men are at hunting them...

**Talent:** Hunters learn the finer points of using spears to kill prey. They learn how to follow prey. They get to know the lay of the land and how to make it in the wilderness on their own. Since they spend a lot of time in the company of other hunters, they learn quite a bit about how to stand out in a group of rivals.

Hunters get to add +1 to their *Ugh* Rating for the purposes of making rolls related to fighting, +1 to their *Aha* Rating for making rolls related to hunting prey and finding their way around in the wilderness, and +1 to their *Mmm* Rating with regard to boasting about their own abilities.

**OPTIONAL RULE:** Alternatively, the Darwin can determine that hunters get to add +1 to the damage they inflict with any weapon instead. This will make them far more deadly than other Cavemen, and should probably

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<sup>3</sup> "Was this the kind of leaf Arggh was eating when he died of fits? Did he say if it tasted good or not?"

be kept as a Talent for an Advanced Occupation (*i.e.*, one not available at the start of the game) – like, say, Warrior.

## SHAMAN

The shamans intercede on behalf of the rest of their tribe with the invisible supernatural forces of the world. Organized religion's not around yet, so the shamans have it easy as far as obeying restrictive ecclesiastical rules. On the other hand, no one's quite sure what works yet, so most shamans end up trying a little bit of everything they can think of: painting graffiti of power in the deeper caves, chanting and dancing (especially around a fire), coming up with weird rules that all cavemen have to follow, and so on. Sometimes it even works – or at least, it seems to. And every shaman keeps the first rule of his profession close to his heart: *Confidence is the key – never let the others know when you don't know what you're doing*. If you can fool the invisible forces, so much the better.

**Talent:** Shamans can call upon the invisible supernatural forces (whatever he conceives them to be) to grant any one Caveman in their group a *Boon* of supernatural luck. In game terms, that Caveman may reroll any one roll they have just made. The shaman must decide to do this before the consequences manifest themselves – throwing up his arms, pointing at the lucky Caveman with weird finger positions, and chanting in a creepy voice. The lucky Caveman can refuse the *Boon*, but the shaman still uses up his use of this ability. Any shaman can do this but once before he has to purify himself and charge himself up with mojo, by drumming and dancing and painting cave graffiti in complete solitude. Every day the shaman does this, he may make a roll versus his *Mmm* Rating, and if successful, he regains the use of the *Boon*.

There are only a few other restrictions on this power: the shaman has to be able to see his target and a *Boon* cannot be used on the *Mmm* Rating roll made to recharge a *Boon*.

Three shamans using their *Boons* together can grant a delayed *Boon* to any one Caveman. The lucky recipient must not be a Shaman; he gets to use the *Boon* only for one of his own rolls; and, all three participating Shamans use up their *Boon* to do this. Only one Caveman in any particular group can benefit from the delayed *Boon* at one time (this is usually the chief). If someone else with a delayed *Boon* joins the group, the Caveman who most recently gained the delayed *Boon* gets to keep it while the other one goes away without any fanfare. Sucks to be that guy.

## OTHER OCCUPATIONS

There are no other occupations available at the start of the game. There are no warriors yet, because no tribe creates enough food reliably to allow anyone to slack off most of the time; usually hunters act in the place of warriors whenever needed. There aren't any herders in the player's tribe yet because no one's invented animal domestication yet, nor animal husbandry.<sup>4</sup> The Darwin may make these available for new characters as the game progresses and the players' tribe gains power and majesty.

## TIME

This game takes place in an era before anyone's measured the year and developed complex calendar systems based on the phases of the moon, or star-groupings, or anything else for that matter. People measure time in days and seasons and years, but there's no standard reference telling you how long a season is – winter lasts from the first frost to the final thaw, spring lasts from then until the ice disappears from the Big Rock Mountains, and so on.

When the action is taking place very quickly, the Darwin should divide time into rounds. One round is enough time for everyone in the group to take an Action: be it to jump into a cave, run for a distance (say as far as you can go on one breath), swing for the other guy's vitals or hurl the spear at the cave bear's head, or cut the rope trapping the shaman in the cage with the ravenous wolverine.

## GAME MECHANICS

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<sup>4</sup> Get your mind out of the gutter, you! They're cavemen, not hillbillies!

The single die needed for this game is the six-sided die, herein after referred to as the d6. The single die mechanic is this: in order to succeed at a task, the player must roll a d6 and try to get under the Rating most appropriate for the task, subject to modifiers. For hitting something in combat, for instance, the player must roll under his Caveman's *Ugh* Rating. If his Caveman is a hunter, he gets to add +1 to his *Ugh* Rating for this purpose, making it easier to hit his target.

The trick involved here is in the phrase "subject to modifiers." There are two kinds of modifiers in the game, Advantages and Obstacles. In all cases, Advantages and Obstacles add or subtract from the die roll made: each applicable Advantage subtracts one from the die roll, while each applicable Obstacle adds one to the die roll. No matter how elaborate the Advantage or Obstacle might be, the Darwin should only modify the roll by one for each Advantage and Obstacle (with one or two specific exceptions) – highly-detailed number-crunching tends to interfere with the smooth flow of the action. This way, the Darwin just counts up the number of Advantages and subtracts the number of Obstacles to derive the number to subtract from the die roll.

## ADVANTAGES

An advantage is anything that helps your Caveman in his attempt to succeed. If you've got a trained wolf that helps you sniff out prey, then that's an Advantage to your ability to hunt prey. Similarly, a flint that sparks is an Advantage when trying to survive in the wilderness overnight. A loincloth made out of an appropriate animal pelt might be an Advantage when trying to pass oneself off as a member of another tribe. A root that gives the eater a boost of energy might be an Advantage when trying to beat someone else in a footrace. And so on.

Every Advantage must be approved by the Darwin, but he is expected to allow the player Cavemen to experiment with gaining Advantages through innovation and experimentation.

In essence, the Talents of the various Occupations are just special Advantages that the Cavemen can't lose.

## OBSTACLES

No one ever said survival would be easy. That's where Obstacles come in. Obstacles are whatever hinders your Caveman in his attempts to succeed. If your prey animal is cagey and tries to actively lose your hunter, then that's an Obstacle to your attempt to catch it. A particularly wide-ranging reputation might be an Obstacle if you attempt to pass yourself off as somebody else. A person's attempts to avoid being speared by you might be an Obstacle for you in combat.

Every Obstacle your Caveman attempts to cause for his foes must be approved by the Darwin. The Darwin is encouraged to allow players to be creative in coming up with ways to try to inconvenience their foes; this is a time when even the most hackneyed, transparent ploys have a chance of working – after all, they haven't had time yet to get "old."

## COMBAT

This game taking place in an age when really complex diplomacy hasn't been invented yet, many situations end up in combat or warfare. Therefore, this game has a few elaborations related to combat, in order to give it more excitement.

Combat should be dramatic and fast-paced. Hence, the Darwin should divide the action sequence into rounds, with each Caveman and each non-player character getting one Action each round. The following maneuvers each require one Action to perform:

- Grab a target with a firm grip (with an Advantage bonus.)
- Taking a precise swing at a target, with or without a weapon (with an Advantage bonus.)
- Throwing one weapon precisely at a target (with an Advantage bonus.)
- Be fully defensive (see the special rule below for particulars.)
- Moving up to 20 feet on a level surface.<sup>5</sup>
- Making a running jump of up to *Ugh* Rating in feet vertically or twice *Ugh* Rating in feet horizontally (succeed in a roll versus *Ugh* Rating or fall when you land.)

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<sup>5</sup> Note that this rule is not used for races – for those, see the section titled *Other Actions*.

- Moving up to 40 feet on a level surface (but only if the previous round was spent moving.)<sup>6</sup>
- Digging an item out of a sack or other container that can be carried by one individual.
- Giving someone a *Boon* (shamans only.)

The following maneuvers each require one half of a normal Action to perform – a Caveman can thus perform two in the same round:

- Grab a target with a weak or partial grip (with an Obstacle penalty.)
- Taking a wild swing at a target, with or without a weapon (with an Obstacle penalty.)
- Throwing a weapon wildly at a target (with an Obstacle penalty.)
- Try to escape from being grabbed (see the special rule below for particulars.)
- Be normally defensive (giving all attackers an Obstacle penalty when they swing at or try to grab you.)
- Moving up to 10 feet on a level surface.<sup>6</sup>
- Switching to another weapon carried at the belt or other easy-to-reach area.
- Making a jump of up to one-half *Ugh* Rating in feet vertically or *Ugh* Rating in feet horizontally (succeed in a roll versus *Ugh* Rating with an Obstacle penalty or fall when you land.)
- Standing up.

When an attacker swings at an opponent with a shorter weapon, the attacker gets an Advantage for that attack roll.

In general, while the Darwin is the final arbiter of the effectiveness of any particular maneuver a Caveman attempts, in most cases he should at least let the player *try* – albeit perhaps with a substantial number of Obstacle penalties for truly outrageous or heroic stunts.

When you successfully hit a target, you apply the damage of your weapon to them. See the *Damage and Recovery* section for details.

## FULL DEFENSE

In a fight, a Caveman might find himself at a serious disadvantage (no weapons, outnumbered, etc.) In these cases, primitive instincts might cause him to start flailing around wildly with his arms or any available object, trying to keep attackers at bay. If the player wishes his Caveman to take advantage of this maneuver, he must actually pantomime the action for the amusement of the Darwin and the other players, and his Caveman reduces all attackers' rolls to hit him or grab him by three (3) points (like a triple Obstacle). A Caveman can only keep this up for a number of consecutive rounds equal to his *Ugh* Rating, at which point he tires and can only perform the normal defensive half-Action.

## GRABBING THINGS

Wrestling is an ancient sport, but at the dawn of time its principles are still little understood by the average Caveman-on-the-street. Thus, grabbing a target is an attack performed as normal, with the standard penalty if the target is defensive. A grabbed target can't normally swing or throw a weapon, move anywhere, or otherwise perform any physical action. In order to escape once grabbed, the grappled Caveman must succeed in a roll versus *Ugh* Rating, and furthermore must equal or beat a roll versus *Ugh* Rating made by the opponent grabbing him.

**Example:** *Arggh (Ugh 3) said something particularly crude to Grog (Ugh 4) while they were huddling under an overhang for shelter from a storm, and Grog decides to throw him out into the weather. Grog first rolls versus his Ugh Rating to grab Arggh; they're both hunters, so Grog would normally need to roll a 5 or less on a d6 to grab Arggh; however, the Darwin decides that both hunters are wet from the rain, so he imposes an Obstacle to Grog's attack. Grog rolls a 2 and succeeds in grabbing Arggh.*

*Now, Arggh gets a chance to escape from being grabbed. He needs to roll a 3 or less to try to escape. When he does that, Grog must roll a 4 or less to try to hold onto him. If Arggh rolls a 1 (making his roll by 2) and Grog rolls a 2 (also making his roll by 2), then Arggh will escape and still have a half-Action to move away or take a swing at Grog. If Arggh rolls a 3 (making his roll exactly) and Grog rolls a 2 (making his roll by 2), then Grog will hold onto Arggh and get to throw him out of the shelter in the next round.*

Once you have a target grabbed, you can throw them a distance in feet equal to your *Ugh* Rating (which does 1 damage point and moves the target), or squeeze them or bash them into the ground or another available surface (which does 2 damage points but leaves the target in the same place).

## OTHER ACTIONS

There are plenty of things to do besides fighting, of course. You can try to chat up a rival hunter to learn about the next big mammoth hunt, or sneak around a rival tribe's caves to try to learn how they make those round things that roll around, or decoy a hunting party by outrunning their point men. All of these Actions should be dramatically roleplayed using the basic roll-a-d6 mechanic.

The Darwin should divide the task into Elements. A race is easy, you just divide it by leg of the trip. For a task like sneaking around the rival tribe's home caves, you might sketch out a basic layout of the area and divide the task into different areas of stealth (around the hunter's practice area, by the river, over the grassy sward where the shamans dance, etc.) A conversation could similarly be divided into different sections based on where the player leads it.

Once the task is divided into distinct Elements, the Darwin determines any Advantages or Obstacles the Caveman faces. Perhaps the hunter is quite willing to talk about himself (an Advantage) but has been told to keep the hunt a secret (an Obstacle). A footrace (or chase) should be over a number of different types of terrain, some easy (an Advantage for someone prepared ahead of time with rope or equipment), some difficult (rough ground and sinkholes apply an Obstacle to everyone moving at a high speed through the area).

Then it's time for the roleplaying. Cavemen should describe what they are doing to the best of their ability – the more detail the better. After describing the attempted Action, the Caveman should roll versus the relevant Rating.

A modified roll that is exactly equal to the Rating is a **Partial Success** – the Darwin should consider how the Obstacle affected the Caveman despite his best efforts. Perhaps the hunting party hasn't lost the Caveman's trail yet, perhaps the hunter let slip when the hunt is occurring but remains tight-lipped about the location of the mammoth trap. A Partial Success is a sign that, while you're winning, you haven't won yet.

A modified roll that is one more than the Rating is a **Partial Failure** – the Caveman didn't succeed in his task, but some slight benefit still applies. He stepped on a twig, but while the hunters are looking around for the source of the sound, they haven't spotted him yet. The Caveman has fallen behind one of his rivals in the race, but he's still ahead of the rest of the pack. A Partial Failure is a sign that while you're failing, you still have a chance to pull a win out of the bag.

A modified roll that is under the Rating is a **Complete Success** – the Caveman has completely dominated his rivals in this stretch of the task, or overcome the Obstacles. The Caveman just seemed to fly over the jagged rocks littering the ground. The hunter tells the Caveman about how well he's going to do at that mammoth hunt, when they spring the trap they laid at the Old Pine Glen tomorrow. The Caveman manages to watch a rival tribe's best crafter carefully start a fire in a patch of grass or something. Note that there are still Elements of the task left undone (like the next leg of the race, or discovering exactly which rocks the crafter struck together to get those sparks), but this part is licked. The Darwin might consider giving the Caveman an Advantage for the next Element or two, if it's appropriate to the task.

A modified roll that is more than one higher than the Rating is a **Complete Failure** – this Element is lost. The Caveman turns around to spot a group of the rival tribe's gatherers returning from foraging, who spot him and sound the alarm. A small hole twists the Caveman's ankle, causing him to fall behind the racing pack. The hunter realizes the Caveman is pumping him for information and runs off to tell his boss. The Darwin should impose an Obstacle on the next one or more Elements, at least until the Caveman achieves a Partial Success.

Always remember, it's much easier to lose an Advantage than it is get rid of an Obstacle. That's life in the Stone Age.

## DAMAGE AND RECOVERY

It's a tough world out there – big animals roaming around unchecked, rival tribes trying to dry-gulch you when you're not looking, and sometimes nature itself seems to have it in for you. All of these are resolved with the



basic roll-a-d6 mechanic. When you fail to do something that's physically risky (like trying not to get hit in combat or walking across a narrow ledge over a precipice) you take damage.

Damage points are directly subtracted from your *Ugh* Rating. (You can practically see them emerge from the Caveman's mouth in your mind's eye, can't you?) A single point of damage represents a serious blow, but nothing that risks death. Three- or four-point injuries represent life-threatening trauma, and should be role-played as such. Most physical risks should carry one or at most two points of damage. Anything that can cause three or more points of damage with a single failure should be adequately indicated as a suicidal risk by the Darwin ("The winds howling from the seemingly-bottomless depths of the chasm actually almost lift you away from its edge, as if invisible spirits were saying, 'No, stupid, go back and evolve!' and trying to pull you back.") Of course, in typical espionage fashion, the prize should be just beyond the players' reach on the other side of the suicidal obstacle (if it was easy, the chief would do this sort of thing himself).

In combat, of course, the chance for injury is great. Striking someone firmly with your fist or foot deals 1 point of damage; hitting someone with a weapon like a club or a spear (either wielded in the hands or thrown) deals 2 points of damage. Some crafters will make really enormous clubs, or spears with huge, jagged flints firmly attached to them – such weapons deal 3 points of damage, but continually cause the wielder to suffer an Obstacle penalty in combat, since no one's learned about leverage yet.

Losses in *Ugh* Rating affect your ability to perform physical tasks, thus you make rolls against the lowered Rating score. When you lose all your *Ugh* Rating points to trauma (*i.e.*, your Rating is at zero), you are unconscious. If you go below zero, you'll die. All things being equal, if you lie around unconscious in the wilderness, there's a much better than even chance that you'll wake up dead in some critter's gullet. So to speak.

Recovery is always a long, slow process. Medicine is extremely primitive – they haven't even learned the bad tricks like leeching yet. About the only thing the shamans know how to do is, give you different kinds of herbs and hope one does the trick. If your headaches still persist, the shaman will drill a hole in your head to let the pain out; it sounds really bad, but it seems to work. And you can make the patients jerk around sometimes by poking the soft spot in their skulls when they're sleeping. Cavemen recovering in the wild regain 1 point of *Ugh* Rating for every six days they rest; resting involves minimal movement, no long distance travel, and only the most rudimentary survival tasks. Cavemen recovering in the comfort of the home caves regain twice that many, or 1 point of *Ugh* Rating for every three days of rest.

No one's invented armor or shields yet, either. So, don't get hit, okay?!?

## REWARDS

Needless to say, there must be some reward for all this toil. Since this is before commendations or medals, and social hierarchies haven't developed more than three levels (Chief – Adults – Children), rewards take two forms: Equipment and Evolution Points.

## EQUIPMENT

This section is really short for an espionage game. No one's invented currency yet, so if you want something better than what you have, you have to either ask your chief for it, steal it from someone else, or bargain with a crafter for it.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Weight (in stones)</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Axe	¼	stone-headed, crafters only; does 3 damage, gives an Obstacle penalty
Clothes	¼	made from leather, they're fairly heavy
Club	¼	wooden, anyone can make one; does 2 damage
Gourd	⅛	this hollowed-out fruit rind holds 1 quart of water
Great Club	½	wooden, crafters only; does 3 damage, gives an Obstacle penalty
Long Spear	½	stone-headed, crafters only; does 3 damage, gives an Obstacle penalty
Jar	⅛	this clay jug holds 2 quarts of water
Javelin	⅛	wooden, crafters only; does 1 damage, thrown only
Sack	0	this leather carryall can carry about a stone's worth of stuff

Spear  $\frac{1}{4}$  stone-headed, crafters only; does 2 damage

More elaborate equipment will have to wait until you steal some technology. What types of equipment will be available then depends on the Darwin's goals for the campaign, but once the domestication of animals has been achieved, almost the full range of *Flintstones*-style gadgetry is possible (not *plausible*, just possible in an espionage game.)

## EVOLUTION POINTS

As in any role-playing game, players will look for methods to improve themselves. In **O:C**, this is handled with Evolution Points (or EPs). Players receive EPs for their Cavemen at the end of any mission. In general, the Darwin should award the players with one EP for each session that the mission took; if the mission was successful and he feels the players role-played well, he may give them another EP for this. Players should track their EPs.

EPs may be spent to improve a Caveman's abilities. Rating may not be increased (no one has invented training courses or exercise regimens yet) but Cavemen may learn new Talents. As explained in the *Advantages* section, a Talent is like an Advantage that the Caveman can't lose. A Caveman may spend 5 EPs and gain a new Talent of his choice. He must justify it to the Darwin, and the Advantage must only apply to one facet of life (*i.e.*, it should be no more broad than the abilities listed under the various Caveman *Occupations*).

## OPTIONAL RULE: EVOLVE OR DIE!

Sometimes it seems like nature itself is against you. Lightning happens to strike the tree you're standing under. A boulder just happens to drop right on your Caveman just as he exits his cave to join the group (perhaps with a pictograph "secret message" hidden inside!) The plant he just ate, which looks just like the plants everyone else is eating, just happens to be a look-alike that contains deadly poison.

In order to provide some structure for this sort of thing to the Darwin, the **Evolve Or Die!** rule has been developed.

To use this rule, the Darwin should keep careful track of every time one of the Cavemen breaks one of the guidelines given under the individual Ratings (*i.e.*, a low-Aha character uses big words, a low-Mmm character tries to keep too many lies in play at once, etc.) Every time a Caveman breaks a guideline, the Darwin should make a checkmark, and then make a d6 roll. If the roll is more than the number of checkmarks a Caveman has accumulated, then he's alright. If the roll is equal to or less than the number of checkmarks, Something Bad Happens to the Caveman. If he's been playing well, perhaps it's something that can be escaped with a series of death-defying stunts or clever ploys. If his playing has been half-hearted, perhaps it is instantly fatal.

In any case, if this rule is used, the Darwin should consider allowing Cavemen to spend 3 EPs to avoid the awful doom. Spending EPs in this way does not reduce the number of checkmarks already achieved.

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