

vs. Monsters

a twentyfour hour game



by Philip Reed

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artwork by the great
edmund dulac

About the Author

Philip Reed always finds it funny when he's writing about himself in the third-person. It's just one of those strange things that writers tend to do on occasion. Writing about himself in the third-person is almost as funny as calling himself a writer. A graphic artist for over eight years Philip has spent more time pushing images, words, and assorted bits around trying to make them look pretty than he has trying to string words together into a form that people will pay him for.

Philip is rambling now and could probably stop and work on something a bit more important like finishing the game but instead he prefers to tell you a little more about himself. Philip is an Origins Award nominated game designer (*Frag*, 2001, Steve Jackson Games) but that really only means as much as the Awards themselves (which isn't much at all). He's also worked on some other things like the *Munchkin Master's Guide*, *Car Wars*, and *Battle Cattle The Card Game* (all Steve Jackson Games) and *Enter the Viking* (for Atlas Games' Rune). His non-game, *Vigilante*, still brings in fan mail but he's happy to report that the hate mail has slowed to one annoying e-mail a month.

About the Artist

Edmund Dulac is a dead artist who really should have never been dragged into this thing. Dulac was born in France (but that shouldn't be held against him since he was a great artist) in 1882. Philip first saw Dulac's work about 15 years ago in high school when he stumbled across Dulac's *The Illustrated Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe*. He again encountered Dulac three years ago when working on the cover of *GURPS Spirits*. Finding those same Poe illustrations on www.clipart.com (what was then www.arttoday.com) Philip used an element from one of the Dulac paintings in the *GURPS Spirits* cover. Dulac is probably still clawing at his coffin, hungry for revenge.

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INTRODUCTION



vs. Monsters is a roleplaying game in which the players take the roles of 19th century monster hunters living in the America of the time. This is the America of Edgar Allan Poe. This is America seen through the goggles of distortion that are used by such greats as Lewis Carroll, Tim Burton, and Mike Mignola. This is America as it never really was.

vs. Monsters is intended for experienced roleplayers. If you've never roleplayed before you've stumbled across something not meant for you. Head to your local book store and grab *Dungeons & Dragons*. Once you're done scratching your head come back to this document and charge ahead blindly. It's what real roleplayers do.

To play *vs. Monsters* you will need at least two players (four or five is best) one of which will act as the gamemaster. I could have invented some retarded title for the gamemaster but we should all face the truth and accept that gamemaster (otherwise known as The GM) is good enough for all of us. You'll also need a deck of cards.

INTRODUCTION

A 24 Hour Game?

Okay, you have probably heard of the 24 hour comic invented by Scott McCloud (www.scottmcccloud.com) but just what the hell is a 24 hour game? Simply put, a 24 hour game is a game that is created in the span of one 24 hour period. At The Forge web-site (www.indie-rpgs.com) many of us came together and decided to create 24 hour games. This is my attempt.

Since it seems to be part of the tradition of 24 hour comics, and since I think some people just might give a damn, I'm going to now list some of the things I did, ate, and listened to during the 24 hour period in which I created this game. If you don't care feel free to skip ahead to the game.

Music Listened To: Stabbing Westward (*Darkest Days*), Static-X (*Wisconsin Death Trip*), Rob Zombie (*The Sinister Urge*), Tool (*Undertow*), Korn (*Untouchables*), KMFDM (*Attak*), and a wide assortment of stuff being played on web-radio as the day flew by.

Sleep? Yes. Six hours. And something like a twenty minute nap while watching *Meet the Press* Sunday morning.

Food Eaten and Liquids Drunk: Tasty kabobs left over from the night before. Water (I drink lots of water). A sandwich. Ice cream. Burritos.

Influences

Primary influences for this work are *Nantucket Brown Roasters* (by Jason Asala, www.thehouseofusher.com), *End Times* (by Sam Hiti, www.samhiti.com), the sickening memories of fairy tales, the works of Tim Burton (www.timburlton.com), and Tool (www.toolband.com).

Secondary influences are a bunch of strange, old stories that I read in high school, and the roleplaying games *Chill*, *Over the Edge*, and *Dust Devils*.

More? Probably everything I've ever read, watched, or listened to in my life. How the hell would I know what my subconscious mind is digging up and thrusting to the foreground while I work on this thing?

Special Mention

These days, when I think of monster hunting I think of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy*. I had the good fortune to work on the *Hellboy Sourcebook and Roleplaying Game* in 2002 and the experience is one I'll remember forever. The chance to ask Mignola numerous questions about *Hellboy* is an opportunity that isn't likely to ever be repeated.

If you've never read *Hellboy* visit www.hellboy.com for more information including links to several of the shorter comics that have been posted on the web.



On With The Game

Enough of that crap. The rest of this PDF is devoted to the game. All you need to do is turn the page and you'll find yourself surrounded by the rich, rewarding world of *vs. Monsters*.

Or, at least, you'll find enough information to play a game. Considering the time limitations on this project I'm willing to bet that there is not a rich, rewarding world anywhere within this PDF. That place is probably living within your own imagination.

CHARACTERS

In every roleplaying game the players play characters. (Can you tell I'm tired?) Before you can play your role you need some idea about your character. This section of the PDF walks you through all of the steps necessary to create a character for yourself. These rules are pretty simple so if you get lost or confused that's your own damn problem. Or, more likely, I've not written what I'm thinking. You have to expect this sort of problem with a game written in twenty-four hours. And what the hell, it's not as if you paid for this game.

Character Sheet

On the next page of this PDF is the character sheet for the game. The cool thing about PDF games is you can make all of the character sheets you want by printing them on your home printer. The character sheet for vs. Monsters is only half of a page so at the end of this PDF you'll find a page with two character sheets side-by-side. Print. Cut. Play.

Now we shall study the character sheet and create a character. This is actually very simple. You can either open this same PDF in another window to view the character sheet as you read this PDF or print the previously mentioned last page.



CHARACTERS

Monster Characters

While this may be very tempting (hell, I'm tempted to include rules for it) I think it's best for us all if we just say no. Over the last decade or so it has become far too common for player characters to be the monsters. I think I'll keep *vs. Monsters* pure and true to its name.

vs. Monsters character sheet

Character Name:

Player:

Blah:

ATTRIBUTES

Fighting

Defending

Thinking

Running

HEALTH

STUFF

The Character Sheet Entries

Character Name: This is where you write your character's name. Try to use a 19th century American name. Huckleberry is not an option.

Player: Write your own name here. This is so that you won't forget it. It's kind of like when you go to a convention and they give you a name tag. The tag isn't so that other people will know your name but, instead, so that you won't forget yours when playing. The last thing they need at a convention is for some retard to think he really is "Halfarn the Dark One" and go on a killing spree. Killing sprees should only take place at schools and businesses and not game conventions.

Blah: Write something personal about your character here. If he's a bed wetter you might not want to put that in writing.

Health: All player characters begin with 10 points of Health. As they suffer damage their Health points go away. You can gain health points back. For everything you need to know about Health see p. 00.

Stuff: In a lot of games this would be known as advantages and disadvantages or maybe edges and drawbacks. Or talents and defects. Or whatever. This is where you list your character's "stuff." To figure out what your character's stuff is see the next page.

Attributes

This is where we'll actually dive into something resembling game rules. Attributes are what you'll use when you're attempting something during the game. The attributes, and what they do, are:

Fighting: You use your fighting attribute whenever you want to attack a monster (or someone else). Since combat is so important to the game there's an entire section on it beginning on p. 00. You may as well flip to the combat rules now (you know you want to).

Defending: When you're attacked you're going to want to defend yourself. This is the attribute you use for that sort of thing.

Thinking: This attribute is used whenever you're trying to remember some bit of trivia or perhaps solve a puzzle. The gamemaster should encourage the player to use his own knowledge and intelligence as much as possible but should feel free to assist players if their Thinking attribute is higher than their real-life intelligence level. Does that sound as mean as I think it does?

Running: And jumping and climbing are all covered with this attribute. Anything that involves movement or speed should rely on this attribute.

permission is granted to make lots of copies

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Assigning Attribute Values

Now it's time to figure out just what value your character has in each of the four attributes. This is a fairly simple task since all players have four values and they must assign one to each attribute. How you assign these values says a lot about what type of character you will be playing.

Take the values 6, 4, 3, and 3 and place each one in one of your four attributes.

Below are just a few possible ways that you could assign your character's attribute values. Feel free to think this through carefully since you won't get the chance to do this again (unless your character dies and you find yourself creating a new one).

Fighting: 6	Fighting: 4	Fighting: 3
Defending: 3	Defending: 6	Defending: 4
Thinking: 4	Thinking: 3	Thinking: 3
Running: 3	Running: 3	Running: 6

Stuff

And finally it's time to select your character's stuff. There's good stuff and bad stuff. For every one good stuff you select for your character you have to select one bad stuff. A character may not have more than four good stuffs (and, thus, no more than four bad stuffs). It is recommended that you not assign more than two good and two bad stuffs to your character.

Recommend Two but Four's the Limit?

That's right. If you take two good and two bad stuffs just write them down and prepare to play. If you get greedy and decide to go for four good stuffs (and the accompanying four bad stuffs) something else happens to your character.

For each good stuff you take over two reduce the value of any one attribute by 1. You may not take more than four good stuffs total.



Good Stuff

The following is the list of good stuff that you may choose from. Gamemasters and players should feel free to expand this list.

Courageous: When wounded you do not follow the usual rules for reduced Health (as described on p. 00). Instead, you suffer a -1 to all attributes when you have 2 Health points remaining and a -2 when down to 1 Health point.

Cunning: Increase your Thinking attribute by one point.

Good in a Fight: On your turn you may make two attacks but only against the same opponent.

Lucky: Once during a game session you can choose to redraw cards for any one action.

Nimble: Increase your Defending attribute by one point.

Scrappy: Increase your Fighting attribute by one point.

Sense Monsters: A rotten trick some gamemasters will try is to surprise the characters with a monster or two. There's no telling where the monster(s) come from but the GM will have a rational explanation for the assault and gain a free attack on the characters before they can respond. But not a character that has Sense Monsters!

Speedy: Increase your Running attribute by one point.

Tough: You have 12 Health points instead of the usual 10.

Veteran: You've played this game a long time and have some experience killing monsters. You know just where to hit a monster to deal the most damage. The damage caps of any weapon you're using is increased by one when you successfully attack a monster.

Bad Stuff

And now the list of bad stuff. Just like the good stuff, gamemasters and players should feel free to expand this list.

Coward: Reduce your Fighting and Defending attributes by one point each.

Inexperienced: You've never fought monsters before or even been in a fight with another human. On your turn draw one card and show it to the other players. If the result is a heart or diamond you may not take an action this turn.

Needs Glasses: Your character must wear glasses to do anything. If your character is ever without his glasses all of his attributes (except Thinking) are reduced by one.

Old: Your character is in his sixties. Reduce his Fighting, Defending, and Running attributes by one each but add three to his Thinking.

One Arm: Your character only has one arm (your choice). The gamemaster will use this against you every chance he gets.

Sickly: Your character is always ill and, when wounded, requires two nights of rest to recover a single point of Health. See p. 00.

Slow: Reduce your Running attribute by one point.

Slowerer: Reduce your Thinking attribute by one point.

Other Details

We've dealt with everything you'll need to complete your character sheet but if you're really into roleplaying games you probably already have ideas for crap like personality and background. That's all well and good and you should feel proud if you fill a notebook describing the history of your character but don't get too excited about it. This is a simple free roleplaying game that was created in twenty-four hours so you'll probably never play it more than once (if even once). Instead of wasting time with that stuff maybe you should watch a movie. I recommend *Office Space* since it doesn't take much brainpower to watch.

But there are other things you can work out with your gamemaster if you're really excited about the game. Like how much money does your character have? Does he own any weapons? How long has he been with the other player characters? The gamemaster has some notes later in this PDF that help him with a few of the more important questions.



MECHANICS

Why Cards?

In 1993 (10 years? Damn.) I thought it would be fun to create my own roleplaying game. Titled *Prophecies & Verse*, I wrote about 20,000 words on the game but never really accomplished anything. The files are long gone (which is for the better) but the desire to create a roleplaying game still burns within.

Prophecies & Verse used a poorly conceived set of mechanics built around a deck of cards. When I started work on *vs. Monsters* I decided that I wanted to see if I could solve the problems I was having with that system. After six hours I decided that “No, that system was a horrible idea” and that I needed something new. Since my brain was already thinking of playing cards, I went with the flow.

vs. Monsters uses a simple game mechanic. The easiest way to describe this mechanic is:

Draw a number of cards equal to the appropriate attribute. Compare the highest card value drawn against a target value. If your highest card value is equal to or greater than the target value you succeed. If your highest card value is lower than the target value you fail.

The remainder of this section busies itself with covering many specific examples of this mechanic in action and numerous small things that you’ll find useful when you’ve been attacked by a monster.

Challenges

When a character attempts an action he is facing a challenge. A challenge requires a test (as described above) to determine success or failure of the action. Only important actions should be “tested” since it would be a waste of time and energy on the part of everyone involved to constantly draw cards for such activities as eating a sandwich, taking a nap, or getting dressed. The gamemaster should use his own judgement when determining what actions are challenges but the players are encouraged to beat the GM if he requires too many tests.

Target Values

As we all know, challenges are against target values. The **Target Value** is the difficulty of a challenge. Use the following tiny table to judge target values.

Challenge is . . .	Value is . . .
Easy	Four
Average	Six
Hard	Ten
Very Hard	King
Impossible	Ace

MECHANICS

Sample Challenges

It's all well and good for me to ramble about challenges and target values but just what the hell do I really mean to say? The following samples should give you an excellent idea of how to judge the target value of different actions.

You are . . .	Challenge is . . .
Looking for a burning house on the horizon	Easy
What's the capital of Florida?	Average
Beating down a locked door	Hard

Opposed Actions

So you say you're going up against another character or monster. Let's pretend that you're racing to be the first to reach a door. This is an opposed action so the gamemaster can't really just say that the challenge is easy.

What you do when two characters (or a character and a monster) attempt actions that conflict (but aren't combat) is each draws a number of cards equal to the appropriate attribute. Highest draw wins and in the event of a tie, highest attribute wins. If still tied, draw again.

Combat

That's about all I want to do with challenges and target values. In a game called *vs. Monsters* fighting and killing monsters should be the single most important activity your character can attempt and, as is the time-honored tradition in roleplaying games, I'm ready to give you some detailed information on killing.

The following information is all that you will need to attack and kill a monster. If you're unlucky, you'll also need this information when a monster attempts to attack and kill you.

Initiative

Most roleplaying games have a structured set of rules for determining who gets to act first. In *vs. Monsters*, the player to the gamemaster's left goes first during a turn and then play proceeds clockwise. All monsters and non-player characters get a turn after all of the player characters.

More complex initiative rules could be devised but I won't subject you (or myself) to that torture.



Attack

When it's your turn during combat if you're not otherwise occupied you're going to want to attack a monster (or maybe the character of a player who has pissed you off but there's no way I'm getting into that mess). To attack, you'll need either a weapon or your fists and a monster close enough to hit (or shoot if you have a gun). Attacks are split into melee and ranged.

Melee Attacks: I only call this melee attacks because I've been roleplaying far too long and I write the occasional *D20 System* product. A melee attack is, in the simplest terms, attacking with fists, a sword, a stick, or anything else that can reach a monster that's standing right next to you. The target value of a melee attack is equal to the Close-Range value of the monster you're attacking. The appropriate attribute is Fighting. In short:

Draw a number of cards equal your Fighting. Compare the highest card value drawn against the Defending value of the monster. If your highest card value is equal to or greater than the Defending value you succeed. If your highest card value is lower than the Defending value you fail.

If your melee attack succeeds proceed to Determine Damage to learn more. If it fails you missed and your turn is over.

Ranged Attacks: If you have a gun (or something you can throw), you can attack monsters that are not right next to you. The target value of a ranged attack is either based on the distance the monster is from you (known as the range) or the Defending value of the monster. Use whichever is higher.

The target value of different ranges can be found on the following table. I hate tables.

Range is . . .	Value is . . .
Really Close (6')	Four
Close (12')	Six
Close Enough (18')	Ten
Not Close Enough (24')	King
Too Far (25' and more)	Ace

In the short form, to attempt a ranged attack:

Compare the range value to the Defending value of the monster. The highest value is the target value for the attack. Now draw a number of cards equal your Fighting. Compare the highest card value drawn against the target value. If your highest card value is equal to or greater than the target value you succeed. If your highest card value is lower than the target value you fail.

If your ranged attack succeeds proceed to Determine Damage to learn more. If it fails you missed and your turn is over.

Determine Damage

Once an attack succeeds, you have damaged the monster (unless the attack was against your character in which case you have suffered damage). The amount of damage inflicted in an attack is:

Draw a number of cards equal to the number of successes. Compare each drawn card to the damage cap of the weapon used. For each card that is equal to or less than the damage cap of the weapon reduce the Health of the targeted monster by 1.

Damage Caps of Common Weapons

The following is a listing of common weapons that characters can use in the game and the damage caps for each weapon.

Weapon is . . .	Damage Cap is . . .
Fists	Three
Knife	Four
Bow/Arrow	Five
Sword	Five
Axe	Six
Pistol	Six
Revolver	Seven
Hunting Rifle	Eight
Military Rifle	Nine
Cannon	—

Bonus Damage

Some weapons are just so powerful that they inflict lots of damage, even if the damage cap of the weapon is exceeded. The following weapons each inflict at least one point of Health damage on a successful hit, even if the damage cap is exceeded.

Weapon is . . .	Bonus Damage is . . .
Pistol	1 point
Revolver	1 point
Hunting Rifle	2 points
Military Rifle	2 points
Cannon	6 points

Once you've determined the amount of damage you've inflicted you're ready to deal that damage to the monster's Health. Go on to Reduce Health, below.

Reduce Health

Now that you know how much damage you've inflicted, you're ready to reduce the Health of the monster (or, as I've been hinting at, your own character's Health if you were on the receiving end of an attack).

All monsters have a Health rating that's somewhere between two and ten. Subtract the amount of damage inflicted from the Health rating. The lower the Health rating is, the more screwed things are as you can witness for yourself in the next table:

Health is . . .	Effect is . . .
Zero or less	Dead!
One point	-2 to all Attributes
Half Starting Value	-1 to all Attributes
Starting Value	No effect

So what do the effects mean? Easy. If the monster's Health started at 8 and it's now at 5 it's between the "Half Starting Value" and "Starting Value" entries on the table. Once this same monster drops to 4 Health it suffers a -1 to its four attribute values. So if the monster was 5, 6, 3, 4 it is now 4, 5, 2, 3. When an attribute is reduced to zero the monster may no longer attempt actions that are associated with that attribute.

Example: A monster with a Fighting of 2 is reduced to its last point of Health. Since its Fighting is now at 0 this monster may no longer make attacks. Of course, any monster with a Fighting of 0 could be beaten by schoolchildren so this isn't any great accomplishment.

It goes without saying that player characters must play by these same rules. It sucks to be wounded. Luckily, your character (and the monsters) can be healed. Which brings us to the next bit of rules . . .



Getting Better

As I've already said, characters can be healed. A night of rest (10 hours or more of undisturbed sleep) increases a wounded character's Health by one point. If the character is being carefully watched by a doctor allow the character to draw a card after a night of rest. If the card is a heart his Health is increased by an additional point.

Characters may never be healed beyond their starting Health.

Rules You Don't Need

Since this is a roleplaying game and I have some space on this page, here are some "optional" rules you can use in combat situations. These add a little complexity to the game but not so much that you'll be rendered retarded by reading them. I mean, if you've read this far and haven't gone stupid these rules aren't likely to hurt you any.

Modifiers

The gamemaster should feel free to increase or decrease the Defending or Fighting attribute of a character or monster if he can think of a good reason. A few good reasons could be:

Reason is . . .	Modifier is . . .
It's dark	-2
It's foggy	-1
Shooting into a crowd	-3

I'm sure the gamemaster can devise more modifiers without my help.



Weapon Ammo

Weapons with ammunition (guns and even bows) can be either always loaded (my preference) or the gamemaster can make players keep track of their ammo (boring). It's assumed that players always have time to reload before it's their turn.

Time

Some games give a damn about "in game time."

GAMEMASTERING

Now for the section of the game where you learn how to become a gamemaster. But since I'm running out of time and, as I said at the beginning, this shouldn't be your first roleplaying game this section is going to primarily cover some ideas for adventures and a collection of monsters. Assorted other information that the gamemaster needs will be scattered here and there but, for the most part, adventures and monsters dominate this section.

Monsters

Each monster consists of:

Name: The name of the monster.

Description: Some blah, blah about the monster to give you something to read and me something to fill space with.

Special Ability: Every monster has at least one special ability. This is where you learn what it is and what it can do in game terms.

Attributes: Monsters have the exact same attributes that player characters do. Here's where you'll find how the monsters stack up against the player characters.

Health: The number of points of Health the monster has.

If you've got the urge to make some of your own monsters go read a good book, watch a good movie, flip through a comic, or start the brain muscles. Then see p. 00.

The monsters are presented in the order that I create them. I could alphabetize them or something but that would take time.



Scarecrow

An animated scarecrow is a common beast in the cornfields of America. Standing as tall as a man and armed with a scythe, scarecrows are solitary monsters. During the day a scarecrow stands still, never betraying that it is an evil creature.

Special Ability: Fear (5). Scarecrows can cause fear in humans. In place of an attack a scarecrow can choose to cause fear. This is an opposed action (the Scarecrow's Special Ability vs. a single target's Thinking). If the action succeeds the target loses two turns.

Fighting: 4 (Damage cap five)

Thinking: 2

Health: 6

Defending: 5

Running: 3

GAMEMASTERING

Zombie

The walking dead. Zombies shamle around through horror films all of the time. You know what a zombie is.

Special Ability: Hard to Kill. To destroy a zombie its head must be shot or separated from its body. If an Ace is drawn during an attack on a zombie the creature is instantly destroyed. There is no reason to ever draw for damage on a zombie since only an Ace attack result can kill one.

Fighting: 4 (Damage cap four)

Thinking: 2

Health: Special. See above.

Defending: 5

Running: 3

Witch

Pointy hat. Long nose (complete with wart). Broom. You know, a witch. And yes, witches can fly on their brooms.

Special Ability: Magic (6). Witches use magic and, in place of an attack, can attempt to cast a spell on an opponent. This is an opposed action (the witch's Special Ability vs. a single target's Thinking). If the action succeeds the witch draws another card and checks the following table:

Card is . . .

Two or Three

Four to Six

Seven to Ten

Jack

Queen

King

Ace

Effect is . . .

Target's attributes are reduced by 1 for his next turn.

Target is charmed and may not attack the witch until his next turn.

Target is covered in warts for the remainder of his life and loses 1 point of Health.

Target is unable to take any actions for two turns.

Target loses 2 points of Health.

Target loses 3 points of Health.

Target loses 4 points of Health and becomes a toad for six hours.

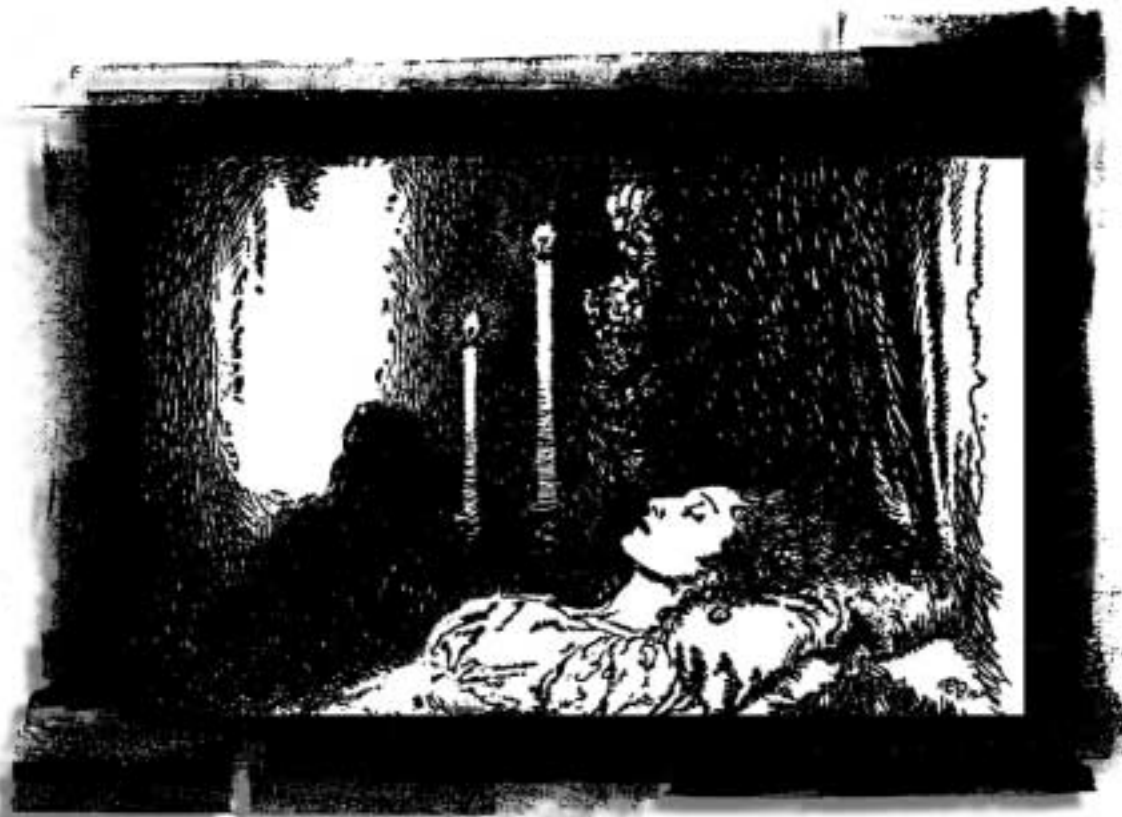
Fighting: 4 (Damage cap three)

Thinking: 6

Health: 8

Defending: 8

Running: 3



Mummy

If you think about it, a mummy is like a zombie wrapped in bandages. They both shuffle around and moan a bit and they both stink.

Special Ability: Mummy's Curse (6). If a mummy successfully attacks it can choose to inflict a curse on the target rather than deal damage. This is an opposed action (the mummy's Special Ability vs. a single target's Thinking). If the action succeeds the gamemaster is free to make up a curse and apply it to the target. Gamemasters are encouraged to get nasty with this.

Fighting: 8 (Damage cap eight)

Defending: 6

Thinking: 4

Running: 3

Health: 10

Skeleton

What do you think it is? It's an animated skeleton with a weapon (probably a sword).

Special Ability: None.

Fighting: 4 (Damage cap three)

Defending: 5

Thinking: 2

Running: 3

Health: 2

Gremlin

A little green monster (about two or three feet tall) with an axe and an insane look on its face. Gremlins are usually seen alone but something there are up to six of them working together. They're not exactly evil but they are trouble.

Special Ability: Break Machines (3). If a gremlin gets into any mechanical equipment the GM should draw three cards against a target value of ten. On a success the gremlin has rendered the machine useless.

Fighting: 2 (Damage cap four)

Defending: 3

Thinking: 4

Running: 5

Health: 3

Cthulhoid Terror

Lots of tentacles. Big. Probably never moves but, instead, lives in the cellar of some abandoned house. If you've never read any Lovecraft that's your problem.

Special Ability: The cthulhoid terror breaks a few rules. The damage cap of any weapon used against such a beast is reduced by two. The best way to destroy one of these things is with lots and lots of fire. The monster does not follow the standard rules for attributes and health. Gamemasters probably shouldn't even use this thing in a game.

Insanity (10). Once per turn, in addition to an attack, a cthulhoid terror may target any opponent within visual range and attempt to drive it insane. This is an opposed action (the monster's Special Ability vs. a single target's Thinking). If the action succeeds the target is rendered insane and runs into the night screaming. Time to make a new character.

Fighting: 5 (Damage cap ten)

Defending: 4

Thinking: 6

Running: 0

Health: 20.

Evil Cultist

A cthulhoid terror wouldn't be complete without cultists.

Special Ability: None.

Fighting: 4 (Damage cap five)

Defending: 5

Thinking: 2

Running: 3

Health: 4

Elements of Horror

When running a horror game there are a variety of things that you can do to make the feeling of the game fit the expectations of the players when you tell them "We're playing a horror game tonight!" Here are just a few of the various elements of horror.

Scary Places

All horror games should take place in an appropriate location. Graveyards, haunted houses, and ghost towns are just a few of the more appropriate locations in which to stage a horror game. If you describe the abandoned house on the hillside to your players they'll start to get into the fun of horror roleplaying.

Weather

It just wouldn't be a horror adventure if it wasn't storming. Storms help build the tension since thunder and lightning flashes can hide any number of crawling creatures. The traveler seeking shelter from the storm might very well be an evil cultist.

The Dark

Just like with weather, it's just not a horror adventure if it's taking place during the day. Just how scary will a horde of zombies be when you can see them miles in the distance? Why do you think the best of the Romero zombie flicks is *Night of the Living Dead*? I promise you it isn't the set design.

These are just a few of the elements of horror. If you're not very familiar with horror I recommend tracking down some books on horror writing and Ken Hite's *Nightmares of Mine* before you begin crafting your horror adventures. If you're a horror master than you're no doubt already laughing at this pathetic attempt at describing some of the necessary elements of horror.

Werewolf

A shapeshifter, werewolves only come out during a full moon. These beasts are without reason and hunger for the meat of animal or human. They hunt during the full moon and frequently assault small villages when they can find them.

Special Ability: Hard to Kill. Only a silver bullet can kill a werewolf. Any other attack will wound a werewolf but a werewolf at 0 Health does not die (it keeps fighting). A werewolf shot with a silver bullet dies instantly (no need to check damage).

Fighting: 8 (Damage cap seven)

Defending: 4

Thinking: 3

Running: 6

Health: 7

Vampire

These vampires can change into wolves, bats, or old men that suck your blood. They live off of fresh blood and only come out at night.

Special Ability: Hard to Kill. You can kill a vampire with a stake through the heart, by chopping off the head and filling the neck with garlic, or just about any number of other goofy ways that your gamemaster will approve. There are some many conflicting vampire lore that you'll probably just have to keep trying things until you kill the one you're currently fighting.

Fighting: 6 (Damage cap six)

Defending: 8

Thinking: 4

Running: 3

Health: 10

Giant Vermin

Oversized rats, bats, and spiders can be quite frightening. These monsters are usually commanded by a witch, vampire, or mummy but they can be encountered alone.

Special Ability: Giant vermin don't follow the usual rules for monsters and are presented at a much lower power level than the other monsters found in this PDF.

Fighting: 2 (Damage cap three)

Defending: 2

Thinking: 1

Running: 2

Health: 1

Starting Money and Equipment

My first game of *Dungeons & Dragons* was a blast. I remember being handed the (first edition) *Player's Handbook* and told to spend a set amount of money on equipment. I had so much fun I forgot to buy a weapon.

vs. Monsters doesn't give starting money or equipment and doesn't even have a table of equipment or weapon prices. There are a few reasons for this decision, the primary one being that there is no way in hell I'm researching 19th century America so I get the price of a buckboard right. If I'd been thinking I would have set this game in modern times but not that I'm down to five hours I'm a little committed to 19th century America.

Gamemasters should allow players to determine how wealthy their characters are without really worrying too much about restricting them. Same thing with starting equipment. Let them write down just about anything they want to. Then look at their decisions and increase the number of monsters in the game accordingly.

You say one player wrote down that he has a squad of elite soldiers at his disposal? Kill them all with a horde of zombies. You're the gamemaster, you deal with your own stupid players. I have enough problems these days.

Making More Monsters

As you read through the monsters in this PDF you're no doubt already thinking of completely new monsters you'd love to spring on your players (this is, of course, assuming that you attempt to play the game). Making new monsters is as easy a matter as coming up with a name, a special ability, and assigning values to the monster's attributes.

Name: You're on your own.

Special Ability: Steal one from another monster in this book if you have to. Chances are if you have an idea for a monster you have an idea for a special ability.

Attributes: Monsters come in two varieties, weak and strong. Weak monsters have attribute values 5, 4, 3, 2 and strong monsters have attribute values 8, 6, 4, 3.



Adventures

Now that you have a few monsters to work with let's take some time to give you some ideas for adventures. What you won't find on the following pages is a complete adventure (I've got three hours left to finish this so there is no way you're getting a complete adventure from me).

Damn

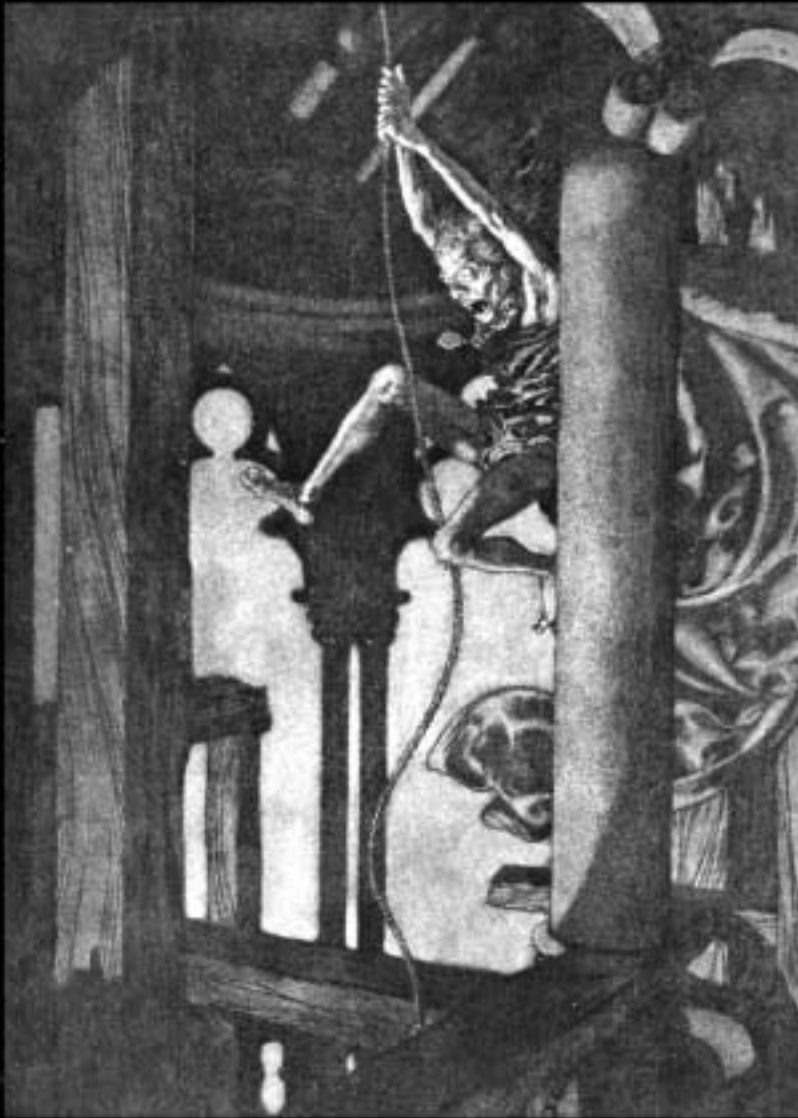
So after beating my head against this page for over an hour I still don't have any ideas for adventures. Just too much crammed into too little time I guess. I usually don't have any problems at all coming up with adventure ideas (the *Haunted House* and *Underground Lab* floor plan sets I worked on for Steve Jackson Games had adventure seeds and those poured right out of me).

It looks like this is where I'll be ending the experiment. I've got about an hour and a half left before I need to have the PDF uploaded so this will give me time to spellcheck and make a last pass through the text. I suspect there are lots of tiny errors here and there in the text but, as of this moment, I'm proud of this almost completed roleplaying game.

Counting the cover and character sheets this is a 20 page PDF. I'm four pages short of my goal which, while unfortunate, is better than I had expected I would do. I enjoyed parts of this exercise and hated others and am unsure if I will attempt this again. It's something I'm definitely glad that I attempted and I recommend that anyone with an interest in writing a roleplaying game try a 24 hour game before getting too heavily involved in the creation of a larger game. If you can complete one of these you'll find a larger project to be just a little bit easier on you.

Once the technical work is done I'm going to bed. I need to head to the office tomorrow but I plan on spending tomorrow night reading the other 24 hour games. As of this time there are 8 others already done.

– Philip Reed, April 13th, 2003



vs. Monsters character sheet

Character Name:

Player:

Blah:

ATTRIBUTES

Fighting

Defending

Thinking

Running

HEALTH

STUFF

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vs. Monsters character sheet

Character Name:

Player:

Blah:

ATTRIBUTES

Fighting

Defending

Thinking

Running

HEALTH

STUFF

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