The Wizard's Test: Deadly Combat Monsters! Monsters! Version

By Ken St. Andre Monstersi Monstersi

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Ten Days in the Arena of Khazan

Fairy Tale



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The Wizard's Test: Deadly Combat Monsters! Monsters! version



Imagined by Ken St. Andre Illustrated by Nicole Bresner

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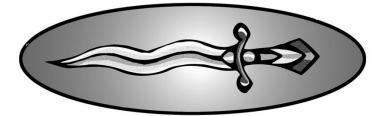
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Players: Read this twice, maybe 3 times. It's a little tricky, but it's intuitive and I think you will figure it out.

It has often been suggested that we use Saving Rolls for combat instead of rolling all the dice and comparing totals. Actually, Saving Rolls have been used in combat since the beginning, but only for accomplishing specific feats, such as dodging an attack, or running away. One can make the story of the game considerably more interesting if Saving Rolls are added into the combat mix.

The problem of using Saving Rolls as the entire combat mechanism is a bit more difficult. What do the players and GM make their Saving Rolls against? Which Attribute or Talent do they use? When we use the Monster Rating system to tell how dangerous the monsters are, they don't even have attributes. The Saving Roll system doesn't work very well with Monster Ratings.

But I have been thinking about it, and it involves adding a new attribute called **Essence (ESS)**. *Essence* is a derived attribute, and for player characters Essence is defined as the current average of the character's 8 primary attributes. Add **Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, Speed, Intelligence, Luck, Wizardry, and Charisma** and then divide by 8. This number is **Essence** and it is used exclusively for Saving Rolls in combat. For example, Fang, Daughter of Terror, has an **Essence** rating of 11.25. That would round down to 11. Fang really isn't a very good fighter. For things with monster ratings, Essence would equal MR/2. The same would be true for npcs with Human Ratings in the *Monsters! Monsters!* 2d edition rules. Essence equals HR/2.

Essence is a composite number that represents everything a character could bring to a battle: intelligence, training, health, skill, luck, speed. Testing them all at once for each combat round.

When it is time to fight, each character would simply make a Saving Roll using their Essence Rating as determined by the number or difficulty of each opponent. See the following chart:

Number	Essence	Saving Roll
of Foes	Rating	Required
1	1-20	1
2	21-40	2
3	41-60	3
4	61-80	4
5	81-100	5

...and so forth.

The chart works by multiplication. Multiply the number of foes times the Saving Roll required for different Essence ratings to find the level of the Saving Roll needed for each round of combat. One foe with an Essence rating of 35 would require a L2SR for each round of combat. (1 x 2). Remember that all Saving Rolls in this new combat system are made with the new computed attribute Combat Essence (ESS). NPC characters/monsters that are fully statted would have Essence scores just like player characters.

Characters that only have Monster Ratings would need to calculate an Essence Rating before combat started. For example, a troll with a monster rating of 100 would have an ESS rating of 50. If that troll was fighting 3 player characters with a combined Essence of 100, it would have to make a L15 Saving Roll to damage them all on the same turn. (3 x 5). The target for level 15 is 90. The troll would have to roll 40 on 2 dice (DARO) to hurt them all. However, that troll could just attack 1 of the 3. Let's say it attacked the strongest one who had an Essence rating of 40. Then it would only need a L2SR (Target 25--an automatic success for

something/someone with a combat Essence of 50 unless it rolled a fumble). For any of them to hit the troll with its Essence Rating of 50 and damage it, would require a L3 SR (1 x 3).

Damage would only be rolled if the attack SR was made successfully. Damage depends on weapon dice plus combat adds just as it normally would, except that no totals are compared and subtracted. If you do damage, you do major damage--the whole thing. You do not need to roll for spite in a case like this.

If combat is unopposed as in the example of 3 to 1 against a troll, every player character would still have to

roll against the troll's Essence Rating of 50 in order to hit it, but they would be using their own Essences in the fight. So let us say the 2nd strongest character had an Essence of 30, and the weakest character had an Essence of 20. Character # 2 has a target number of 30, and it already has a combat Essence of 30, so it hits on anything that is not a fumble, and does full damage to the troll's monster rating. Let's say he did 50 points of damage. 100 minus 50 = 50 for a new monster rating on combat turn 2, and that equals a new Essence rating of 25 for the troll. Character # 3 also has an unopposed attack, but he still needs a L3SR to hit and damage the troll. The target is 30 for level 3. His combat Essence is 20. He needs to roll a 10 or better on 2D6. Let's say he has a typical roll of 7 (6, 1). He missed and does no damage on that combat turn.

But what happens after the Saving Rolls have been made (or missed)? Misses are easy. That character does no damage. What happens when the Saving Roll is made? Weapon damage would then be calculated, and the target must take damage. In a two person fight, if Fang makes her combat Saving Roll and Gringrin the Goblin misses his, then Fang does full damage. And vice versa. But if they both make the Saving Roll, things get tricky. How is damage allocated? It could be gruesome but they both take the full damage that the other dishes out? Wicked! Lots of casualties that way. Of course, armor would still take damage and help protect in such situations.

Going back to the example of the troll fighting 3 characters--it chose to fight only one, the toughest one. It easily made the L2SR to hit. It hit that tough guy for 11D6 + 50. That would probably kill the tough guy. Yikes! In normal T & T combat three fairly tough characters have a good chance to beat a troll with a monster rating of 100 and suffer only spite damage. Not anymore. Yikes! Combat just got real dangerous.



But how about big melee combats? Ouch! How would the Saving Rolls even be calculated? Could the Game Master manage 20 different SR's for each round of combat? Does he break it down to one-on-one fights? Or maybe two or three-to-one. Typical situation: 8 bandersnatchi vs. 5 midlevel characters. The bandersnatchi have monster ratings of 60 each. Each bandersnatch would have an Essence Rating of 30, requiring only a L2 SR to hit. But if characters faced 2 bandersnatchi at once, the total would be 60 and that would require a L3 SR from the pc in order to do damage to both. The characters' Essence average only about 30 each. That's a piece of cake--only fumbles keep them from hitting. On the other hand, both of the monsters only need L2 SR's to hit--automatic for them unless they fumble their Saving Rolls. Ouch indeed!

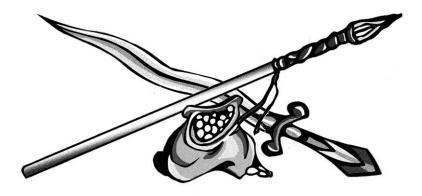
I don't think most players would ever switch to this style of combat. It would actually be slower to execute than the original style. On the other hand, for small melee situations, it could be a blast. I'm going to redo some of my earlier solos using this style of combat and the *Monsters! Monsters!* 2nd edition rules. Bwa ha ha ha ha ha haaaaaaaaa!

End

IMPORTANT NOTE: The combat in these fights can be fairly complicated. Be sure to read the whole paragraph without taking any action first. For example, the text may tell you to do 3 combat rounds at the beginning of

the paragraph, but it may also say if either fighter's CON goes to zero or less, then go to some other paragraph. Those instructions clearly take precedence over doing 3 combat rounds. Be sure you understand the whole situation before you start rolling dice and making Saving Rolls.

Talent Saving Rolls. This solo may allow you to use a Talent to improve your chances of making a Saving Roll. Most Talents have a value of 3, but may have any value depending on how you developed your character. To make a Talent Saving Roll, simply add the Talent value to the attribute that you are using to get a modified attribute as the base of your Saving Roll attempt.





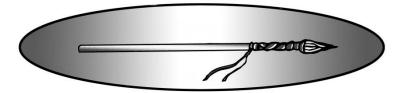
Introduction:

The old wizard smiles at you--an eerie experience--are his teeth really glowing? "You have done well so far in simple tests of fight or flight, but I'd like to see what you can do in more complex situations where all the choices don't seem so good or clear-cut. "Bring it on!" you sneer.

(This is an adventure for any level 3 or lower monster. You should be nonhuman, but humanoid--uruks, goblins, minotaurs, skeleton men, kobolds, dark elves, lizard men, etc.--get the idea? The Death Goddess wants the monster kindreds in her service. You can bring your own equipment in with you, but any kind of weird effects that it would take a Game Master to adjudicate simply don't work.

Monsters! Monsters! 2d edition rules are in effect, but your adventure point total has been reset to zero to start this adventure. The main difference is that you have a chaos factor. Non-magic using monsters have a chaos factor equal to their level. This allows them to change the total of any dice roll either up or down by that number of points. That includes Saving Rolls on the computed ESS attribute. For this adventure, you can only do this once during the adventure. Ordinarily you could do it once per game turn for any dice roll, but the old wizard isn't going to let you get away with that. If you were carrying any adventure points over from previous adventures, you will get them all back plus 10% interest if you survive this test.)

When you are ready, turn to <1>



<1> You are standing in a small room with two tables and two doors. The floor and the walls are smeared with a black greasy mud and the turgid air



hangs heavy with the aroma of rotting fish. Two small tables stand on opposite sides of the room, one beside each door. The first door has a painting of an alligator on it; the second door has the painting of a swamp troll. On the table beside the alligator door is a large sandwich made with heavy slices of black rye bread and containing fish and some gooey sauce. On the other table is an old leather pouch apparently full of rocks. You look at it carefully and find that the rocks are actually low value, uncut jewels of different sorts.. The light in the room comes from a high window over the alligator door--too high to see through unless you can fly. What do you do?

A) Leave the sandwich and the jewels behind and step through a door--go to <10>

B) Take the sandwich and step through a door--go to <15>.

C) Take the jewels and step through a door--go to <20>.

D) Try to take both sandwich and jewels and step through a door--go to <25>

E) Try to eat the sandwich. Anything this foul in appearance must be magical--go to <30>.



<2> Up on a tree branch where the alligator can't hurt you, you look down at the savage beast tearing at the trunk of your refuge. It isn't going away, and there is no way off this island until the beast is dead. If you know combat spells then you don't have chaos magic, you may sit there and cast enough of them to eventually slay the reptile--go to <28>. If you don't know magic, you will have to ready your weapon and jump down and fight it sooner or later. When you're ready for the showdown, go to <21>.

<3> Never share your smile with a crocodile, never stop to talk or even chat a while. He will eat you up like a buttercup. Never, never, never trust a crocodile! In this case it's an alligator, but the same principle holds true. Yes, you guessed it. That was foolish. The gator attacks you--go to <21>

<4> You choke to death. That should teach you never to eat anything that looks and smells bad. Close the book.

<5> The horrible sandwich is clogging your throat and windpipe. You begin to cough--great racking coughs that hurt all the way down to your toes, and you do manage to cough it up. Ack! That was awful. Now you have a sandwich with a bite taken out of it. Luckily, it wasn't a big bite, or you might not have survived. Take 1 point of CON damage and return to <10> to make a different choice.

<6> The horrible sandwich is choking you to death. You begin to cough--great racking coughs that hurt all the way down to your toes, but it does no good.



You cannot breathe. You are suffocating. All goes black and you pass out. You are unconscious and dying, but go ahead and make a L2SR on your Luck (25 - LK). If you don't know spells, you may use your chaos factor if you wish. Remember, your chaos factor is your level number and you can change any dice total either up or down by that number or less--the trick here is to use the total of just one die in the Saving Roll to turn the roll into doubles, If you make the Saving Roll, go to <27>; if you fail it, go to <4>.

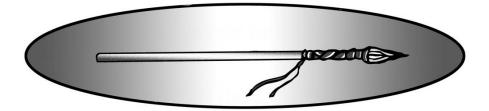
<7> You smile broadly. "I'm here to buy," you declare. "What fine weapons do you have for me?" The swamp troll says, "Let me see your money!" If you have the pouch of uncut jewels, then go to <24>. If you don't have it, go to <33>.

<8> You succeed--good shot! The alligator champs its mouth shut on the tasty sandwich and swallows it,

where it immediately has its intended effect. Go to <21>.

<9> After the swamp troll is out of the combat, you may take all of its weapons and keep the jewels also. The fish spear is a 6D6 weapon that is enchanted versus fish. A single point of damage from it will paralyze even the largest shark. The dagger is unusually potent--it gets 12D6 in combat. The flute-like thing is just a hollow reed, useful for breathing while your body is under water. It's not worth any money at all, but is a good trick to know.

A short time after that, a magical door will open in the trunk of the mangrove tree. You may step through it and return to the wizard's chamber--go to <30>.



<10> If you go through the Gator door, go to <35>. If you go through the Troll door, go to <34>.

<11> The alligator is getting close. If you wish to throw the sandwich into its gaping maw, make a L1SR on DEX (20 - DEX). If you don't know spells, you may use your chaos factor if you wish. Remember, your chaos factor is your level number and you can change any dice total either up or down by that number or less--the trick here is to use the total of just one die in the Saving Roll to turn the roll into doubles .If you make it, go to <8>. If you miss it, go to <13>.

<12> Since you can't buy, you may as well attack. You just have time for one combat spell before combat begins. The troll has a monster rating of 60 (7D6 + 30) which gives it an ESS rating of 30. It will fight with the leaf-bladed dagger. To hit it and do damage, you need only make your own L2SR on your ESS rating. For it to hit you, check your ESS rating on the chart in the essay on page 6 to see what level Saving Roll the troll must make.

If you slay him, go to <9>. Incidentally, the dagger he is using is poisoned with deadly frog venom. If you take damage, then you have been poisoned. If poisoned, take 1D6 of Stun Damage per combat turn. Stun damage comes off your CON normally except that it won't kill you. If you hit, you do your total damage to the troll; if it hits, it does its total damage to you. When your CON reaches zero, you will pass out. If that happens before you slay the troll, then go to <31>.



<13> You miss. The sandwich bounces off the gator's head, making it stop and snap futilely at the air for a second. This gives you just enough time to grab your weapon and fight for your life. Or you will have time to cast a combat spell. Go to <21>.

<14> Jumping into the swamp water is the worst decision of your life. It is infested with insects, leeches, hungry fish, and huge reptiles. You swim until you can't swim any longer, then try to put your feet down, but there is no bottom. You lose a lot of blood to the leeches and the little fish nibbles. Your clothing and armor get saturated and drag you down. Eventually you drown ... horribly. Close the book.

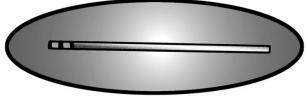
<15> You have the disgusting sandwich in your hand. Go now to <10> and choose a door to exit the room.

<16> You could try throwing the bag of jewels into the gator's mouth. That could give you a moment to draw your weapon or try to flee. Make a L1SR on DEX (20 - DEX). If you don't know spells, you may use your chaos



factor if you wish. Remember, your chaos factor is your level number and you can change any dice total either up or down by that number or less--the trick here is to use the total of just one die in the Saving Roll to turn the roll into doubles. If you make it, go to <18>. If you miss it, go to <23>. Or you could just drop the bag, grab your weapon or prepare a spell and fight--in that case, go to <21>.

<17> Your attack takes the troll by surprise! With a shriek, he turns and dives into the swamp waters and swims away. You get the three objects on the blanket. The fish spear is a 6D6 weapon that is enchanted versus fish. A single point of damage from it will paralyze even the largest shark. The dagger is unusually potent--it gets 12D6 in combat. The flute-like thing is actually a hollow reed--useful for breathing while under water, but not worth anything. Once you have collected your treasure, a door will open in the mangrove tree, and you can go through it to return to the wizard's chamber. Go to <32>.



<18> The bag of jewels breaks an alligator tooth when it hits. That reduces the gator's monster rating to 58 (6D6 + 29). (ESS = 29) Go to <21> and fight it out.

<19> Your timidity makes the troll laugh. "Oh ho," he cries. "I am sorry that I frightened you. Come out! I

won't hurt you. Just give me your weapons and armor, and I will show you the way to go home. If you are humiliated and recover your courage, you may come out fighting. In that case, go to <12>. If you come out peacefully, the troll will offer you something to drink from a fish-bladder canteen. It tastes vile, and makes you drowsy. Oh no! You cannot stay awake. You collapse, totally at the mercy of this tricky swamp dweller. Go to <31>.

<20> You have a bag of low value uncut jewels in your hand. Go now to <10> and choose a door to exit the room.



<21> If the gator has its mouth full of gooey sandwich, it will lose the use of its jaws as a weapon and have a monster rating of 40 (5D6 + 20). That gives it a combat Essence of 20. If it doesn't have a sandwich in its mouth, it is more formidable and has a monster rating of 60 (7D6 + 30). That's an ESS of 30. Also, if the gator is trying to cope with a sandwich you will have one combat turn to cast any combat spell you know (Take That You Fiend, Blasting Power, Freeze Please, or Vorpal Blade, etc) before you have to fight it physically. If no sandwich, then no time for magic. Fight! Remember that combat is done by making Saving Rolls on ESS-- yours vs. the alligator's and its versus yours. If the Saving Roll succeeds, you do your total damage to the

gator. If the gator succeeds, it does its total damage to you. Also, remember, your chaos factor is your level number and you can change any dice total either up or down by that number or less--the trick here is to use the total of just one die in the Saving Roll to turn the roll into doubles.

If you win, go to <28>. If you die, close the book-you are gator grub.



<22> You turn and dash away from this frightening example of swamp life at its ugliest. This makes the troll laugh. There really isn't any place to go, however. If you decide to jump in the dark water and swim for it, go to <14>. If you hide behind the tree go to <19>.

<23> With a savage roar the gator is on you. Its tail sweeps around and cuts your legs out from under you.

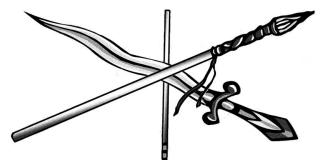
There is no time to draw a weapon--you must fight it bare-handed. If you know spells, you may use them at a rate of one spell per combat turn in addition to your 1D6 plus your combat adds, but only the physical struggle actually helps you ward off the reptilian attack. Remember that combat is done by making Saving Rolls on ESS--yours vs. the alligator's and its versus yours. If the Saving Roll succeeds, you do your total damage to the gator. If the gator succeeds, it does its total damage to you. Also, remember, your chaos factor is your level number and you can change any dice total either up or down by that number or less, The weapon damage is only counted if the Saving Rolls are successful. Fight to the death. If you win, go to <28>. If you lose, there's a happy gator in the swamp tonight. Close the book.

<24> The troll is very pleased to see the uncut gems--trolls like pretty rocks. It begins to bargain with you. The troll has a CHR rating of 19. You haggle because it enjoys haggling.



Roll 2D6 (DARO) and add it to his CHR of 9. Then do the same using your own CHR rating. If your total is higher, then he sells you all three objects for the contents of the pouch. If his total is higher, he only sells you one of

them--your choice. The fish spear is a 6D6 weapon that is enchanted versus fish. A single point of damage from it will paralyze even the largest shark. The dagger is unusually potent--it gets 12D6 in combat. The flute-like thing is actually a hollow reed--worth nothing, but useful for breathing underwater. Once the deal is concluded, the troll wishes you a pleasant day. It then picks up its blanket and anything else it still owns and walks briskly away. It walks behind the tree and vanishes from your sight. You are unlikely to ever see it again. But, while you are looking at the tree, you see a magical door open in its trunk, and beyond it is a pure clean light. You walk over and step through to find yourself in the wizard's chamber--go to <30>.

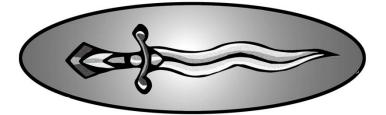


<25> The room is too large for you to grab both items at the same time. When you touch one, the other one magically vanishes with a small popping noise. If you took the sandwich, go to <15>. If you took the coins, go to <20>. <26> The mangrove tree trunk is slippery, and the first branch is quite high. It will take some skill or dexterity to get up into the branches. If you have a Talent for Climbing, Agility, or Acrobatics, you can use it for this L2SR on DEX (25-DEX). (Remember that the Talent rating simply adds to your attribute score when you make the Saving Roll.) If you make the Saving Roll, you manage to get up into the tree before the alligator catches you--go to <2>. If you fail it, then the giant reptile catches you, and it's not a pretty sight. You slip back to the ground and have to face the reptile barehanded--go to <23>.



<27> You wake up in Khara Khang's chamber. It seems that he was watching you, and decided to save your life. Finding you passed out and turning blue, the old wizard dug the gooey mass out of your throat, gave you artificial respiration, and resuscitated you. When you wake up, you see him glaring at you. "Let that be a lesson to you," he snarls, "don't go eating strange things in hopes they are magical. That kind of behavior will get you killed. Now get out of here! I am very disappointed in you." He hands you your stuff, and you get your suspended adventure points back with a 10% increase--so the adventure wasn't a total loss. You leave and find yourself once again on the streets of Khazan, ready for a new adventure somewhere else. THE END.

<28> The alligator is dead. You search, but there doesn't seem to be any treasure here unless you want to butcher the beast and take its teeth or claws. The teeth are nasty things--you could catch a disease by simply touching them, but a good dagger is a better weapon. The claws are impressive. If you decide to cut up the reptile, you will gain body parts worth about 20 gold pieces in the open market. When you are ready, a magical door will open in the trunk of the mighty



mangrove tree, and you may step back through it to the wizard's chamber at <29>.

Old Khara Khang chuckles with delight when <29> you suddenly materialize in his chamber. When he sees that you have some gator parts he is even happier. (If vou didn't butcher the reptile, his smile is just a token grin.) "You have done very well, and I think you will be an excellent agent for Her Deathliness once you have completed your training." You may sell the gator parts if you wish (that gets you 1D10 + 20 gold pieces) and I will give you this additional blessing." He reaches out and touches you. You feel a magical tingle run through your body. (You may increase any one of your attributes by 1 point. By doing so, you use up all the adventure points you gained in this adventure plus whatever Khara Khang just gave you; however, now that the adventure is over you get back all the a.p. that you had previously with 10% interest.) You thank the old wizard and get back to your normal life. You know that Khara Khang may still have more tests and challenges for you, but you are unafraid. THE END.

<30> Bravely you pick up the sandwich and bite into it. Ewww! This is foul. As you try to chew and swallow,



your jaws get locked up in the gooey peanut butter, and the mass clogs your throat. You find yourself choking to death. Make a L3SR on CON (30 - CON). If you don't know spells, you may use your chaos factor if you wish. Remember, your chaos factor is your level number and you can change any dice total either up or down by that number or less--the trick here is to use the total of just one die in the Saving Roll to turn the roll into doubles.

If you make the Saving Roll, go to <5>. If you miss the Saving Roll go to <6>.

<31> You wake up back at the beginning of this adventure in Khara Khang's chamber, very surprised to find that you are still alive. You don't have any weapons or armor--the troll took those as a token of its victory. It also bit off both your earlobes, and they hurt like the devil, but it did not kill you. The old



wizard is very disappointed in you, but he returns your suspended adventure points with 10% interest. At least

the adventure wasn't a complete loss. Then it's back to the streets of Khazan with you in hopes of finding another adventure soon. THE END.

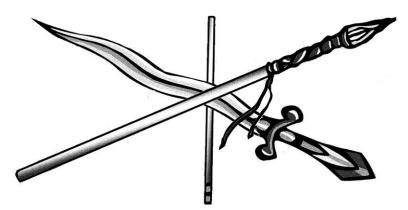
<32> Old Khara Khang chuckles with delight when you suddenly materialize in his chamber. When he sees that you have the troll's weapons he is even happier. "You have done very well, and I think you will be an excellent agent for Her Deathliness once you have completed your training." You may keep the troll's weapons if you wish and I will give you this additional blessing."

He reaches out and touches you. You feel a magical tingle run through your body. (You may increase any one of your attributes by 1 point. By doing so, you use up all the adventure points you gained in this adventure plus



whatever Khara Khang just gave you; however, now that the adventure is over you get back all the a.p. that you had previously with 10% interest.) You thank the old wizard and get back to your normal life. You know that Khara Khang may still have more tests and challenges for you, but you are unafraid. THE END.

<33> The troll looks at you expectantly, but when you don't produce the uncut jewels, its joy turns to disappointment and then to anger. "Liar!" it cries. Snatching up the bronze dagger, it attacks you savagely. If you pull your own weapons and fight it, go to <12>. If you turn and run away, then go to <22>.



<34> The door vanishes behind you as you step through it, and you find yourself on an island of black mud. Above you the sky is dark and gloomy with heavy low-lying clouds. A drizzling rain quickly soaks you to the skin. All around the island are dark waters in which many reeds grow, and there are quite a few sunken trees. Behind you is a mighty, mossy mangrove tree. Ahead of you is a very large troll. It has muddy brown skin, large flapping ears, bulging eyeballs in a grotesque face. The troll squats on a mat made of reeds. Arranged in front of it are a few primitive weapons including a fish-spear, a leaf-bladed dagger, and something that looks like a flute. He smiles and speaks to you in a mangled version of the Common Speech. "Welcome to my swamp, stranger. Did you come to buy? Or to die?" If you answer "buy" go to <7>. If you answer "die" go to <12>. If you just attack him, go to <17>. If you try to run away, go to <22>.

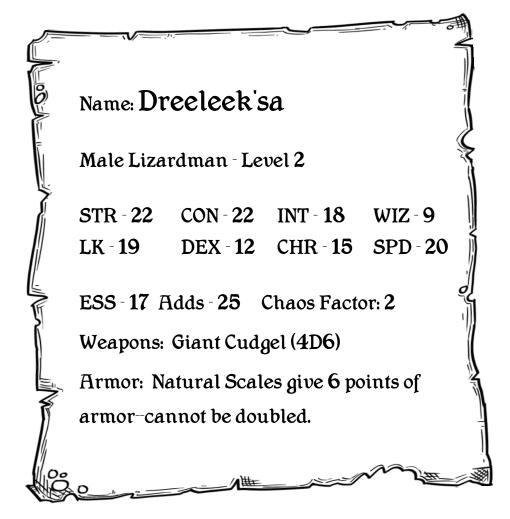
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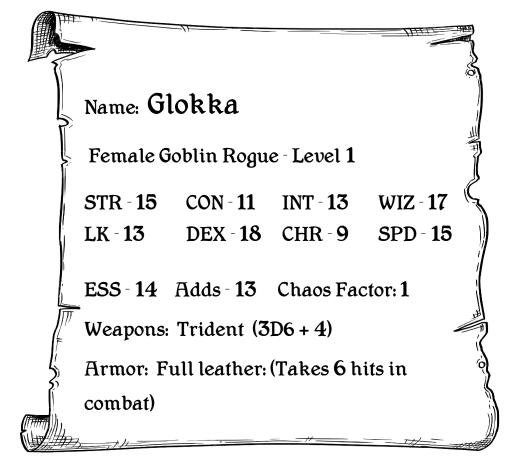


mighty, mossy mangrove tree. In front of you is a large

alligator on the water's edge. When it sees you, it emits a hissing burble of a roar and rushes toward you with jaws wide-extended. If you have the sandwich in your hand, go to <11>. If you have the rocks in your hand, go to <16>. If you just decide to fight it with your weapons or if you want to cast a spell at it, go to <21>. If you turn around and try to quickly climb the mangrove tree, go to <26>. If you just stand there or try to talk to it, go to <3>.

Two Sample Characters for Monsters! Monsters! Adventures





NOTE: Goblins in Trollworld are neither cute nor friendly. They start their lives as eggs spawned on marsh weeds and go through three metamorphoses before achieving their final humanoid form. When goblins and uruks live together, the goblins are always slaves.

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