

PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/104 June '17

DUNGEON FANTASY[™]

POWERED BY GURPS

**HEROIC BACKGROUND
GENERATOR**

by David L. Pulver

IT'S A QUEST!

by Christopher R. Rice

TRAPPED IN THE LIVING TOMB

by Steven Marsh

THE STATE OF THE DUNGEON

A Progress Report

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Stock #37-2704

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Why venture into some dank hole devoid of green, growing things – bunched up with clumsy, noisy, smelly companions – to play “kill or be killed” with abominations against Nature? For treasure and sport, of course! Don’t expect me to help carry the wounded, though.

– Llandor the Gray, Scout

Soon, the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* shall be making its triumphant debut to a world hungry for satisfying dungeon-crawling action. But until then, *Pyramid* is here to stoke the fires of anticipation.

There are many ways one can get started on a life of adventure, but perhaps the most harrowing is to be *Trapped in the Living Tomb*. That’s right; this is a complete, ready-to-play adventure for the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* (written by long-time *Pyramid* editor Steven Marsh). But how can that be, when the game hasn’t even been released yet to the outside world? By being a *solo adventure* that contains all the information necessary to play! All you need are dice, a pencil, and a copy of the character sheet on p. 16. Can you help a mighty swashbuckler escape from a mysterious subterranean enigma that’s teeming with traps, puzzles, and dangers?

When you put together the pieces of adventuring excitement, well . . . *It’s a Quest!* Join Christopher R. Rice – co-author of the forthcoming *Dungeon Fantasy Traps* supplement – as

he shows you how you can make a satisfying adventure (or even campaign story arc) by just rolling a few dice. With this article, you can jump-start your imagination to generate a complete idea for your *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* campaign before you even crack open the set!

You can make the nuts-and-bolts of a hero with the in-depth design system of the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG*, but sometimes you want to

know where that adventurer came from; fortunately, that’s easy with the *Heroic Background Generator*. Author David L. Pulver – co-author of the *GURPS Basic Set* that’s the foundation of the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* – presents a set of tables that help you come up with a complete background for your would-be crypt-crawler.

There’s no need to visit a sage or temple mystic to learn *The State of the Dungeon!* Discover the latest news about the progress on the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* . . . and insider news on other elements related to that set.

This issue also includes a *Random Thought Table* from Steven Marsh that provides a few more things to think about as you consider your hero’s strengths and weaknesses.

You don’t need to approach the old stranger in the tavern to begin your journey. With this issue of *Pyramid*, your *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* adventures can start now!

ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

Pale Blue: In This Issue

Brown: In Every Issue

Green: Columnist

Dark Blue: **GURPS** Features

Purple: Systemless Features

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FROM THE EDITOR

THE STARS SOON ALIGN! THE TIME IS NIGH!

It's a conundrum: How do we support and get folks excited about the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* here in the pages of *Pyramid*, when folks don't have their snazzy boxed sets or follow-up items yet?

Fortunately, we're used to doing the impossible twice before breakfast around here, so we hope we've risen up to the challenge. We decided to take the tack of asking what would be useful to have in hand before fans get the complete, hefty set.

Thus, we have a solo adventure designed to set the mood for the forthcoming set and teach a few of the basics of the full *Dungeon Fantasy RPG*. Unlike most other solo adventures, this one assumes you know *nothing* about the system . . . so it's ideal to print out and hand to anyone who's new to the game. Speaking personally, I've wanted to write one of these ever since I discovered my first paragraph-style fantasy adventure 30-odd years ago, and I hope you enjoy playing it as much as I did writing it.

We also have two articles that feel like mini-supplements of their own. One is devoted to helping players make heroic backgrounds for your fledgling dungeon-crawlers . . . a perfect way to get inspiration or even dictate randomly how you got in the crypt-crawling business in the first place. The other is a guide for Game Masters to craft campaign arcs and storylines (including plenty of key ideas), letting you tie together adventures into a larger whole.

VOICES FROM THE DUNGEON DEPTHS

We'd be remiss if we didn't do one more special call-out. Normally, here in the pages of *Pyramid*, we add amusing or relevant quotes from the larger world that catch our fancy. However, to help get in the mood, this month

instead we received *new* quotes from *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* mastermind Sean Punch, providing insight from the mouths of iconic characters presented in the boxed set and the screen. Think of it as a thematic appetizer while you await the full game.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

We've never had a set like the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* before . . . and we've never had an issue of *Pyramid* like this before! Between the standalone solo adventure, the mini-supplements, and the future previews, we're curious: What did you think? Do you love having your gaming arsenal augmented beforehand like this? Or is there something you'd like to see different? Let us know privately via email at pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the fervent fan base publicly and discuss this issue at forums.sjgames.com.



Additional Material: Sean Punch

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TRAPPED IN THE LIVING TOMB

BY STEVEN MARSH

Trapped in the Living Tomb is a solo adventure for the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*. However, it's designed so that you don't actually need that boxed set to play it – or even a Game Master (or GM as it's abbreviated). The rules you need to play are contained right in the adventure; we've even highlight key abilities in bold. All you need is a copy of the character sheet on p. 16, three six-sided dice, and a pencil and paper to take notes.

In this adventure, you'll take the role of Redhair the Quick, a swashbuckler. Although the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* thrives on adventuring parties, you'll be going this adventure alone. Fortunately, you have the confidence to fearlessly see your way into any obstacle. You might even make it out alive . . .

ROLLING THE DICE

When you're asked to make a success roll – often abbreviated as just "roll" – locate the skill on your character sheet (see p. 16) and roll three dice (always dice with six sides!). Total the dice; if the sum is *equal to or less* than the skill, you succeed. If you roll *more* than your skill, you fail. (The full game has critical successes and critical failures, but we're not going to worry about those too much for this quickie adventure.)

If there's a modifier – a bonus or penalty – it's applied to the *skill* before you roll.

A GLIMPSE INTO A WORLD OF ADVENTURE

The full *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* is a complex affair; this solo adventure tries to both teach the basics of that game system *and* provide a satisfying experience. We had to leave a lot unsaid here . . . lots of tactical options and possibilities, many complications, scads of possibilities for critical successes or critical failures, hex-based movement. There's way more than we could cram into even a meaty adventure like this; the boxed set contains hundreds of pages of great material!

So, please don't think of this as the be-all and end-all of the game. Think of it as a teaser, either to prepare you for the full set (if you've never tried the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* before), or as a standalone adventure to get you in the hack-and-slash frame of mind.

Example: You need to make an **Acrobatics** roll at -2 to cross a ledge. Your skill is 15, so your skill after the modifier is 13. You roll three dice, getting a 6, 4, and 2 – for a total of 12. You succeed!

A roll of 3 or 4 always succeeds, and a roll of 17 or 18 always fails. However, except when defending against an attack, you cannot even *attempt* a roll unless your skill after modifiers is 3+.

If it's important to know how well you succeeded, subtract what you rolled from your modified skill.

In the example above, you succeeded by 1 point (13 minus 12).

When you're rolling damage, you want to roll high . . . if you're doing the damage, that is! If you see something like "roll 2d+1," that means roll two dice, add them together, and then add 1 more.

IMPORTANT: YOU'RE LUCKY!

In this adventure, your hero has Ridiculous Luck. When you use this ability, you get to reroll the dice. You can use this ability whenever you're asked to roll the dice, after you roll, whether for a skill attempt, injury taken, or whatever. If you use this ability, roll and total the dice *two more times* (that is, three times total) and take the best result (which is usually the lowest sum).

Normally with Ridiculous Luck, you would get to reroll the dice every 10 (real-time) minutes of game play. But since that doesn't make much sense for this adventure, instead you can use your ability a total of **six times** the entire adventure – but only once per action. Check off your progress on the character sheet; you can find this trait under *Advantages*.

PICKING UP STUFF

For the purposes of this adventure you can carry 14 more pounds. If you carry more than that, take another -1 to all **Dodge** rolls. If you find any coins or small jewels in this adventure, their weight is negligible. Be sure to write down anything you take with you on your character sheet.

You might also want to note any other interesting things that you discover along the way.

And now, your adventure begins.

THE ADVENTURE

You're part of a caravan to a trade-route town. In exchange for providing extra protection, you'll receive meals plus some coins in your purse at the end of your journey. It's not much, but you enjoy the company.

As you're making your way through the forest, you're scouting ahead. You may not be an expert, but you think you're more perceptive than your traveling companions.

While you explore ahead, you miss that the overgrowth on the ground conceals some kind of pit. Fortune – who usually smiles so sweetly for you in life – has turned against you for now, as you find yourself falling.

Start at 1.

1 Time seems to slow down as gravity exerts its force against you. Unsure of when – or even *if* – you'll hit the ground, your training and natural reflexes kick in as you attempt to break your fall.

According to the character sheet, your **Acrobatics** skill score is 15. Roll three dice and sum them.

If you roll equal to or less than 15, you succeed; go to 44.

If you roll more than 15, you fail; go to 11.

If you fail your first roll, this would be a good time to use your Ridiculous Luck – see *Important: You're Lucky!* on p. 4.

2 You realize that, on the edges of each shelf, there is no dust about a half-inch out from the spines of any of the books, even though the rest of each shelf is dusty. It's as if there's some kind of barrier in front of the books. There's something about these shelves that makes the hair on the back of your neck stand up.

If you wish to take a book, go to 98.

If you want to touch the shelves without touching the books, go to 109.

Otherwise, return to 4.

3 If you have a suitable lever, it should have a number on it. If so, read that number *backward*, and go to that section number. (For example, if the lever said "14," go to 41.)

If you do not have a suitable lever – or don't wish to use it at this time – return to 47. However, when you're in the contraption room from now on, you may return to this section (3) whenever you like.

4 This is another 30' square room, illuminated at the top by the same glowing runes you've found elsewhere in this structure. There is only one door – the one leading out to the west, to the room you came from.

The north, east, and south walls of this room are lined with bookshelves, each 10' tall and heavy with books. In addition, in the center of the room is a large orb – approximately 3' in diameter. The orb appears to be a huge form of natural crystal; it's milky gray, except for a large black spot in the center. It resembles nothing so much as a giant eyeball. In front of the orb – facing away from it – is a large, comfortable-looking cushioned chair.

You may:

- Examine the bookshelves; go to 56.
- Look at the orb; go to 18.
- Sit in the chair; go to 92.
- Search the room; go to 108.
- Leave the room; return to 85.

5 It takes about 30 minutes to tend your bruises and scrapes. Make a **First Aid** roll (you're at -1 for Chummy due to being alone but +1 for your first-aid kit, so these cancel out). If you succeed, recover 1d-3 Hit Points (minimum of 1 HP). If you fail, you recover no HP. Regardless, go to 110 when you're done.

6 "Provided stored healing energies remain in stasis, of course I can assist you," she says. She raises her hands.

If you have not asked her for aid previously, you feel a wash of magical healing flow over you which restores your Hit Points to full. If she *had* healed you previously, nothing more happens.

Do you ask her for anything else?

- Escape; go to 107.
- Information about the place; go to 50.
- Something else; go to 27.

Or do you leave this room (return to 85)?

7 You're not usually the sort to make determinations about what strange devices in dungeons do; that's why you befriend a thief or two before making your way to adventure. However, desperate times call for desperate chin-stroking.

If you want to inspect this (while touching it as little as possible) and have not tried to do so already, go to 113.

If you want to thoroughly search this device, taking your time and touching it as needed (and have not done so already), go to 83.

Otherwise, if you want to choose another course of action, go to 47.

8 This desiccated corpse has been dead for some time; it's some kind of humanoid. It is covered in a fungus that is surprisingly pliant to the touch. You're grateful you're wearing gloves; although this goop seems harmless, oozes and slimes are often *very* dangerous.

In the corpse's pockets, you find seven copper pieces (\$7), which you may take. Underneath its body you find a rusted pickaxe jutting through the leather armor. The armor is of no value; it doesn't fit, and yours is better, regardless! Although the pickaxe is rusted, you may take it, if you like; it's 8 lbs., and you'll need to keep it in your backpack.

If you want to try to figure out what happened here, make a **Perception** success roll (abbreviated as **Per** – check your character sheet). If you succeed, go to 116. If you fail or don't want to roll, go to 110.

9 The door opens easily, and you see what seems to be the forest in front of you! If you step through the door, go to 118.

If you throw an item through the doorway, go to 34.

Otherwise, you can close the door and continue exploring; go to 68.

10 This door is solidly locked. If you have a golden key, you may use it now; go to 62. Otherwise, return to 26.

11 You tried to mitigate the damage, but the unexpectedness of the fall meant you couldn't do much when your side and something squishy suddenly become acquainted.

Now, make a damage roll for the fall. Roll 3d and add them together. Normally that would be your basic damage, but you landed on something squishy, so divide that damage in half (round down). Then subtract your armor's Damage Resistance (DR), which is 3. That's how much damage you took. Subtract that from your Hit Points (HP). (If you hadn't used your Ridiculous Luck on the previous **Acrobatics** roll, you can use it now on the damage roll.)

Be aware that if your HP is ever 0 or less, that's bad news. Fortunately in the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, you're not necessarily out of the action if you are injured too much, but you're probably relying on friends to help get you back into fighting shape. Unfortunately, for this adventure, you're going it alone . . .

Go to 77.

Falling not so bad. Just land like cat!

– Miao Miao, Swashbuckler

12 You've seen enough magical weirdness today to tell you that there doesn't seem to be anything strange going on. Brimming with confidence (perhaps even Overconfidence?), you step through the doorway; go to 118.

13 You realize that this room has not been disturbed in some time, based on the dust on the floor. You believe you see faint footprints on the floor, leading from the room you came from (with the arcane circle on the floor) to the door on the western wall. You figure they were left here some time ago . . . perhaps years. If your theory is correct, you're guessing there were no footprints in the room you fell into because – with the hole in the ceiling – it's open to the elements.

If you wish to open the western door, go to 38. Otherwise, there's nothing else to do here; return to the arcane circle room by going 110.

14 The door to the north room opens easily. If this is the first time you've been in this room, go to 94. Otherwise, go to 26.

15 Your Overconfidence makes waiting to be rescued – like some mewling infant – a truly trying task. You need to make a self-control roll to overcome your disadvantage. Roll 3d. If you rolled 6 or less, go to 90. If you roll more than 6 (or you choose not to roll), there's no way you'd wait; fortune favors the bold! Go to 110 and choose another option.

16 If this is your first time in the south room, go to 32. Otherwise, go to 85.

17 Death is a possibility for any adventurer who lives a life worthy of the title. Sadly, you are part of the statistics

that make the tales of heroism seem all the more heroic. Someday, someone else may find your body and try to piece together what happened. But that's small comfort for you. *You have died.*

18 The orb looks calming and oddly hypnotic. If you want to peer into it, go to 101.

If you want to search it for traps, go to 69.

Otherwise, you can return to room; return to 4.

19 The skeleton attacks, but your weapon isn't ready! This means that you can only use **Dodge** (not **Parry**) and must spend your first action drawing your sword.

Roll 1d: On a 1-3, go to 49. On a 4-6, go to 54.

20 On any roll other than a 17 or 18, you hit the odd structure but don't seem to be able to do enough damage to harm it.

If you rolled a 17 or 18, that's a critical failure. You've bent your sword! For the rest of the adventure, all attacks with that weapon (that is, every time you use the Rapier skill), you're doing so at -2. You'll need to have a professional weaponsmith repair Hellsender when you escape here. (No, not "if" – you're certain you'll escape!)

Return to 47.

21 This device incorporates both magic and technology to achieve an almost unimaginable feat. As near as you can tell, this device – when active – should work as the lift mechanism for the *entire dungeon*. Since your current problem is that you're 30' below the ground without any good way to get to the surface, you strongly suspect this will be an answer to your problem . . . if you can figure out how to use it.

Gain +3 to any future rolls to search this device.

Return to 7.

22 You suddenly remember your Gentleman's Code of Honor as you reach for your sword. You can't hurt this person who hasn't threatened or attacked you; you have principles to uphold! (*In the **Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game**, one way to customize your character – and get more cool special abilities – is by taking disadvantages. In this case, in addition to Overconfidence, Redhair has a Code of Honor to uphold or face penalties at the end of the adventure.*) Go to 105.

23 The door opens into a familiar-looking 30' square, with the same glowing runes along the ceiling providing illumination as you've seen elsewhere. There is only one doorway – the one you came in from to the east, where the flying swords attacked you.

If this is the first time you've been in this room, go to 87. Otherwise, go to 84.

24 You get close to the books again, and another bolt of energy shoots out at you from the shelves. Lose 2 Hit Points of injury.

If you have been reduced to 0 HP or fewer as a result of this injury, go to 51.

If you want to try once more to get the books or search the shelves, go to 72.

Otherwise, return to 4.

25 “An excellent question!” you exclaim. “Well, you see, it’s less than, but the same as the greater-than portion of the answer you’re attempting to assert with the number of fingers. Greater than makes as much sense as less than and equal to, except for the one that’s the right answer makes even more sense, which is less.”

An eternity seems to pass. Finally the guardian says, “That answer . . . is correct . . . I think.” Then it disappears.

Go to 61.

26 Without the threat of the glowing guardian, it’s easier to assess this room. It appears to be the same size as the room you entered from – a square, 30’ to a side. There are two identical-looking doors along the east and west walls, and the door south leads back to the room with the arcane circle in the middle of the floor that you fell into originally.

If you wish to try the west door, go to 47.

If you wish to try the east door, go to 10.

Otherwise, you can return to the room you came from before; go to 110.

27 “I am sorry; I do not understand. Please restate your request.”

Do you ask her for anything else?

- Aid; go to 6.
- Escape; go to 107.
- Information about the place; go to 50.

Or do you leave this room (return to 85)?

28 Make a **Perception** roll (abbreviated **Per** on the character sheet). If you succeed, go to 48. Otherwise, you don’t find anything interesting; return to 4.

29 Carefully examining this device, your fingers discover a hidden recess that pushes away, revealing what you realize must be a slot – probably for a lever of some sort. Go to 3.

30 You’re confident there are no traps associated with it; your gut tells you it’s safe. (*In the full **Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game**, the GM will roll for you when you wouldn’t know the outcome one way or the other . . . like when you’re checking for traps.*)

If you would like to peer into the orb, go to 101. Otherwise, return to 4.

31 The figure exclaims in a booming voice, “Answer my riddle you must, lest I turn you into dust.”

If you attempt to attack the figure, go to 42.

If you listen to hear what it has to say, go to 73.

If you attempt to run away, go to 99.

32 The first things you notice as you step through this doorway are the two attractive-looking swords hanging on the far wall. You know swords, and those cutlasses look amazing! They could never replace your Hellsender, of course . . . but they’re still worthy of examination.

The second thing you notice is the door slamming shut behind you. A voice that sounds like stones grinding intones,

“UNAUTHORIZED PRESENCE DETECTED.” The two blades immediately fly off the wall and glide toward you. Uh-oh.

Instinctively your hand goes to your blade.

Make a **Fast-Draw** roll. If you succeed, go to 88.

If you fail, you still go to 88 . . . but you spend your first turn drawing your weapon and must **Dodge** instead of **Parry**.

33 Is there *any* problem that violence won’t solve? You think not!

If you’re attacking the strange contraption with a sword (either your weapon or another weapon you’ve found in the area), make a **Rapier** roll and go to 20.

If you’re attacking it with a pickaxe, go to 40.

Otherwise, if you think better of this course of action, return to 47.

34 You pick an item from your backpack and toss it through the doorway (mark the item off your character sheet). It falls to the ground, about the distance you would expect with the heft you threw it. If you wish to make a **Perception** roll (abbreviated **Per** on the character sheet), you may do so at -2. If you succeed, go to 12.

If you fail the **Per** roll or don’t wish to roll, you may step through the doorway; go to 118.

Otherwise, there’s not much else you can do besides close the door and continue exploring; go to 68.

35 The chair is *still* incredibly comfortable! You love this chair. Return to 4.

36 A final bolt shoots out from the shelves. As your heart shocks into permanent stillness, you find yourself wondering: Is there *anything* you could have done differently? Go to 51.

37 The spectral figure listens to you yammer on about how the possible answers are less than, greater than, *and* equal to fingers and humans. Finally, after a long silence, it says, “I have failed to comprehend your answer. Try again.” The guardian repeats the riddle; go to 73, but you can’t attempt to fast-talk again.

38 Does the phrase “Chibble-chibble-tok” mean anything to you? If so, go to 9. If not, go to 81.

39 This definitely seems to be the bedchamber of a magician of some sort. You find a few interesting items: three books in a language you don’t understand (4 lbs. each), a large mortar and pestle (6 lbs.), and a cameo with tiny drawings of a middle-aged man and woman (0.5 lb.). You may take any or all of these items, but if you do, see *Picking Up Stuff*, p. 4.

Go to 89.

40 Yes! The pickaxe. If there’s a better way to make holes in inanimate objects, you don’t want to know about it.

The gargantuan mysterious device, for its part, isn’t dodging. Go ahead and roll your swing damage (2d-1).

If you do 8 or more points of damage, go to 58.

Otherwise, your blow dings off it. Return to 47.

41 You peer around the room, looking for anything out of the ordinary. Make a **Perception** roll (abbreviated **Per** on the character sheet) at -4. If you succeed, go to 13. If you fail, go to 100.

42 You lunge forward at the figure. As you do so, the area where its eyes would be glows a menacing red. Go to 99.

43 Make a **Perception** roll (abbreviated **Per** on the character sheet). If you succeed, go to 106. Otherwise, go to 105.

44 You land on something with a *squish*, rolling as best you can to spread out the momentum in your body. The fall hurt, but you realize it could have been a *lot* worse. (What was the “squish”? Things that go “squish” are rarely good news in a dungeon. . .)

Now, make a damage roll for the fall. Roll 2d and add them together. Normally that would be your basic damage, but you landed on something squishy, so divide that damage in half (round down). Subtract your armor’s Damage Resistance (DR), which is 3. The final total is how much injury you took. Subtract that from your Hit Points (HP). (If you hadn’t used your Ridiculous Luck on the previous **Acrobatics** roll, you can use it now on the damage roll.)

There’s no way your HP could be 0 or less now, but – if it ever is – that’s bad news. Fortunately in the **Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game**, you’re not necessarily out of the action if you are injured too much, but you’re probably relying on friends to help get you back into fighting shape. Unfortunately, for this adventure, you’re going it alone . . .

Go to 77.

45 This room seems superficially identical to the other rooms you’ve seen so far in this structure – a 30’ square with 30’ ceilings, with illuminating runes along the top of the ceiling line. There are bones, skulls, and parts of skeletons in various states of construction strewn throughout, and a workbench along the eastern wall. You’re guessing this was some kind of experimental workshop for whoever called this home.

There is only one door: the one you came in through. There is nothing else of note here; when you’re done marveling at the bones, return to 26.

46 This room appears to be the same size as the room you fell into – about 30’ square. Based on the elaborate décor, you’re guessing this is the bedroom of some kind of spellcaster. Like the entry room, glowing runes at the edge of the 30’ ceiling provide illumination. There is a four-poster bed along one wall; each post is topped with an ornate carved dragon that looks like wood. A particularly large and heavy desk with various wizardly accouterments you don’t understand is against another wall. An ornately carved but stiff wooden chair is near the desk.

Go to 89.

47 This area – like the others you’ve seen so far – is a 30’ square room, illuminated at the top with the

same strange runes. There’s only one door: the one you came in through.

In one corner, the room features a gargantuan . . . *thing*. It fills nearly two-thirds of the room. It towers at least 20’ tall. It seems made of metal, with bolts holding together its pieces. It’s covered in (what you presume to be) more arcane runes and markings. It’s oddly curved in most places, except for one area that is flat. There’s little clue to its purpose. It’s covered in dust, as if it hasn’t been disturbed in some time.

If you want to try to figure out what this thing is or what to do with it (and you haven’t tried to do so already), go to 7.

If you’ve been blessed with special perception, you know what to do.

Otherwise, you might try attacking the device (go to 33), or returning to the room you came from (go to 26).

48 As you examine the chair, you realize that the cushion can be unscrewed and raised off. Having done so, you find a book hidden in the niche, entitled *Flaming, Freezing, Horrid: Which Skull Is Right for You?* Flipping through it, it doesn’t seem to have any immediate use, although it does look like it might be interesting to a scholar or someone who studies the arcane. If you wish to take it with you, it’s 3 lbs.

You also find four copper pieces and one silver piece trapped in the cushions (worth \$24).

Having exhausted the delights of the comfortable chair, you return to considering the room; go to 4.

49 The skeleton slashes at you. Make an attack roll for it (its skill is 14). If it rolls a 3 or 4, it critically hits, which means you cannot defend! Otherwise, unless you made an All-Out Attack last turn, you may roll against **Dodge** or **Parry**. Your Dodge is at -2 for encumbrance, but you can roll against **Acrobatics**; success gives +2, while failure gives -2.

If the skeleton fails to hit – or you successfully **Dodge** or **Parry** – go to 66.

Otherwise, it injures you. Roll 1d+3. Subtract your armor’s Damage Resistance (DR), and multiply the remaining damage by 1.5 (round down). That’s how many Hit Points of injury you take.

If that injury is enough to reduce you to 0 HP, go to 17.

Otherwise, it’s your turn to counterattack; go to 66.

50 “Of course,” she replies. “There have been two perimeter breaches via the ceiling of the central room, three years ago and – most recently – within the past 48 hours. Your sword trap has been engaged and will need to be recharged and reactivated.” You realize she’s discussing your arrival, and probably the arrival of the goblin whose corpse you found in the central room.

She reveals some other information you already know. You ask her when the last time “you” (Cavalas) were there. She informs you that it has been six years, two months, five days, and 13 hours. You learn that her name is Sara.

She doesn’t know anything about the history of this locale. Her knowledge of this place begins about seven years ago, and she seems to be a late addition to this complex.

Better to avoid traps and foes than to go through them. Staying alert is staying alive.

– Puddin’ Noddington, Thief

Do you ask her for anything else?

- Aid; go to 6.
- Escape; go to 107.
- Something else; go to 27.

Or do you leave this room (return to 85)?

51 Some heroes fall in the line of battle. You have been laid low by the forces of fervent literacy. *You have died.*

52 Make a **Perception** roll (abbreviated **Per** on the character sheet) at -2. If you succeed, go to 57. If you fail, go to 39.

53 A skeleton – armed with an axe – lumbers from a corner of this room and swings his weapon silently. Fortunately, you’ve trained yourself to always beware of danger when you least expect it, so you’re fully prepared for this surprise attack.

Make a **Fast-Draw** roll to ready your weapon. If you succeed, go to 103. If you fail, go to 19.

54 The skeleton grips the axe with both hands and does an all-out attack to do more damage! Make an attack roll for it (its skill is 14). If it rolls a 3 or 4, it critically hits, which means you cannot defend! Otherwise, unless you made an All-Out Attack last turn, you may roll against **Dodge** or **Parry**. Your Dodge is at -2 for encumbrance, but you can roll against **Acrobatics**; success gives +2 while failure gives -2.

If the skeleton fails to hit – or you successfully **Dodge** or **Parry** – go to 66.

Otherwise, it injures you. Roll 1d+5. Subtract your armor’s Damage Resistance (DR), and multiply the remaining damage by 1.5 (round down). That’s how many Hit Points of injury you take.

If that injury is enough to reduce you to 0 HP, go to 17.

Otherwise, it’s your turn to counterattack; go to 66 . . . but the skeleton cannot make any **Dodge** rolls this turn!

55 This room seems to be the same size as the room you came from, with similar glowing runes lining the upper edges of the 30’ ceiling. Along the west wall is a heavy door (which looks like it opens in). It is otherwise nondescript.

If you wish to examine the room – and you haven’t done so already – go to 41.

If you wish to open the western door, go to 38.

Otherwise, you can return to the room you came from; go to 110.

56 There are three bookshelves along each wall, each teeming with books.

If you try to take any of the books, go to 98.

If you want to search the shelves without touching the books, go to 109.

If you wish to search for traps, go to 102.

Otherwise, return to 4.

57 You’re all but certain this is the bedchamber of some powerful magic user. Based on the dust, it hasn’t been used in a number of years – you’re guessing at least two or three, but it could be *many* more.

In searching the room, you find a strange-looking crystal skull. If you take it, it’s 1 lb. (You can either wear it or put it in your backpack.)

There are a few other interesting items: three books in a language you don’t understand (4 lbs. each), a large stone mortar and pestle (6 lbs.), and a cameo with tiny drawings of a middle-aged man and woman (0.5 lb.). You may take any or all of these items, but if you do, see *Picking Up Stuff*, p. 4.

Go to 89.

58 As you pierce the plating of the strange, rune-covered device, you hear a hissing, which rises in pitch.

On the surface world, passersby who were within a mile of this locale told tales for years to come about the explosion they heard that day. In the intervening decades, the resultant crater would fill with rainwater, gaining the name Square Lake among locals.

No one knew your vital contribution to altering the local landscape; you weren’t around to tell them, having been vaporized a few milliseconds after piercing the gargantuan unknown device. If you ever have a chance to commune with the mortal world again, you would tell whoever contacts you that this course of action was not a good idea. *You have died.*

59 You vaguely remember reading this riddle as a child, but aren’t sure you recall the right answer. Was it “less than”? You decide to give that a try. Go to 93.

60 The skeleton disintegrates before your eyes. All that remains is the axe it was holding. (Was that “Father” you heard about? You don’t want to think about it.)

Investigating the “axe,” it seems to be a sturdy head locked onto some kind of smooth lever of some sort. Inscribed on it is the number “36.” It weighs 1 lb. You suspect it’s important, so you take it with you (in your off-hand, if your backpack is full). The axe head itself is rusty, and you recognize it as worthless.

Go to 45.

61 It was a potentially dangerous encounter, but you’ve lived to tell the tale. You’re no bard, but you’re fairly sure you can spin this encounter into an ale or two at a local tavern. You pat yourself on the back as you survey the room.

Looking at the floor, there isn’t much left outside of a pile of ash and a few coins. (Maybe some other hapless person came down here and had worse luck with the glowing guardian?) If you take the coins, there are three silver and 11 copper, worth \$71 total.

If you took any injury from that encounter, you may make a **First Aid** roll to patch up your wounds. If you succeed, you recover 1d-3 Hit Points (minimum of 1 HP).

Go to 26.

62 The door opens, and you step through. If this is the first time you’ve been in this room, go to 65. Otherwise, go to 45.

63 You insert the lever. It locks into place with a satisfying “click.” Instinctively, you pull it.

As you do so, the entire dungeon you're in shakes and shudders, and the machine starts releasing steam and making a noise over and over: "Chibble-chibble-tok! Chibble-chibble-tok!" It's an interesting sound; *you should remember it*, in case one of your bard friends can turn it into a tune.

Eventually the device stops, and – with it – so does the room's motion. You don't see anything else obviously amiss or different. However, you instincts tell you you've done as much as you can with this room. Go to 26; there's no need to go to this room again (and, if you do, it's just a featureless room with nothing you can do outside of marvel at the gargantuan machine and then return to 26).

64 A skeleton – armed with an axe – lumbers from a corner of this room and swings its weapon silently. You're caught completely unaware and thus cannot defend! The skeleton swings the axe. Make an attack roll for it (its skill is 14).

If the roll succeeds, you are injured. Roll 1d+3. Subtract your armor's Damage Resistance (DR), and multiply the remaining damage by 1.5 (round down). That's how many Hit Points of injury you lose.

If that injury is enough to reduce you to 0 HP, go to 17.

If the skeleton failed to hit or the damage wasn't enough to end your fighting career, your Combat Reflexes take over. Make a **Fast-Draw** roll to get your weapon ready as a free action. If you succeed, go to 103; if not, go to 19.

A walking cadaver or skeleton is almost certainly an agent of Evil. Laying it well and truly to rest is your gods-given duty.

– Sister Miriam Suntemple, Cleric

65 This room seems identical to the previous rooms you've seen – 30' to a side, with glowing runes near the ceiling. A workbench is against the eastern wall.

As you step in, the door slams shut. Make a **Perception** roll (abbreviated **Per** on the character sheet), at +2 because you realize this seems like a trap. If your roll succeeds (that is, you rolled a 12 or lower), go to 53. Otherwise, go to 64.

66 If your weapon isn't ready, you spend this action drawing (or picking up) your sword. Now you can choose to **Parry** as well as **Dodge**. Go to 103.

Otherwise, it's time to strike back! You have three options:

1. Attack once, using fancy footwork so that the skeleton cannot easily defend. (If the skeleton just made an All-Out Attack, this isn't an optimal choice, because it already won't be defending!) Roll against **Rapier**, at -6 for the Deceptive Attack, which makes your effective skill 15. A roll of 3-5 is a *critical hit*, which means the skeleton can't dodge. An 18 is a *critical miss*: you drop your sword and must spend next turn recovering it before you can attack or parry.

2. Attack twice, prioritizing speed over deception. Roll against **Rapier**, at -3 for the Rapid Strike and -2 for a (minor) Deceptive Attack, which makes your effective skill 16. A roll of 3-6 is a *critical hit* and an 18 is a *critical miss*, as above.

3. Do an All-Out Attack to do more damage. Choose either option above (#1 or #2), but you do an extra +2 damage if

you hit! The downside is that you have *no* defenses when the skeleton counterattacks, so don't do this unless you think it'll be the finishing blow.

Skeleton's Dodge

If you critically hit or the skeleton made an All-Out Attack last time, it can't defend; skip to figuring damage, below. Otherwise, it will roll against its **Dodge** (which is an 11) to try to avoid the hit.

If you attacked once, it rolls at -3 (8 or less) due to your fancy footwork. If you attacked twice, it rolls at -1 (10 or less) for each attack that succeeded. If it fails to dodge, you hit it; read on!

Your Damage

Roll 2d-1 for damage, or 2d+1 if you made an All-Out Attack. Subtract 2 from the total for the skeleton's Damage Resistance (DR). Then multiply the remaining damage by 1.5, rounding *down*, to see how many Hit Points the skeleton loses.

Keep track of the skeleton's injuries. Once it loses 24 HP, it disintegrates!

If you have slain the skeleton this turn, go to 60. Otherwise, go to 103.

67 The edges of your vision glitter, and your eyes quickly narrow in on one aspect of the machine, which – to your perception – is glowing with an unnatural light. Looking closer, you realize there is a recess, which – when touched – reveals a slot . . . probably for a lever of some sort. Go to 3.

68 This is the room that's west of the room you fell into initially.

Outside of any ways you've disturbed this room, its only distinguishing feature is a door on the western wall.

If you wish to open the western door, go to 38.

Otherwise, there's nothing else to do here; return to the room with the arcane circle by going 110.

69 Make a **Traps** roll. Since you don't have the **Traps** skill, you're working off default; in the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, you can attempt most skills even if you don't have them. In this case, make an **Intelligence** roll (abbreviated **IQ** on the character sheet) as roll at -5.

If you succeed, go to 30.

Otherwise, you're confident there are no traps associated with it; your gut tells you it's safe. Return to 4.

70 "Of course," she replies. "The control arm is with Father." She then raises her arms. If this is the first time she has told you about Father, a golden key falls on the ground, which you may pick up (its weight is negligible). She doesn't elaborate on who "Father" is.

"What else do you require?" she asks.

You decide to ask her for:

- Aid; go to 6.
- Information about the place; go to 50.
- Something else; go to 27.

Or do you leave this room (return to 85)?

71 After about an hour, you've made a crawlspace that's maybe one or two feet deep, with no end in sight. At some point, the rusty pickaxe breaks (cross it off of your equipment list), and you realize this method of escape can't be remotely feasible. You decide to close the door.

*(Normally this would be where we'd discuss **Fatigue Points** – FP on your character sheet. Heavy physical activity takes its toll on you! But we're not going to worry about it in this case; you lost 2 FP to dig as much as you did, but 20 minutes of rest will restore them for you. In the full **Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game**, keeping track of your physical and mental exhaustion is important!)*

Go to 68.

72 Once more, you attempt to press past the pain, and are rewarded with another bolt of protective energy from the shelves. Lose 4 Hit Points of injury.

If you have been reduced to 0 HP or fewer as a result of this injury, go to 51.

If you want to persevere to get the books or search the shelves, go to 36.

Otherwise, return to 4.

73 "To answer my riddle," the figure continues. "Take the number of fingers of a random human. Multiply that by the number of fingers of another random human. Multiply that number by a third random human. Continue at this until you have multiplied all the fingers of all humans in the world. Is that number greater than, less than, or equal to the number of correct answers to this riddle?"

If you answer "Greater than," go to 86.

If you answer "Less than," go to 93.

If you answer "Equal to," go to 76.

If you think back to your modest education for a clue (and have not already done so), go to 117.

If you want to attempt to fast-talk your way out of this, go to 75.

74 You have enough provisions and water to rest for one day. Mark off on the character sheet that you used up three of your rations; you don't have enough food to rest for another day. Despite the weirdness of resting in what's probably a dangerous locale, you actually manage to doze lightly throughout the period. At the end of that day, make an HT roll. If you succeed, regain 1 Hit Point. If you fail, you don't regain anything.

Regardless, go to 89.

75 Make a **Fast-Talk** roll at -2. If you are successful, go to 25. If your roll fails, go to 37.

76 The figure ponders your response, then says, "That answer . . . is incorrect." Go to 99.

77 Having survived the fall, you feel lucky to be alive and mostly intact; your mind flashes back to your uncle, who loves to tell the story of how he lost both his hands on his very first adventure due to an unlucky encounter with the sickled limbs of a corpse golem.

Shaking off nostalgia, you survey your surroundings. You quickly realize you're in some kind of room – seemingly a

perfect square. The room is 30' to a side. There are exits in all four directions. Meager light streams in from overhead, forming a beam from the hole you just fell through. Additional illumination is provided by some kind of strange runes that are along the top edge of the room.

In the center of the room – approximately where you landed – there is a large ornate arcane-looking circle on the ground; its diameter is just shy of the width of the room itself. There is a human-sized body off-center on the floor. It's covered in a strange fungus. The body is (you imagine) significantly flatter than it was a few moments ago, because you landed on it.

You take stock of your situation. The hole you fell from is about 30' overhead, and in the center of the ceiling – impossible to use as an exit. You have your trusty rapier (named Hellsender), your suit of enchanted armor, and a backpack with a first aid kit, a few provisions, and a wineskin with water in it. You kept the rest of your adventuring gear with the caravan. Fortunately, an oiled blade, a suit of armor, and a snack is all you need to triumph!

You're confident you knew the direction you were headed before you were falling, and you're certain you kept your bearings beyond that, so you have no problem orienting yourself.*

You decide to:

- Evaluate your injuries; go to 5.
- Investigate the room; go to 115.
- Investigate the body; go to 8.
- Wait to be rescued; go to 15.
- Try a door – the north door (go to 14), east door (46), south door (16), or west door (55).

** Actually, if you survive this, you'll discover you were wrong about your sense of direction, but you have an amazing degree of Overconfidence; this is one way it's manifesting. But it doesn't really matter for this adventure, and having a direction you think of as "north" is handy.*

78 "Welcome back, Cavalas," she replies. "Much time has transpired since you were last here."

What do you ask her for?

- Aid; go to 6.
- Escape; go to 107.
- Information about the place; go to 50.
- Something else; go to 27.

Alternatively, you can depart, going back to the room where the cutlasses attacked you (go to 85).

79 You have defeated the enchanted blades . . . as you knew you would! Although they're worse for the wear for your encounter with them, you may take either or both cutlasses, if you desire. They each weigh 2 lbs.

If you took any injury from your fight, you may roll against **First Aid** (at -1 due to Chummy but +1 from your first-aid kit, which cancel out). If you succeed, you recover 1d-3 Hit Points (minimum of 1 HP).

Now that the rush of battle is wearing off, you evaluate the room. Go to 85.

80 This is one of the most comfortable chairs you've ever sat in. You spend some time relaxing.

If you wish to search the chair, go to 28.

Otherwise, you enjoy a moment of bliss before returning to the business of trying to escape; return to 4.

81 The door opens easily – but it’s a solid earthen wall! What are you going to do?

You consider trying to tunnel your way out. If you have a pickaxe, you may do so by going to 71.

If you decide you’re not getting out that way, you close the door and go to 68.

82 You engage in some banter with her. “Oh, who would you think I would be?” you ask.

“Logic would dictate that you are Cavalas.”

“You’re pretty logical, aren’t you?”

“As I was devised,” she replies.

You conclude that she is some kind of construct. She doesn’t have a lot of wit or will on her own, so you suspect that she’s not too dangerous. You tell her that you are, indeed, Cavalas. Go to 78.

83 You try to search the strange device – taking a fair bit of time to do so – even though you’re not sure what you’re looking for.

Make a **Perception** roll (abbreviated **Per** on the character sheet) at -2. If you succeed, go to 29. Otherwise, you don’t find anything; return to 47.

84 This room is identical to how you left it. The woman in red is still standing in the center of the room. Just like the last time you were in the room, she asks, “Are you Cavalas?”

This feels familiar. How do you reply?

- “Yes, I am!” Go to 78.
- “No, I’m not.” Go to 114.
- Remain quiet. Go to 105.

Alternatively, you can leave (return to 85), or – if you haven’t done so already – you can attempt to look more closely (go to 43), use your fast-talking skills (go to 112), or attack (go to 22).

85 Now that swords aren’t attacking you, this room is a nondescript square – about 30’ to a side – similar to the room you fell into initially with the arcane circle. Like that room, it has illuminated runes along the top edge of the walls, providing light. There are three doors. Two open inward into this room; one leads east and the other west. The third door is the one to the north, which leads back to the room with the arcane circle where you made your original landing.

To try the door to the east, go to 4.

To try the door to the west, go to 23.

To return to the room to the north with the arcane circle, go to 110.

86 The figure ponders your response, then says, “That answer . . . is incorrect.” Go to 99.

87 For the first time since landing in this dungeon, you see a sign of life! Standing in the center of the room is a young woman. She is clad entirely in red robes, and her hands seem folded in front of her body. She looks at you expectantly.

“Are you Cavalas?” she asks.

How do you respond?

- “Yes, I am!” Go to 78.
- “No, I’m not.” Go to 114.
- Remain quiet. Go to 105.

Alternatively, you can leave (return to 85), or – if you haven’t done so already – you can attempt to look more closely (go to 43), use your fast-talking skills (go to 112), or attack (go to 22).

88 Facing off against two swords that move under their own magical volition, you’re reminded of the training sessions your master would put you through with two fixed blades swinging around a pole. You’re feeling confident that your training can see you through this.

This encounter plays out as follows.

(A) The first blade attacks you. The weapons attack unerringly; you have no choice but to **Parry** or **Dodge**. (If you don’t have your weapon ready, then you can only **Dodge** for now.) Find the relevant ability on your character sheet.

Your **Parry** is unmodified. Your **Dodge** is at -2 for encumbrance, but you can roll against **Acrobatics**; success gives +2, while failure gives -2.

If your **Parry** or **Dodge** succeeds, you get out of the way of the first blade. Go to (B).

If your **Parry** or **Dodge** fails, you’re hit! Roll 1d-1 for the sword’s damage, then subtract your Damage Resistance (DR). (Treat negative results as 0.) If there’s any remaining damage, multiply it by 1.5 (round down) and lose that many Hit Points. In other words, with your DR of 3, a die roll of 1-4 means no injury, a roll of 5 means losing 1 HP, and a roll of 6 means losing 3 HP.

(B) Now the second blade attacks you! Treat this as (A), except that if you’re defending with your **Parry** a second time, it’s at -1. Multiple **Dodge** rolls aren’t penalized, but you can only use **Acrobatics** to boost *one*, so if you did that for the first sword, you can’t do it against the second one.

(C) If your sword isn’t ready, you spend this action drawing it (or picking it up). Otherwise, you can counterattack! You have the following options:

- Attack one sword. Make a **Rapier** roll at -4 (it’s small and fast) for an effective skill of 17. The swords don’t try to defend, so if you succeed, you hit. If you roll a 3-6, you get a *critical hit*, while a roll of 18 is a *critical miss*; see below for both.

- Attack twice with a Rapid Strike, either at each sword or at the same sword twice. Make *two Rapier* rolls, each at -7, for an effective skill of 14. (It’s normally harder, but you’re a true weapon master.) Success means you hit. A roll of 3 or 4 is a *critical hit*, and an 18 is a *critical miss*; see below for both.

If you got a critical hit, then the sword you hit is automatically felled for good. Otherwise, roll 2d-1 for damage.

Machines noisy, stinky, an’ dangerous. Best thing to do with machine is hit it lots. Save them little smashy-bashy bits, tho. Always some dummy in town happy to trade you for that junk.

– *Argua the Barbarian*

Subtract the sword's Damage Resistance (DR) of 4 from the total, and if any damage remains, multiply the result by 1.5, rounding *down*. (Cutting weapons are *nastier* if they get through DR!) Each cutlass has 10 Hit Points. When you reduce one to 0 HP, the magic that animates it breaks down, and it falls to the ground with a clatter.

If you got a critical miss, you drop your weapon; you'll need to spend the next turn dodging and getting it back.

If you're still mobile and the weapons aren't both defeated, go back to (A) and do it again; once you defeat one sword, skip (B).

If both weapons are defeated, go to 79.

If you are ever reduced to 0 HP or fewer, go to 17.

89 If you haven't done so already and want to loot the room or investigate it further, go to 52.

If you haven't done so already and want to rest in this room, go to 97.

Otherwise, you can leave this room by returning to the large square room you initially fell into; go to 110.

90 Summoning your inner reserves, you wait. You hear voices overhead – who you recognize as being a couple of members of the caravan – saying, “I think that fool went over this way!” (Maybe someone else got lost, too?) Sensing an opportunity, you shout up to them. The voices don't respond but get closer; you hear them clearly. You throw a piece of rubble up at the hole. You know your aim is true, but the rock just bounces off the empty opening with a glistening sparkle of magical protection. It seems there's some kind of energy shield covering the hole . . . but you're guessing it's only one way, which is why sound (and bodies) can travel down into this chamber, but you can't seem to make your voice heard.

Eventually, you hear the searchers mutter something about how the person they're looking for must've run off, and the voices fade as you hear the caravan jangle away.

As you always suspected, it's foolish to rely on others; you're more than capable of untangling this enigma and escaping this place! Go to 110.

91 “The control arm is what activates the Verifier.” She elaborates no further.

You say:

- “Yes, I definitely need the control arm.” Go to 70.
- “No, I think I'm all control-armed out, for now.” Go to 104.

92 If this is the first time you're sitting in the chair, go to 80. Otherwise, go to 35.

93 The figure ponders your response, then says, “That answer . . . is correct.” Of course it is, you think. Lots of people don't have hands – including your uncle! So, however big that number is, whenever you multiply it by zero, the whole number is going to get reduced to zero. Since there's at least one correct answer to the riddle, then the number of multiplied fingers *must* be less than the number of correct answers.

The guardian disappears. Go to 61.

94 This room appears to be the same size as the room you fell into – about 30' square. As you enter, the door behind you slams shut, and a spectral figure coalesces out of the darkness. It's roughly humanoid shape, but seems to be entirely energy. Go to 31.

95 You've come across riddles like this before, but not this specific one. Still, something about it makes you think of your uncle. Feel free to refresh your memory at 77, and then return to 73.

96 This is a device that somehow incorporates both magic and technology to work on a grand scale. As near as you can tell by looking at it, the device somehow affects something for the entire dungeon. It seems important; your instinct tells you that – if you can figure this out – you can escape from here.

Gain +3 to any future rolls to search this device.

Return to 7.

97 Resting is a way to recover from injuries. It's not a great method – you're much better off if you can avail yourself of magical healing. However, if you're willing to rest here a full day (which has a chance at restoring 1 Hit Point), go to 74. If not, go to 89.

98 As you get close to the shelves and the books themselves, a bolt of energy shoots out at you.

Lose 1 Hit Point of injury. Your armor doesn't seem to offer any protection on this.

If you have been reduced to 0 HP or fewer as a result of this injury, go to 51.

If you want to try again, go to 24.

Otherwise, you can return to examining the room; go to 4.

99 A bolt of energy shoots out from the guardian. Your combat training has prepared you for such treachery! You recognize you won't be able to parry the bolt, so your best option is to get out of the way.

There are lots of combat options in the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* that provide tactical richness. In this case, since you have no way to attack an intangible foe, it's fair to assume that you were fully on guard (All-Out Defense), which gives you +2 to your **Dodge**.

Your acrobatic training kicks in as well; you're great at avoiding danger! Make an **Acrobatics** roll; success gives another +2 to **Dodge**, but failure gives -2.

Now you're ready to make your **Dodge** roll! Your **Dodge** is 11, but you're at -2 for your encumbrance (or -3 if you've picked up a lot of stuff), mitigated by +2 for All-Out Defense. Then add the +2 or -2 from your **Acrobatics** roll.

If you succeed at your **Dodge** roll, you leap deftly out of the way!

If you fail . . . that's not so good. The bolt strikes you squarely in the armor. Roll 2d damage, then subtract the Damage Resistance (DR) of your armor. That's how much injury you lose; subtract it from your Hit Points. (That bolt was *hot*; you suspect that – if you weren't wearing armor – you might be on fire now.)

If your HP is above 0, you're still alive! The glowing guardian is giving you another opportunity to answer its riddle; go to 73.

If you are below 0 HP, you flicker into and out of consciousness. Even if you *did* survive, the fact that you're trapped here without anyone to help heal you means your days are numbered; go to 17.

100 This room feels musty, like it hasn't been opened for a while. There's nothing else amiss with this room, that you can find. Go to 68.

101 The orb is so nice to look at . . . so soothing. You hear a humming in your ears. You realize that your senses have been enhanced in subtle but significant ways. For the rest of this adventure, when you're asked if you've been blessed with special perception, you may add 20 to the section number of the room you're in and go to that section number.

You feel like these enhanced senses won't last, but you're enjoying them while you can. Return to 4.

102 Make a **Traps** roll. Since you don't have the **Traps** skill, you're working off default; in the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, you can attempt most skills even if you don't have them. In this case, make an **Intelligence** roll (abbreviated **IQ** on the character sheet) at -5.

If you succeed, go to 2.

If you fail, go to 111.

103 The skeleton attacks! Roll 1d: On a 1-3, go to 49. On a 4-6, go to 54.

104 "I see. Then I cannot assist you further in departing your compound, although I can assure you the Verifier remains functional." She does not elaborate on what the "Verifier" might be.

Do you ask her for anything else?

- Aid; go to 6.
- Information about the place; go to 50.
- Something else; go to 27.

Or do you leave this room (return to 85)?

105 Several long moments pass as you stare at each other. Then the silence is broken as she speaks again: "Are you Cavalas?" Her intonation is identical to the previous time she spoke.

How do you respond?

- "Yes, I am!" Go to 78.
- "No, I'm not." Go to 114.

Alternatively, you can leave (return to 85), or – if you haven't done so already – you can attempt to look more closely (43) or use your fast-talking skills (go to 112).

106 As you stare at her, you realize that you can faintly see the outline of the wall behind her. She seems to be some kind of construct made of light! Go to 105.

107 "Do you require the control arm?" she asks. You reply:

- "Yes." Go to 70.
- "No." Go to 104.
- "What is the control arm?" Go to 91.

108 Go ahead and make a **Perception** roll (abbreviated **Per** on your character sheet).

Regardless of what you roll, you prove to your satisfaction that there's nothing else in this room outside of the stuffed bookshelves, weird-looking orb, and comfy-looking chair.

Return to 4.

109 Go to 98.

110 This is the initial square chamber you fell into, with the arcane circle on the floor. If you haven't done so, you can investigate the body (go to 8), explore the room (go to 115), evaluate your injuries (go to 5), or wait to be rescued (go to 15). Otherwise, you can try a door: the north door (go to 14), east door (go to 46), south door (go to 16), or west door (go to 55).

111 You're no expert, but you don't find anything unusual about the bookshelves.

If you wish to take a book, go to 98.

If you want to touch the shelves without touching the books, go to 109.

Otherwise, return to 4.

112 Make a **Fast-Talk** roll. If you fail, she does not understand what you were trying to say, and there is awkward silence between you; go to 105. If you succeed, go to 82.

113 Make a **Traps** roll. However, you don't have the **Traps** skill, so you're working off default; in the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, you can attempt most skills even if you don't have them. In this case, make an **Intelligence** roll (abbreviated **IQ** on the character sheet) at -5.

If you roll a 3 or 4, you have achieved a critical success! Go to 21. Otherwise, if you succeeded, go to 96.

If you failed, you can't figure anything out about the device. Return to 7.

114 "I see," she replies. "A pity." Then she disappears. You wait a moment to see if something else is going to happen, but the air remains quiet. This room is otherwise featureless, so you return to the place where the enchanted cutlasses attacked you (go to 85).

115 Outside of what you've already observed, the room is surprisingly nondescript. It was obviously built by skilled hands – it's a perfect square! – and you're pretty sure there's some kind of magical element (glowing runes and arcane-looking circle!). The stout, wooden doors in all four directions look the same to you; they all open inward into this room. Based on the dust, you're guessing that no living being has been here in a number of years. Go to 110.

*Aha, books!
I am no fighter,
but writings I know.
– Francesco
Zombani, Cleric*

116 You believe the body is some kind of goblin-kin – probably a goblin, but you’re no expert. Based on the condition of the corpse, the pickaxe, and the rubble lying near the body, you’re guessing that this fool was poking around in the woods; having found an interesting rock formation, he hammered away at it with the pickaxe . . . where he proceeded to fall the 30’ onto his implement. His death was likely quick enough, and the blood served to speed up the corrosion process on the pickaxe.

You’re guessing that, in the intervening years, the brush and overgrowth of the woods covered the hole the goblin had made, creating an unwitting trap for you. The years also allowed for a mound of moist fungus to grow over the body . . . at least, you’re *hoping* that’s what happened; are there goblins walking around half-covered with fungus? You shudder at the thought.

Go to 110.

117 Your parents gave you a smattering of education in the classics. (In game terms, Redhair spent one point from quirks on the **Poetry** skill, even though it doesn’t appear on the swashbuckler template.) Roll against **Poetry** at no penalty; the spectral figure is just enough of a “person” to satisfy your Chummy disadvantage.

If you roll a 3 or 4, go to 59. Otherwise, if you succeed, go to 95. If you fail, you draw a blank; return to 73.

118 The fresh air of the forest is a welcome change from the stagnant air of the claustrophobic rooms you’ve just left. Looking behind you, you see that – indeed – the entire “dungeon” structure you were in – really, a square about 90’ to a side – has emerged from the ground.

As you get your bearings and begin to consider what to do next, the large square building sinks back into the ground. Is that Cavalas’ doing, or an automated force motivating the structure? You’re reasonably confident you could find the area again if you needed to, and slightly less confident that you could find the exact hole you fell into.

With nothing else to do – and grateful to have emerged from that ersatz tomb – you set out back for civilization. You miss people and are hoping to meet a few friends for adventure in your destination town. Who knows? Maybe there’s an innkeeper who needs help killing rats or something.

You have faced adversity and emerged triumphant! Go to *Rewards*, below.

REWARDS

Redhair gets 3 bonus character points for completing this adventure (assuming survival, of course). In addition, Redhair might have picked up the following loot (not counting any loose money found along the way).

- Cameo with tiny drawings (\$100, 0.5 lb.).
- Crystal skull (\$250, 1 lb.).
- Cutlass (\$500, 2 lbs. each); although they were damaged, they still possess a remnant of magic that may be of use to someone.
 - *Flaming, Freezing, Horrid: Which Skull Is Right for You?* book (\$75, 3 lbs.).
- Mortar and pestle (\$50, 6 lbs.).
- Pickaxe (\$5, 8 lbs.) that’s heavily rusted.
- Three books: \$(1d × 100) and 3 lbs. each. (According to the person you sell them to, they’re a series of fiction stories about a humanoid wizard who tries to conquer the world.)

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is the editor of *Pyramid*. For more details on his background, see Random Thought Table, pp. 38-39.

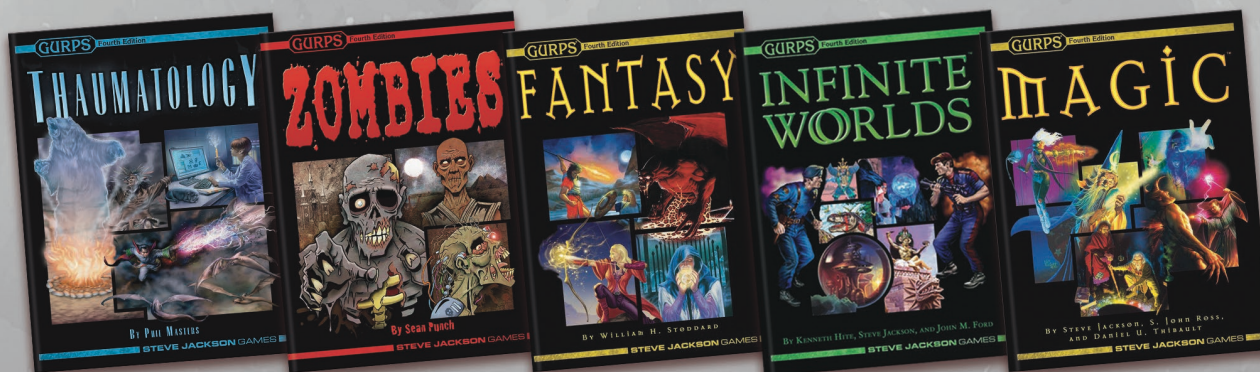
Special thanks to Jason “PK” Levine, Christopher R. Rice, Emily Smirle, and Sam V. for help, inspiration, and insight.

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IT'S A QUEST!

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

The *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* is all about killing monsters and taking their stuff, but that doesn't mean you can't do other things. Not every encounter *has* to end in a combat and not every game has to be endless plodding through a dungeon. When the players start to complaining it's just SDDD ("Same Delve, Different Dungeon"), it's time for the GM to link it all together and give the players' endless looting and slaying a common purpose and plot. This article will help you do exactly that with general advice for connecting disparate events and adding overarching plots, plus a series of random-roll tables to help you rapidly fabricate a fiction fulfilling the players' fervent demands.

Example Campaign, Part 1

Robin is the GM of *Wintersrun*, a *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign with four PCs: *Perri the Crimson Singer* (an elf bard),

Mortdecai (a halfling cleric), *Llewes McClellan* (a human ranger), and *Burl Breakspear* (an orc barbarian). Recently, Perri and Mortdecai's players have been talking about how their adventures might be more than just a series of unconnected delves.

Perri: "Man. Another random dungeon?"

Mortdecai: "Yeah. How does it all fit together?"

Perri: "Well . . . this is the Twisted Wood. Remember back a few games ago how the goblin mentioned that he came from here? What if they were after that bauble MacGuffin thing we handed over to the Brotherhood of Brightswords?" [Looks to the GM.]

GM: [Clears throat.] "Drat! You figured it out. Okay. So you found the quest. What now?"

Perri: [Looking at Mortdecai.] "We play."

THE SANDBOX IS A LIE

"Sandbox play" refers to a style of video game also known as "open world" or "free roam." In this style of adventure, the player or players approach the world in a nonlinear way that is not subject to specific demands of a plot. In roleplaying, this has come to mean almost the same thing, but it's acquired an air of "player facing" gaming which many find attractive. That is, the players are the one who decides what is happening within the campaign, not the GM.

At my age, one accepts that "free will" is about reacting to the designs of the universe, not controlling them.

– Uncle Seamus, Wizard

The problem is this is not exactly what's occurring. The players are not moving the onus of what is occurring in the game from the GM to themselves, but rather creating more work for the GM. Most gaming groups mutually decide what kind of game they wish to play, but it's often up to the GM to create the broad strokes and specific encounters of the world so that the PCs can delve into it. When the campaign is a "sandbox," the GM quickly finds out he has to do more than broad strokes. He needs multiple possibilities prepped, which

means an increase in prep time for the game itself, which can lead to GM burnout, and then *nobody* is happy.

So how can you give your players a "sandbox" feeling without spending all your free time creating things you might never use? It *can* work if you have at least two of three things: (1) driven, active players; (2) a GM that is good at "improv" gamemastering; and (3) good communication between the players and GM *outside* of game sessions.

THE PLAYERS

Players tend to come in three types.

- *Active Players*: These are the sorts who are always asking the GM what's next and making suggestions about how various challenges and encounters fit together. They keep the action going. They are essentially the GM's helper and the gears of the game "machine." Every campaign needs at least one active player.

- *Passive Players*: These are the sorts who are quiet at the table, tend to go with the flow, and take on support roles. They are essentially the grease that makes the gears turn smoothly. Every campaign needs at least one passive player.

- *Switch Players*: These are the sorts who can step into the spotlight when needed and work in the wings at other times. These players are the bread and butter of gaming. The majority of your player base will likely be switch players.

For a sandbox style game to work you need at least two active players for every five players at your table. Otherwise, things can (and will) bog down.

IMPROV GAMEMASTERING

All GMs do some improv during a game, whether this is just a bit of dialogue or an entire encounter. But true improv GMs (those who rarely prep anything other than “bare bones”) are especially good at it. An improv GM can turn any situation the players throw at him into something they believe is part of the campaign’s master plot. An improv GM can easily link multiple events or histories into something that can work in a logical way. Improv GMs are ideally suited to sandbox-style games and may prefer that style of gaming. Other GMs can enhance their improv skills by providing two or three options for what to do next and by allowing players to do go through an adventure in a nonlinear order.

COMMUNICATION

Communication outside of the game is a key factor often overlooked by players and GMs alike. This doesn’t have to

consume all conversations between the members of the gaming group, but it *is* helpful to let the GM know what the group would like to do next. It can be as simple as asking whether the party hopes to go to the Caverns of Ultimate Darkness or the Castle of Cloud Giants. A five-minute conversation can help the GM immensely. It also has the side effect of having the players *think* about what they are getting into and better prepare.

Example Campaign, Part 2

The GM knows that Perri’s and Burls’ players are “active player,” while Mortdecai’s player is a “switch player,” and Llewes’ player is a “passive player.” The GM is decent at improv, but given his players inclinations for “more” from the campaign, he’s decided to try to sharpen that tool in his GM’s toolbox. His improv skills aren’t great, but he’s been talking to his players outside of gaming and they’ve told him what they want from the campaign. That should help shore-up his short-coming as he improves his own abilities.

RAILROADS AND HELL ON WHEELS

“Railroading” is a derogatory term in the gaming community. It refers to a GM forcing players down one specific path, typically a linear adventure that was prepared in advance, usually by introducing arbitrary restrictions, barriers, NPC demands, and so on. It’s a common technique for novice GMs and in convention adventures. It becomes a problem when the players want more freedom than the adventure outline gives them.

Roleplaying games are in essence collaborative storytelling. The GM comes up with the premise and the players take the role of characters within the story itself. The problem with badly presented railroading is *illusion of choice*. Players can be a finicky lot, and if they think they have no choice in a situation, they will inevitably listen to the “imp of the perverse” (the urge to do the wrong thing at the worst possible moment), which makes the GM miserable if he doesn’t know how to adapt what he has to what the players have decided to do. And if the GM fumbles through the scenario, then the players won’t have any fun either.

But railroading doesn’t *always* have to be such a dirty word. The problem most people have with railroading is that the GM has taken a blunt approach to making them follow a series of events. If a GM is more subtle about it, the railroad tracks become more like walking paths that wind about and sometimes cross each other. A few tips:

- Frame questions to players with a choice or a series of options. “You’ve taken care of the troll, but it had *two* pieces of the map of the Treasure of Kara-Tosh. One leads to the Castle of Cloud Giants and the other to the Twisted Wood. Where do you want to go?” The choice itself is an illusion because the GM has already prepared both areas and knows that the party has to eventually explore each one. However, by allowing the players to have more agency in

what occurs, the GM can give them what they want while still being prepared for the rest of the campaign.

- Use ideas the players come up with or speculate on. If they see links between a series of events, people, places, or things and the links make logical sense, then connect those parts. It doesn’t have to be exactly as they speculated, but it always makes a player feel great if they feel like they got close.
- Know the players. Know what they like – what tropes they enjoy, what their favorite TV shows, movies, books, etc. are, and so on. Then use that against them. Build a quest they can relate to and they players will invest more of themselves in the campaign. Cliché isn’t always a bad thing; clichés are what allow us to relate to something in a universal way.

Herding Cats

Sometimes the adventure *really* needs to move in a certain direction to keep the campaign moving toward its conclusion. That’s the time to check out character sheets and character motivations. Sometimes, there’s an advantage or disadvantage that the GM can tap into with an overheard comment in the public square or a scrap of paper with a clue or a recognizable token hidden among other loot. As a last resort, someone could approach the party with gold to pursue a certain course of action (essentially bribing the players to continue with the planned encounters).

Example Campaign, Part 3

GM: “You’ve been traveling for months to get to the Castle of Cloud Giants. Unfortunately, the map detailing the seventh *ingzai* that leads to the Treasure of Kara-Tosh failed to mention that the castle was *literally* in the clouds. There is a beanstalk . . .”

Perri: “Of course there is. Can I cast Pathfinder to find the best way?”

GM: “Sure, but I’ll also note that the Twisted Wood is only about six miles south. So you could climb the beanstalk and go to the Castle or head into the Twisted Wood. You have maps for both the sixth and seventh *ingzai* in your possession.”

Burls: “I say we go into the Wood. Burls *hates* goblins.”

Mordecai: “I’d rather not have to climb and possibly go splat.”

GM: “Llewes?”

Llewes: “I’m good with whatever.”

GM: “To the Twisted Wood then!”

PRODDING THE QUEST

To some, the world “quest” is a golden beacon of shining security, a term that means all of the delving and adventuring is related somehow. To others, it’s a thing to be shunned and abhorred. Most gamers fall somewhere in the middle. If the GM has a way to make things work, so that one adventure naturally leads to the next to create a sense of accomplishment or “zero to hero,” then all the better. Being a specific form of railroading (see p. 19), it can be used badly and create resentment or downright hostility at the table. Once again, the imp of the perverse will rear its beady-eyed little head and cause chaos.

So how do you walk the line? First, don’t start a campaign with any firm plot in mind before discussing the idea of a quest with your players so that they understand what the campaign is about. Whether you decide to start with a quest in mind or choose to see where player interest leads the group, first let the players get used to their characters. Run some simple, one- or two-session adventures, like hunting rats in a basement for an innkeeper or running spices from one town to another. Let the adventurers test their abilities. Once the players are sure of themselves in the roles of their characters, start giving them tougher, longer, and more involved adventures. After one or two delves (four to 10 game sessions each), the GM should have a good idea of what the players want and how much time they spend on different types of scenes (social interaction, puzzles, and combat, plus inter-player table talk). From there, it’s a matter of connecting the events of previous game sessions into something more than its parts.

CREATING THE QUEST MOSAIC

Creating an overreaching plot between a series of unconnected events, people, places, or things can seem like an impossible task at first, but with a little practice, it becomes second nature.

The first thing that should be done is to list all the key features (events, people, places, and things) from previous sessions that could be important to a quest or otherwise seem like they could be related in some way. Note that sometimes only one or two types of features will be significant in any given scenario. It can be helpful to list each feature in a separate bubble on a large sheet of paper or write them on index cards. These features are your *tiles*.

Next, arrange the tiles (or draw lines between them) so that they link to one another in a logical manner. (Nominally, linking persons, places, or things to events is by far the easiest course of action since you could include all of those things within an event.) Some tiles will only have one link between them, while others will connect with many other tiles.

Once you have the various tiles of your quest linked, decide what is the *keystone*. The keystone should be the one concept

that can logically tie in to most of the others and will end up being the key feature of the final adventure in the quest. It might be a tile that connects to many other tiles, or it might be something that is inspired by multiple connecting tiles and needs to be introduced in a future adventure. Not all tiles need to link to the keystone. Some might be extra side adventures, or they could become the basis for a new quest in the future.

Next, determine the *touchstones*. Touchstones are tiles that link to two or more other tiles and can be clues that lead the players to the keystone. Touchstones can be similar (pieces of a map) or be different but with parts of the answer (a request for aid fighting against a minion of the goal’s guardian here, a passage in a book about the goal’s guardian there, a piece of the ultimate treasure in another spot, and so on). The GM may need to incorporate touchstones in new adventures to help link important tiles to the keystone.

Once the GM has the *quest mosaic*, he can begin planning new adventures around it.

Example Campaign, Part 4

The GM has been gamemastering *Wintersrun* for three months now, with a total of 11 sessions. The PCs deciphered the runes in Wightsholme, and he didn’t have anything planned, so he improvised a bit: “The runes talk about the treasure of some long ago wizard-king named Kara-Tosh. Finding his seven *ingzai* (you can’t translate that word; ‘map’ maybe) will open his tomb, a place of vast riches.” The PCs made copies of the runes and were excited to check it out, but the GM ended up skipping a week. When the group began gaming again, it was forgotten. Recently, the players have been looking for something more and the forgotten Treasure of Kara-Tosh seems perfect (his keystone). Since the goblin tribe that attacked the Town of Hensley said they were from the Twisted Wood, the GM decides one of the *ingzai* is there (a touchstone). He also decides that the odd carved stone square the goblins were after and that the party gave to the Brotherhood of Brightswords is another *ingzai* (a touchstone). Since he’s decided that the *ingzai* are both a map and key, he needs five more touchstones and at least one more tile per touchstone. Dusting off an old adventure, about a castle of clouds, he gets busy.

THE QUEST CLOCK

Once the GM has a good outline, the next thing to do is to create a *quest clock*. The quest clock is a way for the GM to measure how far along the delvers are in their current campaign. It gives the GM an idea of how much material he’ll need to prep and when.

With knowledge about how players prefer to spend their time during game sessions, the GM can decide on what types of challenges and encounters to include in each adventure and how complicated to make each one. This allows the GM to pace the game sessions so that the players feel like there is neither too much nor too little to do.

Pacing is incredibly important when it comes to maintaining involvement in the game world. Suspension of disbelief suffers when play is rushed during one session but then lackadaisical in the next. Thus, the GM must keep a fairly even pace or risk breaking apart his quest mosaic. He'll also need to decide how much time the group will game, how often "table talk" occurs (talking about non-gaming stuff at the table), and how often specific elements appear within each session. A rough guideline for the quest clock is 10% table talk, 20% interaction, 20% puzzles or overcoming obstacles, and 50% combat encounters, spread out over each session. Thus, if the GM usually runs four-hour sessions, he might decide that two hours are for combat encounters, 45 minutes for interaction (dialogue, social encounters, etc.), 45 minutes for puzzles or

Whoa, whoa, whoa! Let's talk this over first. No plan, no Thief.
 – Hap Badapple, Thief

overcoming obstacles (dungeon riddles, travel hazards, etc.), and the rest for table talk.

Example Campaign, Part 5

The GM has watched his players over the last 11 sessions (which last about four hours each), and he's come to the conclusion that his players are about 10% table talk, 30% interaction, 30% puzzles or overcoming obstacles, and 30% combat encounters. This allows him to spend his prep time making sure he has engaging dialogue, interesting puzzles, and unique encounters. It also lets him know when he's got breathing room (during table talk) when he's running to improvise something if needed.

WHEN IT'S OVER

All quests must eventually end. The heir to the throne must be saved and the dragon must be slain. The kingdom must again know peace . . . for now. So what happens next? The GM has a couple of options. He could simply decide that it's done, and the players move onto something new and unrelated. Or he could decide to link the next quest to the previous one. To do this, use the same method for *Creating the Quest Mosaic* (p. 20), but on a grander scale. The GM should be careful here as the players may not want another linked series of adventures and may want to go back to a more freeform style – and that's all right! A good GM works with his players (and vice versa) and between them, they create a fun experience for all.

RANDOM QUEST GENERATOR

We've talked about taking something that's already there and turning it into a quest, but what about creating something from whole cloth? Whether it's at the table and you need something fast or you're trying to come up with something for your next game session, the following tables will be useful.

At each stage, the GM can pick something suitable, or roll randomly.

1. Determine what the keystone is.
2. Determine the number of touchstones.
3. Determine the number of tiles.
4. Roll on the appropriate table for the keystones, touchstones, and tiles.
5. Determine the number of complications the quest has, and roll them on the appropriate table.

KEYSTONE TYPE

Roll 1d to decide what the keystone of the quest mosaic is.

Roll	Type	Roll	Type
1	Person (below)	4-5	Event (p. 23-24)
2	Place (pp. 22-23)	6	Roll twice and combine them in a logical manner
3	Thing (p. 23)		

NUMBER OF TOUCHSTONES

For the most part, the GM is likely to just pick the number of touchstones important to the quest. He's going to have to

draw from previous game sessions to really make things work together. To randomly determine how many touchstones the quest mosaic has, roll 1d+1. If the touchstones are all similar, then roll once on the *Keystone Type* table (above) to determine what it is. Otherwise, roll on the *Keystone Type* table once for each touchstone.

NUMBER OF TILES

Roll 1d on this table to figure out the number of tiles the quest mosaic has. If you have more than double the number of touchstones as tiles, multiply the base amount of tiles by 1.5; round up. Roll on the *Keystone Type* table (above) to determine what each tile is.

Roll	Number	Roll	Number
1	1d-2	4	1d
2	1d-1	5	1d+1
3	1d	6	1d+2

PERSON

Key people in adventures can include everything from gods to monsters to fairy rulers. They can represent the player characters, too! When you roll on this table, first roll 1d: On 1, the event relates to one of the PCs; select or roll randomly to determine who it is. On 2-6, roll on the following table instead. Townsfolk, nobility, priesthoods, or gods are always selected by the GM. Roll 1d.

Clerics, druids, and wizards believe that everybody they meet is an agent of supernatural forces. Thieves fear that everyone sharing the road intends theft or murder – and far too many warriors are willing to prove them right by attacking first and asking questions later. My experience is that most travelers are ordinary folks who are happy to talk. You can learn a surprising amount that way.

– Jag Fairchild, Bard

Roll	Result
1	Adventurer (roll on <i>Adventurer</i> table)
2	Monster (roll on <i>Monster</i> table)
3	Nobility
4	Townfolk
5	Priesthood or deity
6	Group; reroll to determine what type*

* If you get this result again, then the group is either larger than average (reroll on the table to find out who is in the group) or composed of at least two different kinds of people (reroll on the table to find out which people).

Rolling Dice

Most tables here call for simple rolls: 1d or 2d. However, some ask for multiple results (e.g., “Roll 1d, 1d”). In the latter case, rather than adding dice together, roll one die at a time for each comma-delimited range. For example, “2, 4-5” means a roll of 2 on the first die, and then a roll of 4 or 5 on the second die.

Adventurer

The person is a delver in their own right. Roll 2d to determine their profession and then 1d, 1d to figure out the race.

Roll	Profession	Roll	Profession
2	Barbarian	8	Cleric
3	Bard	9	Holy warrior
4	Scout	10	Swashbuckler
5	Thief	11	Druid
6	Wizard	12	Martial artist
7	Knight		

Roll	Race	Roll	Race
1, 1-3	Cat-folk	4, 4-6	Half-elf
1, 4-6	Gnome	5, 1-3	Elf
2, 1-3	Dwarf	5, 4-6	Half-orc
2, 4-6	Halfling	6, 1-3	Half-ogre
3, 1-6	Human	6, 4-6	Special*
4, 1-3	Human		

* Roll on the *Monster* table (below) to determine the class of creature, and then pick an appropriate monster.

Monster

Roll 1d, 1d, 1d, 1d on this table to determine the class. The GM decides what the monster actually is.

Roll	Class
1-3, 1-3, 1-3, 1-3	Animal
1-3, 1-3, 1-3, 4-6	Giant Animal
1-3, 1-3, 4-6, 1-3	Dire Animal
1-3, 1-3, 4-6, 4-6	Construct
1-3, 4-6, 1-3, 1-4	Demon
1-3, 4-6, 1-3, 5-6	Divine Servitor
1-3, 4-6, 4-6, 1-3	Elder Thing
1-3, 4-6, 4-6, 4-6	Elemental
4-6, 1-3, 1-3, 1-3	Faerie
4-6, 1-3, 1-3, 4-6	Hybrid
4-6, 1-3, 4-6, 1-3	Mundane
4-6, 1-3, 4-6, 4-6	Plant
4-6, 4-6, 1-3, 1-3	Slime
4-6, 4-6, 1-3, 4-6	Spirit
4-6, 4-6, 4-6, 1-3	Undead
4-6, 4-6, 4-6, 4-6	Special*

* Reroll on this table to determine what class the monster is. Then roll 2d on to the profession table (see the first table under *Adventurer*, above) to find out what special training or experience the creature has had.

PLACE

Places are often the location of special rituals, ancient treasures, or beings of infinite or hidden wisdom. Roll to determine where the place is (below), then what is particularly notable in that location (p. 23), and finally how far away it is from the PCs (p. 23).

Terrain

Determine the local terrain, which can be important for many professions, skills, spells, etc. Roll 2d.

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
2	Arctic	8	Mountains
3	Island/Beach	9	Urban
4	Jungle	10	Swampland
5	Plains	11	Desert
6	Woodlands	12	Special*
7	Underground		

* The GM decides what, but it’s often an extradimensional plane, hidden city, etc.

Location Key Feature

Roll 1d, 1d, 1d to find out what is in the place.

Roll	Result
1, 1-3, 1-3	Extrplanar; reroll to determine the key feature of this area (reroll if this result comes up again)
1, 1-3, 4-6	Large natural structure (e.g., forest or mountain)
1, 4-6, 1-3	Military encampment
1, 4-6, 4-6	Small natural structure (e.g., escarpment)
2, 1-3, 1-3	Small body of water (e.g., pond or brook)
2, 1-3, 4-6	Large populated area (e.g., town)
2, 4-6, 1-3	Medium-sized populated area (e.g., village)
2, 4-6, 4-6	Bridge or similar constructed crossing structure
3, 1-3, 1-3	Large solitary building (e.g., castle or fortress)
3, 1-3, 4-6	Medium-sized underground area (e.g., cavern)
3, 4-6, 1-3	Temple or (un)holy place
3, 4-6, 4-6	Large body of water (e.g., huge lake or ocean)
4, 1-3, 1-3	Large underground area (e.g., underground city or dungeon)
4, 1-3, 4-6	Monster lair; roll on the <i>Monster</i> table, p. 22, to determine the class of creature that lives there
4, 4-6, 1-3	Ruins; reroll to determine what it was
4, 4-6, 4-6	Small populated area (e.g., hamlet)
5, 1-3, 1-3	Small populated underground area (e.g., cave)
5, 1-3, 4-6	Medium-size solitary building (e.g., keep or tower)
5, 4-6, 1-3	Burial ground or graveyard
5, 4-6, 4-6	Medium-sized body of water (e.g., lake or river)
6, 1-3, 1-3	Small solitary building (e.g., farmhouse or tomb)
6, 1-3, 4-6	Palace or similar structure
6, 4-6, 1-3	Medium-sized natural structure (e.g., valley)
6, 4-6, 4-6	Combined location; reroll and combine them in a logical manner

Distance to Location

Determine how far away the location is from where the PCs currently are. Distance can be expressed in abstract range bands or concrete numbers. Roll 1d.

Evil can lurk anywhere. The stillest pond, the most idyllic town, even a seemingly blessed temple or burial ground can conceal dark forces. And the malevolence need not wear the face of a wicked person or an unholy monster. Cursed objects and places can look innocent enough, yet leach sinister energies that twist and distort everyone and everything nearby. Look for omens, especially terrible and unexpected events.

– Sister Miriam Suntemple, Cleric

Roll	Abstract	Concrete
1	Very close (e.g., outside of town)	1d-2 miles*
2	Close (e.g., near town)	2d miles
3	Short (e.g., in the area)	6d×2 miles
4	Moderate (e.g., a few days away from town)	3d×10 miles
5	Long (e.g., several days away from town)	6d×10 miles
6	Extreme (e.g., an adventure in itself!)	1d×100 miles

* Treat 0 as half a mile and -1 as 500 yards.

THING

Things (e.g., MacGuffins) are the bane of adventures everywhere. There's always some orb, sword, or doohickey that'll cause the end of the world if it's not destroyed or delivered into the right hands. Roll 1d, 1d on the following table to determine what it is.

Roll	Result
1, 1-2	Natural object (e.g., a river stone)
1, 3-4	Piece of armor (e.g., a bracer or gauntlet)
1, 5-6	Kitchenware (e.g., frying pan or fork)
2, 1-2	Personal accessory (e.g., a comb or mirror)
2, 3-4	Rubbish; reroll to determine what it was (if you get this entry again, no one remembers what it was, but everyone knows it's important)
2, 5-6	Bowl or cup
3, 1-2	Jewelry (e.g., amulet or ring)
3, 3-4	Sword or knife (e.g., a shortsword or dagger)
3, 5-6	Bludgeoning weapon (e.g., a staff)
4, 1-2	Other adventuring gear (e.g., rope or backpack)
4, 3-4	Bauble (e.g., a pair of dice or key)
4, 5-6	Book/scroll (e.g., a spellbook)
5, 1-2	Gemstone (e.g., a ruby or crystalline orb)
5, 3-4	Ranged weapon (e.g., crossbow)
5, 5-6	Hafted weapon (e.g., a spear or axe)
6, 1-2	Liquid or potion (e.g., wine or herbal remedy)
6, 3-4	Ammunition (e.g., arrow or bolt)
6, 5-6	Magical/special; reroll to determine what it is and then decide how it is special

EVENT

Roll 1d to determine the type of event: 1 – good; 2-4 – bad; 5-6 – mundane. Then, roll 1d on the specific sub-tables to figure out more details. If an entry indicates the event is about a person, place, or thing, roll 1d: 1-2 – person; 3-4 – place; 5-6 – thing. Then roll what it is on the appropriate table below.

Good Event

Good events are usually not something delvers *stop* from happening, but are typically something delvers try to ensure happens or to protect from those who want to stop it. Roll 1d.

Roll	The Event . . .	Example
1	Is about finding, rescuing, or protecting a person, place, or thing that will ultimately help others.	Locating a holy orb that can banish evil in the right hands.
2	Is about protecting or helping with a special birth.	Protecting a mystical horse who will be born with the ability to carry its rider from one place to another rapidly.
3	Will bless a place or people if it happens.	Helping with a ritual to protect a village from demons.
4	Is due to a prophecy.	“When the sun swallows the moon, the day will turn into a midnight noon.”
5	Is about making new friends or social connections.	Meeting with local leaders at a harvest celebration.
6	Is a mix of results. Reroll twice and combine logically. Ignore further rolls of 6.	

Bad Event

Bad events are common in quests. Delvers try to stop them from happening or more rarely ameliorate the effects of something that has already happened. Roll 1d.

Roll	The Event . . .	Example
1	Pertains to a local being corrupted by evil.	A prince has made a deal with the Devil.
2	Is due to the loss of a person, place, or thing.	A high priest goes missing.
3	Is because of the appearance of an evil or annoying creature or thing.	A demon appears to poison the water of a nearby river.
4	Is due to the organization of “local” evils by some bigger evil.	The goblin tribes are led by a giant.
5	Is due to a demonic, undead, etc. Infestation in the area.	A curse causing all the dead in a graveyard to rise as undead.
6	Is a mix of results; reroll twice and combine logically. Ignore further rolls of 6.	

Mundane Event

Not necessarily good or bad, mundane events are generally caused by people being people.

Roll	The Event . . .	Example
1	Is result of two local powers (e.g., a chief or knight) fighting.	A landed knight preaches his brand of religion at the tip of a sword.
2	Is due to some natural disaster.	A hurricane devastates a coastal town.
3	Is due to absence or abundance of something.	A famine or a plague of locusts.
4	Is due to something else spilling over from a nearby region; reroll the event type and then roll on an appropriate table.	The corrupted prince of a nearby kingdom sends his minions to the local area.
5	Is result of past actions from other delvers; reroll the event type and then roll on the appropriate table.	An angel was released from imprisonment by the devil, but is weakened and needs to regain its strength before it can help the adventurers.
6	Is a mix of <i>two</i> results; reroll twice and combine logically. Ignore further rolls of 6.	

QUEST COMPLICATIONS

There is always a catch. These are situations that make it more difficult for the quest to be completed. Roll for the number of complications on table below, then on the quest complication table (pp. 25-26).

Roll	Number	Roll	Number
1	0	5	1d-1
2	1	6	1d
3-4	2		

Hired to save a town from ogres? Be ready for whoever drafted them, probably a wizard. Paid to rid a road of bandits? Don't be surprised if they're really toll collectors. There's always a catch. A smart merc is ready for this and won't make a deal that stinks of a catch from the outset.

– Grükuk Kzaash, Knight

Complication Type

Roll 1d, 1d, 1d. This table is by no means exhaustive and the GM is encouraged to create his own complications.

<i>Roll</i>	<i>Complication</i>	<i>Example</i>
1-2, 1-2, 1-2	The quest is subject to a time constraint of some kind.	"You must free the faerie lord before the next new moon or darkness will come over the land."
1-2, 1-2, 3-4	The quest will help another band of delvers in some way.	By finding the Stone of S'zar the delvers can ensure the Brotherhood of Brightswords enters the cursed Abbey of Haarould.
1-2, 1-2, 5-6	The quest will help to prevent a military invasion, coup, etc.	"The dragon is taking all our reinforcements from the border. Slay it or Tondril is going to invade us!"
1-2, 3-4, 1-2	The quest can only be completed by the "worthy," which may require passing tests or meeting prerequisites.	"Only a humble person can reach the center of the labyrinth."
1-2, 3-4, 3-4	The quest is one giant "dispel magic" against an equally giant spell.	Retrieving the lost Scrolls of Scalzos to recite the incantation will negate the Lich-Queen's curse of undeath.
1-2, 3-4, 5-6	The quest will restore the honor of a PC or NPC the players know.	"If we can help the Brotherhood of Brightswords, it'll help Lady Ion win her throne back."
1-2, 5-6, 1-2	The quest involves an old enemy of the PCs.	"The Shadow King is the cause of this!"
1-2, 5-6, 3-4	The quest is all a plot by some mastermind for something greater.	The Lich-Queen has commanded a band of goblins to fight in the name of the adventurers to turn the local townsfolk against them.
1-2, 5-6, 5-6	The quest requires some kind of knowledge or information to complete.	"You must find the Silken Codex of Rivain before you can hope to contain the power of the Orb of Baldur."
3-4, 1-2, 1-2	The quest is involved with something the PCs have already done.	"The Sword of Thorns must never be reunited with the Orb of Baldur, but the Monks of the Brotherhood of Brightswords have all been slain."
3-4, 1-2, 3-4	The quest, if failed will cost the lives or well-being of many innocents.	"The orc tribes will continue to raid us until stopped! Please help."
3-4, 1-2, 5-6	The quest involves the life of an ally.	"Your daughter will die unless you find the Quickening Berries of Vol-Tarsh."
3-4, 3-4, 1-2	The quest involves avenging the death of an NPC ally (or PC).	"You killed my father! Prepare to die!"
3-4, 3-4, 3-4	The quest offers a reward, but it's dangerous to use or gain a benefit from.	Killing the giant means that person can wield the Sword of S'vigard against the dragon, but it may cost the wielder his life.
3-4, 3-4, 5-6	The quest involves helping the local rulers somehow.	"We keep looking for our princess, but an illusion ensures she's always in another castle. We hope you can help."
3-4, 5-6, 1-2	The quest involves a prophecy or divination of some kind that must come to pass for good or bad.	"The Syl-Fa-Doon Oracle has decreed that if one falls, we all fall."
3-4, 5-6, 3-4	The quest is subject to a temporal or spatial requirement.	"We can only close the portal when the stars are right at this location!"
3-4, 5-6, 5-6	The quest involves a dangerous external requirement.	"You must bring the gryphon to the temple and it must be kept alive."
5-6, 1-2, 1-2	The quest involves solving a riddle or puzzle.	"You must answer the three questions of the Syl-Fa-Doon Oracle before she tells you the location of the Orb of Baldur."
5-6, 1-2, 3-4	The PCs were forced into the quest.	The delvers must retrieve a special wand for the Lich-Queen or face the death of an ally.
5-6, 1-2, 5-6	The quest requires the PCs fix or repair something to actually begin.	"The Starscope of Merriweather can take you where you want to go, but it's broken."
5-6, 3-4, 1-2	The quest requires the party to bring someone (typically not a party member!) to a specific location or unite them with someone or something.	"The king's son must make it to the Wintersrun Circle or the Fimbulwinter will come."

Complication Type (Continued)

Roll	Complication	Example
5-6, 3-4, 3-4	The quest requires that each touchstone (whatever it may be) be completed in a specific order.	"You must first gather elemental fire, then water, then earth, then air."
5-6, 3-4, 5-6	The quest is actually only the first part of a multi-part enterprise.	Once the delvers have the Sword of Svigard, then they can slay Ysixothrax the Mighty a dragon of great renown and evil.
5-6, 5-6, 1-2	The quest doesn't pay anything up front, but rewards may come	"We don't have any money to give you, but if you kill the orcs, they may have some pilfered loot."
5-6, 5-6, 3-4	The PCs don't <i>know</i> they are on a quest.	"You were fated to be here."
5-6, 5-6, 5-6	Reroll twice and combine the results in a logical manner.	

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice knows it's both a trap and a threat, and now he knows it's a quest. What will he know next? From Portsmouth, Virginia, he's spinning words and whimsy into gold. Of course, if he's not writing about **GURPS**,

he's blogging about it. Visit his site "Ravens N' Pennies" (www.ravensnpennies.com) for more **GURPS** goodies. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse; as well as the rest of his gaming group (the Headhunters); Beth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix"; and Euan Hastie, for being most excellent sounding boards.

EXAMPLE: THE TREASURE OF KARA-TOSH QUEST MOSAIC

Kara-Tosh was a powerful wizard-king who ruled a small kingdom hundreds of years ago. When he died, he left vast riches in his tomb to take with him to the next life. One of the builders of his tomb created a map leading back to it, but before he could use it, he died and the map was lost. Later on, a priest broke the tablet the map was on into pieces (*ingzai*) and scattered them for fear of a prophecy coming to pass of Kara-Tosh rising again. Despite that, adventurers have hunted for the tomb for centuries to plunder the rich treasures within.

Keystone: The Tomb of Kara-Tosh (place). The tomb is in the ruins of the wizard's tower in the middle of a forest in the north called the Twisted Wood.

Touchstones: Brotherhood of Brightswords (group of adventurers); Castle of Cloud Giants (place); Cragmyr the Troll (monster); the Black Stone of Tyrth (thing); the Keeper of the Word (person); the Twisted Wood (place); Wightsholme (place).

Tiles: Goblin tribe of Twisted Woods (person); Hensley (place); Hergog (monster); Rickert the Blacksmith (person); Rayvon (place).

Complications: Kara-Tosh didn't die naturally. He was killed by his subjects while attempting to become a lich and failed due to the gods cursing him and imbuing the curse within the fragments of the map. If the tomb is ever opened (using the seven *ingzai*), the curse will be lifted and Kara-Tosh will live yet again.

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

EIDETIC MEMORY

HEROIC BACKGROUND GENERATOR

BY DAVID L. PULVER

This is an aid for players (and GMs) who want to quickly generate an interesting – and above all, heroic – *Dungeon Fantasy* character background, but don't necessarily want to spend a lot of time thinking about it.

The *Heroic Background Generator* focuses on providing ideas about a person's heritage, family, and significant life events before adventuring. It isn't a life path system that maps out a career. Rather, it's intended to give some background details and plot seeds that the player or the GM can later use. However, the background is not intended for ordinary people; most likely, you will discover a past full of strange portents, odd relations, and mysterious events!

You should use the background generator before you spend points on your adventurer. That way, you can use its concepts to inspire your character build, and discard any that don't fit what you had in mind. Alternatively, you can simply ditch rolling entirely, and just choose whatever results appeal to you!

THE BACKGROUND GENERATOR AND CHARACTER TRAITS

Several results may imply or suggest the existence of certain traits, such as Status, Wealth, Allies, Signature Gear, or Enemies, or ownership of equipment or property. As mentioned above, you should use the generator before starting character creation. Then if you want to spend points to gain an Ally, Enemy, Signature Gear, equipment, etc. suggested by the generator, you should feel free to do so; if not, then those suggestions can be background details about things that you lost or you now aspire to.

For instance, the background generator may reveal that the adventurer has a mentor, who is still alive. If we don't want to spend points on him as an Ally, we could come up with a story detail, such as having quarreled with him. Or, perhaps, the mentor is away on a long journey, or held captive, or busy mentoring another student. We can then spend

character points to have him as an Ally later, when we want him to enter play.

The same approach can apply to equipment: it may be broken, stolen, or at a distant location. For instance, the generator may say the person inherited a ship – but perhaps it needs serious repairs and a crew before it's usable. Maybe that's what you're adventuring for: to save the money needed to fix it up!

USING THE GENERATOR

Start with Step 1, then go to Step 2, etc. Each section has sub-tables, but only roll on them if directed from another table, then return to the next unfinished step.

Step 1. Birthplace

The location of your birth. Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
------	--------

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | A castle (or palace or fortress) |
| 2 | A home in a small village |
| 3 | A home in a town or city |
| 4 | A sacred place (monastery, temple, etc.) |
| 5 | A lonely house or tower |
| 6 | A cave or camp site (on the battlefield, in a wagon, etc.) |

Step 2. Region

What kind of terrain your birthplace was in. Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
------	--------

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Desert or arid steppes |
| 2 | Pastoral countryside or lowlands |
| 3 | Highland, mountain, or glacier |
| 4 | Island or seacoast |
| 5 | Forest, jungle, or swamp |
| 6 | Beyond the world; roll on <i>Beyond the World Table</i> (p. 30) |

Step 3. Parentage

You might have some details about your parents. Roll 1d.

Roll Relationship to Birth Parents

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Orphaned; your natural parents are missing or dead; roll on the <i>Orphan Table</i> (p. 30) |
| 2-4 | Raised by two parents; roll twice on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (p. 30) |
| 5-6 | Raised by one parent; roll once on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (p. 30) |

Step 4. Your Mentor

A classic hero has someone who trained them, or a friend or advisor who led them down the path to adventure. A mentor figure may be someone you studied under, but it does not imply you had the same profession (and template). For instance, your mentor figure may be a wise wizard, but many warriors or thieves in heroic fantasy and swords-and-sorcery stories have wizards as mentors without ever being mages themselves!

Roll once on the *Who They Are Table* (p. 30) to determine their background, proceeding to other sub-tables as indicated.

Step 5. Familial Relationships

For your mother and/or father (if applicable), or foster parents, and your mentor, roll for each one's fate unless already determined by other rolls. Roll 1d: 1-2 – dead; 3-6 – still alive.

To find out their attitude toward you now (if still alive) or just before their death, roll 1d: 1-3 – they love you; 4-5 – the relationship is troubled, estranged, or cold; 6 – they hate you. You may reciprocate or have a different attitude.

Step 6. Siblings

Roll 1d-3 to determine the number of surviving birth-siblings or foster-siblings in addition to any family members who might have been mentioned already. Then roll 1d on this table once for each person.

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
1	Older brother	4	Younger sister
2	Older sister	5	Identical twin
3	Younger brother	6	Fraternal twin

If important, roll 1d for the state of the relationship with each person, as with Step 5, above.

Step 7. Omens

A hero's birth, or adoption if of unknown parentage, is often marked by signs and portents! Roll 1d to find out about the remarkable happening at the hour of your birth.

Roll Result

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | A natural disaster – a storm, earthquake, flood, or hurricane |
| 2 | A great commotion of animals; roll on the <i>Wild Animal Table</i> (p. 32) |
| 3 | A monster attacked; roll on the <i>Monster Table</i> (p. 32) |
| 4 | A mysterious stranger was passing through, who commented on your birth; roll on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (p. 30) |

Roll Result

- | | |
|---|---|
| 5 | A great battle; perhaps you were born on the battlefield |
| 6 | A celestial event (comet, meteor, super nova, or eclipse) |

Step 8. Darkness

Heroes often encounter evil or tragedy in some form during their lives. Tragedy is often part of your heroic past, sometimes shaping your life to this day. Roll 1d.

Roll Result

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Your life was free of evil. Perhaps you adventure to help the less fortunate, – or maybe you're so incredible that no one dared go against you! |
| 2-4 | Someone did you wrong. Roll on the <i>Evildoer Table</i> (p. 32) to find out who it was, and then on the <i>Dark Deeds Table</i> (p. 32) to determine what that person did. |
| 5 | Someone who you were close to you died tragically (or vanished). No person was to blame, but roll on the <i>Relative or Loved One Table</i> (p. 33) to determine who it was and on the <i>Disaster Table</i> (p. 33) for the nature of their fate. |
| 6 | A disturbing prophecy was made at your birth by a local oracle or distinguished visitor; roll on the <i>Dark Prophecy Table</i> (p. 33) to see what that person foretold. |

Step 9. Special Legacy

Something special happened early in your life. Roll 1d.

Roll Result

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | An important person (roll once on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> , p. 30) owes you a favor, for you saved that individual from something bad (roll on the <i>Grim Fate Table</i> , pp. 32-33). |
| 2 | You inherit the deed to a ruined tower, old house, abandoned village, or other place of mystery that was once in the family. Unless you want to pay starting wealth for it, the GM may assume it is occupied by brigands, haunted, or is a monster-filled dungeon. Perhaps you can try to reclaim your family home! |
| 3 | You learn you are the true heir to a dynasty, tradition, martial-arts style, cult, mercenary unit, or the like. If you do not choose to buy appropriate Rank or Status, assume you have been forced out, driven into exile, or left for some other reason. |
| 4 | You inherited a powerful or edifying book or scroll – or perhaps just a few fragments or pages from one, with clues as to where the rest can be found. Or maybe it's in a language you don't understand. |
| 5 | You inherited a map, verse, or other clue to a treasure, possibly one within the nearest dungeon, possibly far distant. |
| 6 | You have a broken magic item and a clue to its repair; roll on the <i>Broken Magic Item Table</i> (p. 33). |

Step 10. Mundane Inheritance

Before you heeded the call to adventure, your parents, guardian, or mentor left you with something. Roll 1d.

Roll Inheritance

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1-2 | A set of weapons, armor, or tools appropriate to your chosen profession, which had a special meaning (“this was your mother’s spell book”). |
| 3 | A deed to a mundane family property (inn, tavern, cottage, shop, fishing boat, etc.), albeit one possibly in poor repair, drowning in debt, etc. |
| 4 | A pet or small herd of domestic animals; roll on the <i>Domestic Animal Table</i> (p. 32). |
| 5 | A faithful companion; roll on the <i>Faithful Companion Table</i> (p. 33). |
| 6 | A means of transport (trusty steed, boat, wagon and team, etc.). |

If you want to pay for this as equipment or Signature Gear, in the case of a faithful companion, as an Ally, you still have it. Otherwise, you sold it off (explaining part of your starting wealth) or lost it prior to starting your adventuring career.

Step 11. Hero’s Burden

Heroes often have some task or burden they must perform. This doesn’t have to get in the way of dungeon adventuring; it may even be why you are doing this (e.g., to earn money to deal with the legacy). Roll 1d.

Roll Result

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | You have a baby; you may be one of the child’s natural parents, or have been forced to adopt by circumstances. |
| 2 | You are promised in marriage to someone – roll on the <i>Lover and Engagement Table</i> (p. 34) and then on the <i>Obstacles to Marriage Table</i> (p. 34) to see why you haven’t sealed the knot yet. |
| 3 | You discover you are the lost heir to a kingdom or castle captured by an evildoer (roll on the <i>Evildoer Table</i> , p. 32). Unfortunately, the evildoer knows who you are, and doesn’t want any competition. |
| 4 | You are outlawed in your homeland; roll on the <i>Outlaw Table</i> (p. 34). |
| 5 | You have a dependent relative who you are responsible for caring for – roll on the <i>Relative or Loved One Table</i> (p. 33). If a sibling or cousin, the person is still a child, aged 7+1d; if an older relative, the person is sickly, ancient, or mad. |
| 6 | You are appointed the guardian of a magical grove, ruin, shrine or the like, left to you by your mentor, or a dying druid, cleric, martial artist, or the like who has charged you to keep the place safe against intruders. Perhaps it’s in a dungeon or the village near it. |

Step 12. Distinguishing Features

Roll 1d; on 1-3, you have an unusual distinguishing feature. Then roll 1d to find out what the feature is, or make something else up if none of these appeal.

Roll Result

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Mysterious birthmark |
| 2 | Facial or body tattoo |
| 3 | Different colored eyes |
| 4 | Witches’ mark (blond streak in hair) |
| 5 | Unusual size |
| 6 | Scars |

Anybody lucky enough to be born to the right house can inherit steed and blade – and anybody at all can learn how to fight. Such things do not a hero make. A hero is one who accepts the burdens of protecting the weak and of serving the King because that’s what’s honorable, not to get paid. I’ve met precious few heroes in dungeons, let me tell you.

– Sir Yvor Gryffyn, Knight

Step 13. Prior Experience

Before you began adventuring, you might have done some other things with your life. Roll 1d.

Roll Result

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | None – you’re this good because you’ve been training hard, or are a prodigy but this is your first time going out into the “real world” in search of adventure! Possibly you’re still just a kid. |
| 2 | You gained experience within an organization appropriate to the profession you’ll choose: thieves’ guild, mages’ guild, mercenary company, church, bardic college, druidic circle, knightly order, or monastery.* |
| 3 | You served a noble, king, or other ruler (or if your status is high enough, were a member of their family): a knight, a court wizard, a confessor or priest, a spy, a huntsman or forester, a fencing master, a mercenary in the royal guard, and so on.* |
| 4 | Wanderer; you’ve traveled the world and seen a lot of strange things. |
| 5 | You had a harsh life full of trouble from an early age, and you learned your skills in the school of hard knocks. |
| 6 | Dungeon adventurer; the first adventure of the campaign isn’t your first time into a dungeon, and hopefully it won’t be your last. |

* Depending on what advantages you choose, you may remain connected to the organization or ruler, or perhaps you cut all ties (and maybe they’re after you!)

SUB-TABLES

Roll on these tables as directed by other tables.

Beyond the World Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Hell or another demonic dimension
2	The depths of the sea
3	An elemental realm (e.g., the realm of fire)
4	The land of faerie
5	The moon
6	The spirit world or astral plane

If you are called upon to roll on this table as the place you were raised, but also end up with fairly mundane parents, roll 1d: 1-2, your parents were servants of a supernatural entity; 3-4, your parents were kidnapped by one; 5-6, your parents were visiting adventurers who happened to have a child there.

Orphan Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1-2	Abandoned at birth. You do not know who your birth parents are. Roll on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (below) once to see who raised you.
3-4	Raised by animals; roll on the <i>Wild Animal Table</i> (p. 32).
5	Adopted but learned of your birth parents before leaving home. Roll on the <i>Humble Folk Table</i> (below) for foster parents and on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (below) for real parents (reroll any roll of 1).
6	Stolen at birth from your birth parents. Roll once on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (below) to determine who stole the child.

Who They Are Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Humble folk; roll on the <i>Humble Folk Table</i> (below)
2	Of a nonhuman race; roll on the <i>Nonhuman Race Table</i> (below)
3	Supernatural being; roll on <i>Supernatural Entity Table</i> (p. 31)
4	Noble or ruler
5-6	A hero, soldier, wizard, or other adventurer. Roll on the <i>Adventurer Table</i> (p. 31)

If you are the child of a noble or ruler, you may wish to buy appropriate Status for your character, but you certainly don't have to: you may be in exile, have abandoned your privileges to adventure, or whatever.

Humble Folk Table

If so directed, roll 1d on this table, and then go to the *Special Feature Table*, because any humble folk who raised a hero of your sort are more than meets the eye!

Roll Result

1	Crafter (e.g., blacksmith, painter or weaver)
2	Entertainer (e.g., dancer, musician, courtesan, or storyteller)
3	Rural (e.g., peasant farmer, fisher, hunter, or shepherd)
4	Merchant (e.g., a traveling merchant, innkeeper, tinker, etc.)
5	Outcast (e.g., a panhandler, prostitute, grave digger, or leper)
6	Scholar (e.g., philosopher, writer, poet, or theologian)

Special Feature Table

Roll 1d.

Roll Result

1-2	Master (skill level 18+ at what he does; the person could be taken as a Contact)
3-4	Very Beautiful or Handsome
5-6	Very wise or loving

Nonhuman Race Table

Roll 1d.

Roll Result

1-3	Civilized nonhuman; roll on <i>Civilized Nonhuman Table</i> (below)
4	Goblin-kin; roll again on <i>Goblin-Kin Table</i> (below)
5	Monstrous humanoid; roll on <i>Savage Humanoids Table</i> (below)
6	Faerie

Civilized Nonhuman Table

These are races that usually live together with humans without enslaving each other. Roll 1d.

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
1	Cat-folk	4	Halfling
2	Dwarf	5	Gnome
3	Elf	6	Mixed*

* Roll 1d: 1-3 – half-elf; 4 – half-ogre; 5-6 – half-orc.

Goblin-Kin Table

Roll 1d: 1-2 – goblin; 3-4 – hobgoblin; 5-6 – orc.

Savage Humanoids Table

Roll 1d: 1-3, use column A; 4-6, use column B. Then roll 1d again for the specific type of humanoid.

Roll	Column A	Column B
1	Bugbear	Ogre
2	Dinoman	Rock mite
3	Gargoyle	Siege beast
4	Horde pygmy	Throtler
5	Lizard man	Troll
6	Minotaur	Wildman

Supernatural Entity Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Elemental spirit (choose air, earth, fire, or water)
2	Divine servitor (an angel, etc.) or demi-god
3	Construct; roll on the <i>Construct Table</i> (below)
4	Demon; roll on the <i>Demon Table</i> (below)
5	Elder thing; roll on the <i>Elder Thing Table</i> (below)
6	Undead; roll on the <i>Undead Table</i> (below)

Construct Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Bronze spider
2	Corpse golem
3	Golem-armor swordsman
4	Obsidian jaguar
5	Stone golem
6	Sword spirit (actually a faerie, but . . .)

Demon Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	As-Sharak
2	Demon of Old
3	Doomchildren
4	Hellhound
5	Peshkali
6	Toxifier

If you prefer, feel free to replace the standard dungeon demons with other types: mighty demon lords, seductive succubi, or whatever else catches your imagination!

Elder Thing Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Cultists who worship these things
2	Demon from Beyond the Stars
3	Eye of death
4	Mindwarper and/or void brutes
5	Sphere of madness
6	Watcher at the Edge of Time

Undead Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Draug
2	Flaming or horrid skull
3	Ghost; roll on the <i>Ghost Table</i> (below)
4	Vampire
5	Lich
6	Skeletons, horde zombies, or zombies (and perhaps a necromancer)

Ghost Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	An ancient ancestor; roll on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (p. 30)
2	A close relative; roll on the <i>Relative or Loved One Table</i> (p. 33); obviously, this means a relative is dead . . .
3	An enemy; roll on the <i>Evildoer Table</i> (p. 32)
4	A childhood lover; roll on the <i>Lover and Engagement Table</i> (p. 34)
5	A former mentor or friend
6	A nature spirit or animal; roll on the <i>Wild Animal Table</i> (p. 32)

The insight of a trained wizard is essential when facing supernatural entities. Misidentifying a corpse golem as a zombie – or a lich as a skeleton – is a mistake you make once in your life.

– Zephyra, Wizard

Adventurer Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1-3	Warrior; roll on the <i>Warrior Profession Table</i> (below)
4	Holy folk; roll on the <i>Holy Profession Table</i> (below)
5	Traveler or rogue; roll on the <i>Traveler and Rogue Profession Table</i> (p. 32)
6	Wizard; roll on the <i>Wizard Profession Table</i> (p. 32)

Warrior Profession Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Barbarian
2	Knight
3	Holy warrior
4	Martial artist
5	Scout (sharpshooter)
6	Swashbuckler

Holy Folk Profession Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1-3	Cleric
4	Druid (beast master, elemental, or green druid)
5	Martial artist
6	Holy warrior

Traveler and Rogue Profession Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Bard
2	Scout (ranger)
3	Scout (bounty hunter)
4	Thief (burglar)
5	Thief (mastermind)
6	Thief (assassin)

Wizard Profession Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1-2	Wizard (artillery)
3-4	Wizard (controller)
5-6	Wizard (thaumatologist)

Idiots who mistake druids for wizards are the kinds of fools who try to pat the “cute wittle ice weasel.”
 – Aelin Rock-Talker, Druid

Animal Tables

Roll 1d on the table you were directed to use by another entry. Otherwise, roll 1d: 1-3, use the *Wild Animal Table*; 4-6, use the *Domestic Animal Table*.

Wild Animal Table		Domestic Animal Table	
Roll	Result	Roll	Result
1	Bat or rodent	1	Sheep
2	Snake	2	Goat or pig
3	Large house cat or small lion or tiger	3	Dog
4	Bird of prey	4	Chicken or duck
5	Wolf	5	Cow
6	Special*	6	Horse

* Roll on the *Giant or Dire Animal Table* (below).

Giant or Dire Animal Table

Roll 1d: 1-3, use column A; 3-4, use column B; 5-6, use column C. Then roll 1d again for the specific type of creature.

Roll	Column A	Roll	Column B	Roll	Column C
1	Acid spider	1	Gladiator ape	1	Giant ape
2	Dire wolf	2	Ice weasel	2	Giant rats
3	Electric jelly	3	Ice wyrm	3	Giant snakes
4	Flesh-eating apes	4	Slorn	4	Giant spiders
5	Foul bats	5	Slug beast	5	Giant spiders
6	Frost snake	6	Triger	6	Gryphon

Monster Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Savage humanoid; roll on the <i>Savage Humanoids Table</i> (p. 30)
2	Dragon (or sea serpent)
3	Giant or dire animal; roll on the <i>Giant or Dire Animal Table</i> (above)
4	Werewolf or other shapechanger; roll on the <i>Wild Animal Table</i> (above) for were-form
5-6	Supernatural being; roll on the <i>Supernatural Entities Table</i> (p. 31)

Evildoer Table

Perhaps the evildoer is using the local dungeon as a headquarters? Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Wicked or jealous relative; roll on the <i>Relative or Loved One Table</i> (p. 33) for the relationship
2	Rival warrior, wizard, cleric, or other adventurer; roll on the <i>Adventurer Table</i> (p. 31) for the profession
3-4	Monster; roll on the <i>Monster Table</i> (above)
5	Horde of goblin-kin; roll on the <i>Goblin-Kin Table</i> (p. 30)
6	Evil band; roll on the <i>Evil People Table</i> (p. 33)

Dark Deeds Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result
1	Your relative (roll on the <i>Relative or Loved One Table</i> , p. 33) suffered (roll on the <i>Grim Fate Table</i> , below) at hands of the evildoer.
3	The evildoer invaded or ravaged your homeland! Someone close to you also suffered; roll on the <i>Relative or Loved One Table</i> (p. 33) to see who that person was, then roll on the <i>Grim Fate Table</i> (below) to see what happened.
4	As a youth, you thwarted, harmed, or insulted the evildoer to prevent an evil deed, earning that person's enmity. Now, he is an enemy, out for revenge against you!
5	For some reason, someone close to you (roll on the <i>Relative or Loved One Table</i> , p. 33) has allied, married, or been duped by the evildoer. Can you win the person back?
6	The evildoer made you suffer; roll on the <i>Grim Fate Table</i> (below) for what was done to you and then roll on the <i>Evildoer Motive Table</i> (p. 33) for why the villain did it.

Grim Fate Table

If this is a fate that applies to you, rather than an acquaintance, presumably you eventually escaped. In the case of “Killed,” you were instead mortally wounded and left for dead, but were saved (or, perhaps, killed and resurrected). Roll 1d.

Roll Result

1	Enslaved
2	Imprisoned
3	Maimed; roll on <i>Injury Table</i> (below)
4	Unspeakable torments
5	Exiled or dispossessed (lost all property and titles)
6	Killed

Injury Table

Roll 1d.

Roll Result

1	Scarred face or body
2	Broken nose
3	Missing one eye
4	Missing a hand or several fingers
5	Limp or club foot
6	Missing ear

Evildoer Motive Table

Use this to determine reasons for any evil deeds you or your family have suffered. Roll 1d.

Roll Result

1	Because someone injured the evildoer's pride.
2	The person tried to stop the evildoer.
3	The evildoer lusted after the victim or wanted to corrupt that person.
4	Just got in the way of evil deeds.
5	The victim had something the evildoer wanted.
6	The person was sacrificed.

Relative or Loved One Table

Roll 1d.

Roll Result

1	Sibling
2	Lover, spouse, best friend, or former lover/spouse
3	Cousin or niece/nephew
4	Grandparent
5	Parent
6	Aunt or uncle

For more detail, randomly decide on the following information. For gender, roll 1d: 1-3 – female; 4-6 – male. For age of cousins, nieces/nephews, and siblings, optionally roll 1d: 1-3 – younger; 4-5 – older; 6 – same age. For relationship of parents or siblings, roll 1d: on 6, that person is a step-parent or half-sibling.

Disaster Table

Roll 1d.

Roll Result

1	Accident (fall, hunting accident, trampled by a horse, etc.)
2	Plague or illness
3	Poverty or despair (starvation, broken heart, etc.)
4	Earthquake, fire, volcano, struck by lightning, etc.
5	Drowned (flood, lost at sea, slipped in the bath, etc.)
6	They just vanished! (Perhaps they're not dead?)

Evil People Table

Roll 1d.

Roll	Result	Roll	Result
1	Tyrant and guards	4	Enemy soldiers
2	Brigands	5	Pirates
3	Cultists	6	Slavers

Prophecy is for prophets. Carve your own life-path.– Samar Alqatil, *Holy Warrior***Dark Prophecy Table**

Roll 1d.

Roll Result

1	You will kill or betray your friends, relatives, or a lover.
2	You will die at the hand of friends, relatives, or a lover.
3	You will betray your homeland or your god.
4	You will do great deeds but die young.
5	You will win all but have nothing in the end.
6	You will become what you most hate or fear.

Broken Magic Item Table

Roll 1d.

Roll Result

1	Weapon (axe, sword, knife, bow, arrow, etc.)
2	Magical tool (wand, rod, musical instrument, staff, etc.)
3	Garment (hat, cloak, shirt, boots, etc.)
4	Jewelry (broach, ring, tiara, pin, etc.)
5	Media (book, scroll, painting etc.)
6	Unusual Item (egg, statue, dice, card deck, carpet, etc.)

Faithful Companion Table

Unless you spend points to gain an appropriate advantage, the companion is no longer with you or is still around but neither helps nor hinders you during your adventuring. For any of the living humanoid options, the companion could be another member of the party.

Roll Result

1	A pet; roll on the <i>Animal Table</i> (p. 32)
2	A lover or spouse; roll on the <i>Lover and Engagement Table</i> (p. 34)
3	A ghost or imaginary friend; roll on the <i>Ghost Table</i> (p. 31)
4	A mentor; roll on the <i>Who They Are Table</i> (p. 30)
5	A younger sibling, friend, or cousin; roll on the <i>Adventurer Table</i> (p. 31)
6	A faithful servant, apprentice, or retainer; roll on the <i>Adventurer Table</i> (p. 31)

If important, either choose gender, or roll 1d: 1-3 – female; 4-6 – male.

Lover and Engagement Table

Roll 1d.

Roll Result

- | Roll | Result |
|------|--|
| 1 | The child of someone noble, rich, or powerful |
| 2 | The child or captive of a supernatural entity; roll on the <i>Supernatural Entity Table</i> (p. 31) |
| 3 | Someone of another race; roll on the <i>Nonhuman Table</i> (p. 30) |
| 4 | A humble but talented person; roll on the <i>Humble Folk Table</i> (p. 30) and for a special feature |
| 5 | An adventurer like yourself; roll on the <i>Adventurer Table</i> (p. 31) |
| 6 | The child of an evildoer; roll on the <i>Evildoer Table</i> (p. 33) |

Obstacles to Marriage Table

Roll 1d.

Roll Result

- | Roll | Result |
|------|---|
| 1 | You don't like the person. |
| 2 | The person doesn't like you, or loves another. |
| 3 | A massive dowry is being demanded. |
| 4 | The person is a captive; roll on the <i>Evildoer Table</i> (p. 32). |
| 5 | Parental disapproval (perhaps you must fulfill a quest to win the right marry the person!). |
| 6 | The person or you are too young for marriage. |

Outlaw Table

Find out why you were outlawed. Roll 1d.

Roll Result

- | Roll | Result |
|------|--|
| 1 | For a criminal act you were accused of. |
| 2 | You killed or maimed a relative accidentally or in a quarrel. Roll for who was afflicted on the <i>Relative or Loved One Table</i> (p. 33); reroll if inappropriate. |
| 3-4 | You refused a ruler something that person wanted. |
| 5-6 | You were framed by rivals or enemies. |

EXAMPLE

I'm creating a character for a *Dungeon Fantasy* game but am stumped for an origin story. I decide to use the *Heroic Background Generator*.

Step 1: Our hero was born in a cave. *Step 2:* Her birthplace was (roll 6) beyond the world. That directs us to a sub-table, and we roll 1: Hell or a demonic dimension. Next, we go back to *Step 3. Parents* and find she was orphaned. This directs us to the *Orphan Table* and we roll 5, learning learn she was adopted but knows her true parents. Going to the *Who They Are Table*, we find her foster parents were humble folk: merchants (wizards visiting hell?) whose special ability was that they were very wise or loving. Her true parents, however, were nobles or rulers. From this we decide that she was born in hell, but spirited away to the mundane world!

We next roll for *Step 4*, her mentor, and the *Who They Are Table* determines he was a supernatural being. The

Supernatural Entity Table says he was a demon – perhaps sent to keep an eye on her, or reveal her demonic heritage? In *Step 5*, we determine if her parents are still alive, and find both her foster parents are, but her birth parents are not. We also determine her foster parents love her. We decide it'll be a mystery what happened to her mentor. *Step 6* is siblings: we learn that she has one, an identical twin, which suggests options for intrigue.

Next we go to *Step 7. Omens*. On the hour of her birth, there was a celestial event; we decide a comet was spotted. For *Step 8. Darkness*, we find that when she was born, there was a dark prophecy that she would betray her homeland or her god. Maybe that was why she was fostered out of hell?

Next up is *Step 9. Special Legacy*. We find she has inherited a powerful book or scroll. Perhaps a demonic grimoire? Sounds like we're generating a would-be necromancer here! *Step 10* is mundane inheritance, presumably what her merchant family left her with. We find it was a small herd or pack of domestic animals – dogs. She has a puppy. Or a pack of loyal hounds whose barking can alert her of any demons sneaking up on her . . . We'll decide later!

Step 11 is hero's burden. We learn she's been promised in marriage to someone; rolling on the *Lover and Engagement Table*, we find her spouse-to-be is the child or captive of a supernatural entity – an elder thing, in fact. Another roll shows to be a Demon from Beyond the Stars. Perhaps it's an alliance between the demons and the elder things? What are the *Obstacles to Marriage*? Parental disapproval, apparently. One party doesn't like the idea. Possibly her merchant foster family . . .

Step 12 is distinguishing features, and we find she has a facial or body tattoo, perhaps some sort of mark of the demon clan or elder things.

Step 13 is prior experience. We learn that she served a ruler. Since we're going with the wizard theme, we decide that after she grew up and learned of her hereditary magical talent, she took service as a court mage with the king, perhaps also hoping that this would provide some refuge from the various demons after her . . .

And now we're done. We started out with a blank slate, but now I have a good sense of who the PC is: a sorceress of possibly demonic heritage, caught in the midst of a dynastic power play between demons and elder things! Doubtless she is seeking magic and power in the dungeons to become experienced enough to protect herself and her human family.

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid science-fiction fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books, including the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and the *GURPS Spaceships* series.

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THE STATE OF THE DUNGEON

When fans helped bring the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* to life in September of 2016, it set in motion a whirlwind of activity. This deluxe boxed set – arguably the most ambitious role-playing-game product ever devised by Steve Jackson Games – is over 400 pages of gaming goodness . . . *plus* full-color double-sided maps, heavy chipboard *Cardboard Heroes*, and other components. And that doesn't count the *Dungeon Fantasy GM Screen*, which includes a heavy four-panel color reference aid and two more color booklets to help you get in the game faster than ever.

PICTURES WORTH A THOUSAND GOLD PIECES

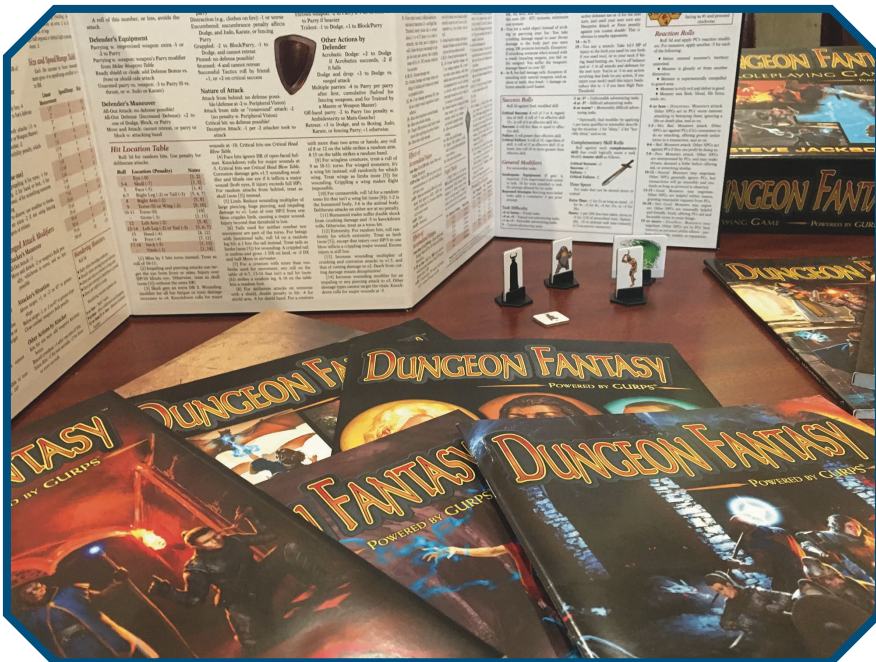
There are a *lot* of moving parts to make this work, and we've wanted to ensure it lives up to our expectations. Fortunately,



it's looking great so far! Here are photos from the tooling sample. Although these aren't final, they're good representations of what the final product will look like.

As gamers as well as creators, we're definitely excited for this set. Each page is crammed with content, and we worked carefully to make sure that each part was designed for maximum fun at the table. For example, the back of each booklet contains a game aid, quick-reference information, or other useful material to help speed up play.

We're also looking forward to the *Cardboard Heroes* included with this set. *Cardboard Heroes* have been part of the Steve Jackson Games arsenal of gaming awesomeness since the 1980s, but these heavy chipboard versions – with lots of new art – are especially satisfying . . . even more so when housed in the special plastic hex bases! (Eagle-eyed fans will notice the arrow on each plastic base, so you can easily tell which way your hero or foe is facing.)



Dungeon Fantasy is an RPG where the PCs are sword-and-sorcery heroes – wielders of weapons, wits, and wizardry – who live in a fictional world inspired by stories of monsters and magic.

– Dungeon Fantasy Adventurers



while still feeling like they are part of a collection? After some internal deliberation and consideration, we came up with a way to make them feel like a unified collection, while still retaining the page references and internal functionality of the standalone supplements.

The individual PDF supplements have all had their near-final checks, and the collected version is awaiting a print-proof copy that will be in our offices by the time you read these words.

THE TIME IS COMING!

As the pieces fall into place, we're still targeting an October delivery date. If you're looking for a more motion-filled version of some of the info here, please check out the unboxing video we made for the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* core set on Facebook, at

bit.ly/DungeonFantasyUnboxing.

We're hope you're as excited about this set as we are. Adventure awaits . . . and soon it can be yours!

BEYOND THE BOX

It's not pictured here, but we're also nearing the end of the tunnel for the various stretch-goal PDFs and the collected softcover edition. Two of these supplements –

Dungeon Fantasy Traps and *Dungeon Fantasy Magic Items* – add new ready-to-use goodies perfect for dungeon designers to dig into (or for heroes to drool over, in the case of *Magic Items*). And the PDF adventure picks up where the adventure included with the boxed set – *I Smell a Rat* – leaves off . . . doubling the play value of the core set! (Can we reveal that the title of this adventure is *Against the Rat-Men*, or do we need to keep that under our hat for now? Need to double-check . . .)

The collected volume – the *Dungeon Fantasy Companion* – combines these three digital supplements into a physical item that's perfect for your shelf . . . or to store in the boxed set itself!

These three items resulted in their own challenges for the *Dungeon Fantasy Companion*: How do we combine the three items in a way that retains all the functionality of the individual PDFs,



RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

PREPARING FOR THE HERO'S JOURNEY

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

It may be too soon to design a hero for the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, but it's not too soon to start *thinking* about it. Here is some beginner advice for players who're looking forward to that first crypt-crawling campaign.

*We'll see what the future holds
after I've discharged my vow.*

– Masha Deathfoot,
Martial Artist

KNOW YOUR ABILITIES

When you're making your hero, it's good to understand what you're trying to do . . . and whether it'll work. From a design standpoint, it makes sense to have a plan in mind, then see if you're actually accomplishing that. For example, bards start with a level of Charisma, which gives them +1 on all face-to-face Influence rolls. So, when starting out, a bard has a Fast-Talk skill of 15, which Charisma boosts to a 16 for the purpose of getting others to like you. Is that good enough? Check it out! Roll some practice dice. Pretend you've got -4. What if you're going up against someone who's also got a 16? Remember that any bog-standard bard is going to have that skill at that level, so if you have a vision in your mind of being someone who even standard bards find impressive, you'll need to boost that somehow.

The *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* often allows for bonuses from different sources, so you frequently have options for how you might do so. If you only care about doing Fast-Talk well, you could boost that skill by 1 for another 2 points. Alternatively, bards aren't limited to the amount of Charisma they can have (that's one of the things that makes them cool), so you might consider boosting that, at the cost of 5 points for each additional +1 (which would also cover other situations). Or maybe

you want to figure out how to get 20 extra points somehow, so you can boost your Intelligence (IQ) by +1; sure, it's expensive, but then *every* skill and ability that uses it also increases by 1.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

The flip side of knowing your abilities is knowing what you *can't* do. For example, if your hero is going to wield a two-handed weapon, then that adventurer won't be holding a lantern, wielding a shield to block damage, or parrying or blocking while moving and attacking. It may be totally fine to *not* have those options – for example, if your Dodge is mighty enough that you don't ever consider trying to Parry – but being aware of your limitations is a step to overcoming them.

Let's say you're the "tank" of the party, designed to soak up a lot of damage. You're quite possibly slower than other members of the party. That's okay, but it may mean you need to be closer to the front of the group, so you can wade into the battle easier and actually . . . y'know . . . absorb damage when it's incoming. If you are slower, keep in mind that any member of your party who's behind you will either need to move *through* your hex to get into battle (which costs them a bit of their movement), attack *over* you, or go *around* you. If you're planning on the rest of the party going around you, realize that the group may not want two slow members at the front; otherwise, the odds of getting in the way of teammates increases!

Similarly, take stock of your advantages and see if there are any aspects there that may hold you back. A hypothetical barbarian who boosts Magic Resistance may have visions of shrugging off the effects of evil sorcerers. However, that protection also keeps magical effects he *wants* to kick in from doing so! That means clerical healing magic is going to have a harder time helping out. Uh-oh! That's not a deal-breaker, though, *if* you plan around it. Maybe you'll invest some character points into money, so you can start with snazzier armor that will absorb damage (so you need less healing). Maybe you'll buy a few levels of Tough Skin to give you natural protection (again, obviating the need for as much healing).

KNOW WHAT YOU'RE BUILDING TOWARD

When you're designing a dungeon-crawling hero, one of the more useful techniques I've found is to have an idea of what your next course of action or "upgrade" is going to be for that hero. That can often shape your initial design decisions.

For example, maybe you're creating a barbarian. Barbarians can start with Luck. However, you might have plans for those 15 points at character creation! What you might do is just decide that you plan on spending the first 15 bonus character points you get from adventuring on Luck. Having that goal in mind will keep you from spending those points on cheaper options that might tempt you . . . but it can affect your decisions at creation. Maybe, instead of spending points from quirks to augment your Brawling, you might skip boosting it altogether, instead planning on relying on your Luck (once your purchase it) to boost its options. (Luck lets you roll three times and pick the best roll once every hour of game play.) With the points you save there, you might be able to cobble together a plan to buy Magic Resistance, with an eye toward protecting yourself from arcane adversity that isn't as easy to mitigate with Luck.

You might also have a longer-term plan that can affect your character creation. Thus, say that you've crafted your character around a specific weapon type and are (logically) building up toward a bonus on a *specific* weapon. Many delving professions in the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* can – at character creation – buy Weapon Bond (which gives you a bonus to a specific weapon you're familiar with) and Signature Gear (which protects weapons from being stolen or destroyed by plot developments). Each of those costs one character point, so they're cheap enough to consider when you're devising the dungeon delver initially. However, it might make more sense not to buy those in the beginning, take your chances with possibly losing your "starter" weapon, and plan on buying a snazzy weapon (or maybe even *finding* a magic weapon) down the road; if you've earned two bonus character points from your adventures and kept them in reserve, then you can optimize your hero without being stuck having spent two points at creation you aren't getting much use out of.

GIVE YOURSELF A NAME YOU CAN LIVE WITH

When my wife and I were expecting our child, we went through a lot of permutations and possibilities names. For me, one of the most important elements – especially for picking a first and middle name combo – was, can I yell this full name and make it sound like a threat? My full name – "*Steven James Marsh!*" – made a great parental exclamation in times of extreme duress. In contrast, if we'd named our child something like, "*Aloysius Snuffleupagus,*" there's a good chance I'd forget what I was yelling at the kid about by the time I got to the end of his name. (Mind you, having crafted a name that works great when bellowed in frustration, our child has been a really good kid, such that I've never needed to *use* the full first-middle-last exclamation . . . not that I'm complaining!)

In a similar way, you probably want to come up with a name that you like, because you'll be both using it *and* hearing it a lot. Maybe run it by the other players; are they going to be okay with using it? Does it sound too much like someone else's name? If two players have independently come up with Zintar and Zanther as their heroic names, that may cause problems for the whole table.

. . . OR JUST FORGET ALL THE RULES

Whatever tips I can offer can hit the wayside once you get to the gaming table. Absolutely true story: When I was writing this column (away from my computer for a few minutes), my son came over and was reading what was on the screen. When I get back to my desk, he's beaming a bright, excited smile, and blurts out, "I would totally play a hero named *Aloysius Snuffleupagus!*" So I know what I have to look forward to for the next dungeon crawl I run.

So, if the gaming table is giggling like kids at the anticipatory notion of Zintar and Zanther as two members of the party . . . well, that may be just the alchemical formula for fun.

Not every character hole needs to be patched. Not every design decision needs to be optimized. Sometimes it's fun just to make exactly the hero you want, have him traipse into the dungeon, and see how the dice fall. The *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* totally supports that, and you'll have a blast.

PLAYS WELL WITH OTHERS

Understanding your abilities and limits individually is great, but it's at least as useful to understand your abilities as a group.

For example, if you have a wizard who's fragile in direct conflict, that pointy-hatted prestidigitator is probably going to hang out in the back of the party . . . hiding behind someone else. In that case, someone else in the party should be better at serving a protective role.

Conversely, sometimes your limitations *complement* each other. For example, if everyone in the party is slow as molasses because they're laden with awesome armor, then there's no need to negotiate who's going to get out of whose way; you're all gonna lumber into battle together! (Of course, in that case, it's best to ensure you have someone on hand who can patch up wounds, medically or magically . . .)

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over 10 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

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