

FARSIGHT GAMES ODDS

The Tabletop Roleplaying E-Magazine

Issue 4 – January 2009

FREE RPG IN THIS ISSUE!

MACABRE

A Devilishly Simple
Roleplaying Game



WIN



GOODIES!

In This Issue:

THE SCEAPTUNE GAMES COMPETITION

AN INTERVIEW WITH TIM BANCROFT

LET ME DO IT! - Advice for new GMs

CREATING INTERESTING NPCs

MACABRE – A Devilishly Simple Roleplaying Game

ODDS

Issue 4

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EDITORIAL

Evil magic, daemons and bloodcurdling tales of terror – just the kind of thing you want in a Christmas issue.

ODDS issue 4 has a few goodies for you this month:

First of all, there's the fantastic RuneQuest competition for you. Get in there and send us your answers and be in with the chance to win some loot. To accompany the competition there's an interview with Tim Bancroft of Sceptune Games, where he lets us know his feelings on games and gives us an insight into the Open Gaming License.

There's the usual articles - this month we have one from guest writer Louis Turfrey, a long-time gamer and writer. As an experienced player he wanted a go in the GM's hot seat and here he lets us know his own personal experience and how he felt about the whole thing.

Then – and this is the fun part – there's **MACABRE**, a completely free roleplaying game about witches, daemons and sorcery in the Middle Ages. I know, I'm about two months too late for Halloween, but hey – better late than never. The game rules are simple and only need a single six-sided dice to play, and I've included plenty

of links so that potential players can read up about the period and style I'm looking for. Have a play and let me know what you think. Any feedback is welcome.

It's been a quiet couple of months at ODDS HQ, and (depending on when you read this issue) I'm looking forward to/having/had a quiet time over the holidays. I'm still working on the SKETCH roleplaying system for Farsight Games as well as taking care of this e-magazine and that's all well and good, but there's still something I need.

Articles.

And that's where you, the reader, comes in. I've put out the word that I need articles a few times, and as this e-magazine is free and I have other responsibilities I'm hoping that you can send me old or even new articles to be published. ODDS is going well but it will only keep going with the support of you, the gamer. Sort through your old work, email me any stuff you have and I'm sure I'll find a use for it.

Have a great Christmas

Keep on rollin'

JONATHAN HICKS
Editor



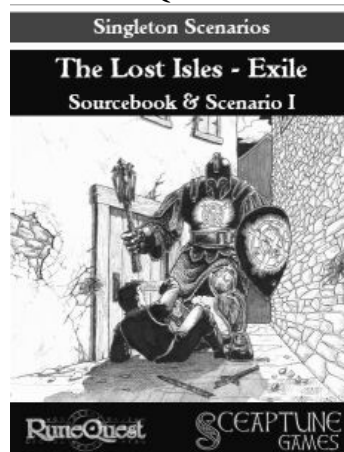
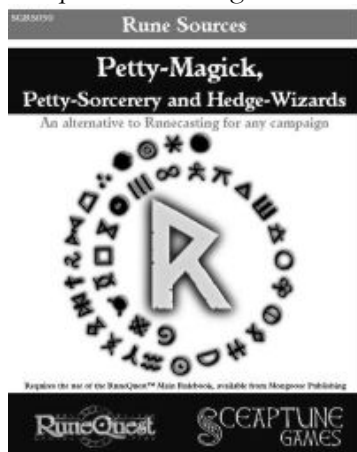
COMPETITION

Sponsored by



www.sceaptunegames.co.uk

ODDS Emagazine in association with **Sceaptune Games** want you to answer a question – and get these two *fantastic* RuneQuest books as a prize!



For more information on these two books, visit www.sceaptunegames.co.uk where you will find plenty of other RuneQuest goodies!

To be in with a chance to win these two books just answer the following question:

What are the following Runes and which three classic RuneQuest cults are associated with each group?



1



2



3

Email your answer to farsightgames@yahoo.co.uk with the subject header of 'RuneQuest Competition' and include your full postal address, and be in with a chance to get your hands on these amazing books! All entries must be in by January 31st 2009, the draw will take place on February 2nd and the winner will be announced in Issue 6 of ODDS.

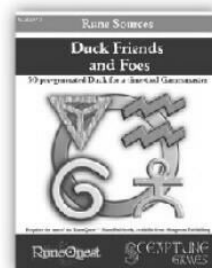
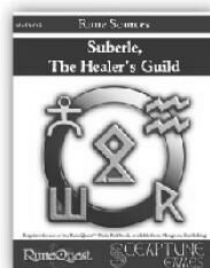
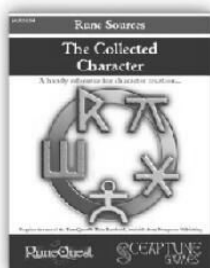
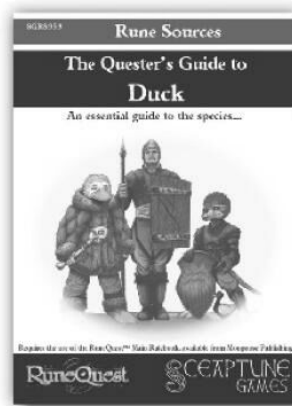
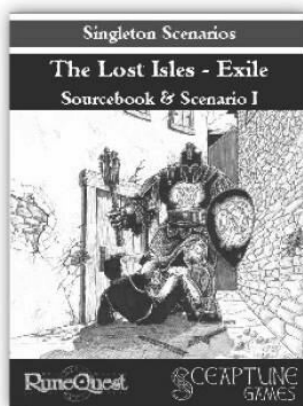
TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

Entries must be in by January 31st 2009. Competition is not open to employees (or members of their immediate families) of Sceaptune Games or Farsight Games. Only one entry per person. No responsibility can be accepted for entries that are lost or delayed, or which are not received for any reason. The winner will be the entrant who answers the question correctly and is drawn randomly from the entries. The closing date is January 31st 2009 and we reserve the right to amend the competition end date at any time. If you win the competition, we will notify you by e-mail. The judges' decision will be final, and no correspondence will be entered into. The prize will not be transferable to another person. No part of the prize is exchangeable for cash or any other prize. If an advertised prize is not available, we reserve the right to offer an alternative prize of equal or greater value. Incorrectly completed entries will be disqualified. We reserve the right to amend these rules at any time. We will endeavour to send prizes within a month of the competition end date but cannot guarantee this delivery time. The private information of entries will not be shared with any third party companies or publicised in any way or form.

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An interview with **TIM BANCROFT**

As part of this special competition issue of ODDS Emagazine we had a few words with Tim Bancroft of Sceptune Games to get an insight into the RPG industry, the Open Gaming License and tabletop roleplaying in general.

So what got you into roleplaying?

I was a member of a school wargames club when one of the other gamers came in and said, “My mate’s just come back from the US. Look what he found!” It was brown-book D&D, the first. Though we weren’t too sure about the Chainmail rules (but found the supplements as soon as they came out) we were completely hooked. Then came Traveller, which was brilliant and made SF RPG’s available, and then RuneQuest, which we loved. Of course, that also includes Tunnels and Trolls, Chivalry and Sorcery and a gamut of other RPGs.

There are plenty of games out there at the moment, from both the big companies and the indie publishers. What other RPGs do you enjoy?

Apart from RQ, I quite enjoy the occasional game of Call of Cthulhu – in our local group and at conventions... I think I’ll miss the Kult of Keepers. Being a bit of a Star Wars geek, I really enjoy running Star Wars Saga games and I also quite like playing/running Dungeons & Dragons 4e. I’ll drop into or run Traveller games, still, and sometimes continue a Conan campaign we have at my local group.

Obviously, RuneQuest is your game of choice. Why RuneQuest in particular?

When it first launched, the skills and magic system was wonderful. You pay

for what you wanted and shaped your character in the direction *you* wanted to go, unconstrained by classes. The combat system had a gritty feel rather than trying to be too detailed or too abstract and the world and default background (Glorantha) was also incredibly rich. It was great fun. The setting I created for my own games – the Lanor Campaign – was Dark Ages/Byzantine based, something which RQ supports really well, better than the high fantasy rulesets.

Mongoose RuneQuest has an early RQ feel. Sure, I don’t like everything about it, but then what roleplayer likes absolutely everything about a rules system? We’re a creative, thoughtful and imaginative bunch as a whole, so will always want to tailor rules our way. It’s the nature of tabletop RPGs, and one of its advantages.

It must be great producing material for the game. What got that started? How did Sceptune Games come about?

Frankly, my gran died and I received a bit of a legacy. I was looking for interesting work whilst studying theology, had been told constantly that I was a reasonable GM and had some great stuff (“*Why didn’t I publish it?*”), so though about setting up a games publisher. Whilst looking at creating some OGL products for d20, Mongoose announced their plans for RuneQuest and as I had always loved it, and it was a younger market (and was concerned that

d20 was post-heyday), I switched over immediately.

Tell us something about Open Gaming Licences. I have this image in my head that to get OGLs you have to spend hours over conference tables with a dozen lawyers hacking out an agreement with the publisher. Just how did you get the licence? What was involved?

To create a license you are probably right. But once the OGL was created, the system to which it related (d20) is effectively completely open – you can virtually do what you like with it. It was pretty radical and, I think, helped lift tabletop RPGs out of the doldrums.

The problem really comes with the logo license, the permission to use the logo with the product. For d20 and RuneQuest, you just had to send your details to Wizards orongoose and comply with the terms of the Logo License. The Logo License controls somewhat more than the OGL, such as some terms and aspects of the character creation rules, but gives a good identity.ongoose and Paizo, for example, have produced products under the OGL that are completely independent of the d20 license but heavily used the d20 SRD (System Reference Document).

With D&D4e, things have changed. The SRD is primarily a list of terms and such you can reference and use, as well as some suggested formats, but the logo is “Dungeons and Dragons”. It is much more tightly controlled than d20 but allows a much closer link to the main product: D&D.

Can you give us an inkling as to what's on the horizon for Sceptune Games? Any new product on its way?

There may not be too much this year as the RQ products we were working on ended up being duplicated byongoose, so we stopped working on

them. We have a couple more RQ Guild/Cult books well on the way and a scenario for the Lost Isles in playtesting, some small 4e supplements and also have a historical RQ book on the slips. The main thing is likely to be HyperLite – an Indie-style, lightweight-but-flexible RPG system. We're at the stage of running some demo/participation games of HyperLite-SF.

The industry has had its ups and downs but from what I gather it's maintaining a certain level of popularity right now. As part of the RPG industry, what do you see happening to tabletop RPGs in the future? Will they still be popular, or do you think other mediums such as online RPGs and console games will dominate?

Online RPGs – MMOs – and console games are already dominating. Given their ‘quick fix’, ‘instant gratification’ appeal and minimal start-up work it's hard to see how they won't continue to do so. Pretty soon they'll evolve into further and more detailed immersion, but I can still see multiple tiers depending on the level of immersion the gamers want.

Tabletop RPGs typically need more work and resources to get going but are far more social, enabling much richer interaction at present. They're extremely flexible and adaptable, too, and also allow for a great deal of immediate creativity. It's quite likely this richness – the incredible flexibility, adaptability, interaction and creativity – that keeps them going and retains their appeal. After all, the MMOs and console games have to be quite fixed in their setting and rules compliance. I much, much prefer tabletop RPGs to any online game, finding them substantially more satisfying and better fun. Providing the rules and GMs aren't too constraining, of course.

LET ME DO IT!

*Louis Turfrey begs and pleads to allow him to have a go in the captain's chair.
Alright, but only if you say please.*

One of the most difficult transitions that any role player can make is to change from a game player to a Gamesmaster. This is especially difficult when you do it for the first time. I have to say that I found it one of the most nerve-wracking experiences of my life, and its one of the reasons that I decided to write this article.

One day I was merrily flying along, blasting people out of the air with my blaster carbine, jetting at full thrust on my backpack, and then I'm suddenly falling out of the air, no fuel left and my repulsor belt not working. The Gamesmaster, no names mentioned, had taken it upon himself to role two dice. He'd then asked me to role a single dice. The problem came when my number matched one of the two on the dice. I had two simultaneous malfunctions. It cost my character his role in the game and a long stay in hospital. All because the Gamesmaster had decided to make the game interesting. It was then that I vowed to become a Gamesmaster, and that certain individuals would pay!

My plan was to create a fair gaming environment, where everybody was satisfied, and where there was a long-term interesting plot. HA! Little did I know. Thinking preparation was the key, I wrote page upon page of copious notes. There was a complex plot, with loads of badness and plenty of gunfights. I was ready, I was prepared, I would get my revenge (*manic cackle*).

As any good Gamesmaster will admit, things don't always go to plan. The Poodoo regularly hits the rotating pod racer engines. When this happens, it really happens big. In my case, I had

gotten fifteen minutes into the plot, when I suddenly realised the players were working it out in front of my eyes. The way things were going the three-hour gaming session would last thirty minutes. I quickly scribbled some notes down, trying to remain calm, and started to wing it. I had to keep as many notes as the players, constantly changing my mind about where the plot would lead. In the end I pulled every dirty trick in the book, trying to outwit the players. I felt like the game was running away from me, on an uncontrollable downward spiral. My breathing was shallow, my heart rate was up and the adrenaline was coursing through my veins! My God, this was exciting.

When the game finally came to an end, I was mentally exhausted. I had decided that then and there would be the last game that I would ever take control of. I was just about to tell everybody this and apologise for the poor game when one of them spoke.

"Wicked. I can't believe the rolls he made."

I sat there stunned for a moment. I then plucked up the courage and asked them what they thought of the game.

Paul enjoyed it, especially the tactical side. Jon, always to the point, said it was a good first attempt. Mark enjoyed the combat but would have preferred more character situations.

I quietly beamed to myself. Sure that my next few games would get better and better...

I was sadly disappointed. I didn't do enough preparation for the next set, and

consequently I wasn't able to wing it well enough. Besides, I came up with this weak crossover between the Star Wars and the Star Trek universes... it was awful. However, I kept trying and this is where the crux of the situation lies. No one can become a good Gamesmaster overnight. It's just not humanly possible. There are those that pick it up faster than others, and those that never got the knack. I think I fit somewhere in the middle.

So please take a moment to reflect upon this article and take heed if you are about to become a Gamesmaster for the first time.

1. There are no hard and fast rules on what works and what doesn't.
2. Pay no attention to those people who say it's easy, it isn't.
3. Give respect where respect is due, and if you enjoy somebody's game then tell them. You never know when they might return the favour.

4. Encourage people to give you honest feedback and don't be offended when you hear something you don't want to.

5. Take advice off other Gamesmasters. They often have more experience than you do, and can point out where the game slows. Let them help you to develop your own style of play, but try and take their advice on balance.

6. Be light-hearted, but not so flippant that it causes annoyance. And don't gloat.

7. Remember, a good Gamesmaster lets the game flow, doesn't control it too much and allows plenty of character interaction.

8. Above all - ***enjoy yourself***.

Louis Turfrey has been in the roleplaying scene for a good twenty years, is a staff member at www.lightsabre.co.uk and has written articles for MicroMart.

CREATING INTERESTING NPCs

One thing that a roleplaying game expects is abundant NPCs, non-player characters that populate the GM's setting with helping hands or dastardly plots. They're either background dressing or they're part of the story.

It's those 'part of the story' NPCs the player characters (PCs) will be spending a lot of their time with that'll need the work. This starship captain they've hired or that installation commander they've kidnapped. The key characters need dressing up.

VISUAL REFERENCE

The NPC in question will need an appearance, of course, so that the players will be able to visualise his or her presence in the game. This can be done one of three ways:

1. If you're talented artistically you can simply draw the character in question. Artwork of the NPC always works effectively as the design is almost always original, making the NPC unique.

2. A narrative description of main characters, denoting a simplistic facial or bodily appearance coupled with clothing style, always works. For example: *The*

short man is ugly with a small pig-nose and narrow eyes topped with thick eyebrows. His clothing is that of a blue flight suit, complete with tassels hanging down his back but it is filthy beyond comprehension - he looks as though he's been dragged through an old oil conduit'.

3. Take an existing picture from a sourcebook or any other reference material and simply say 'that's what they look like', adding the odd detail as far as changing the appearance goes.

The character must be firmly imprinted in the player's minds as play progresses to avoid questions such as 'which one was he again?' or 'what did he look like?' These queries can slow a game and suspend belief if players have to constantly remind themselves what the NPC looks like. If you have a picture of the character, place it on the table whilst the scene unfolds. If it's a description you have read out, then make sure you've done a convincing job. Sometimes, the need to remind players is necessary the first time they encounter your new NPC but don't be disheartened if they don't take to them straight away. As in real life, getting to know a face and name takes a little time.

It's usually the norm to base the way a character looks on their personality - if they dress dark and broody they're usually bad guys, dressed dirty and scruffy they could be common thieves, dressed well and clean shaven they're good people. This isn't always the case. Dress a person in black, give them a big gun but an even bigger heart and you've got an interesting character. Dress another in a smart casual suit with a bright smile and blue eyes, give them a black heart and devious mind and you've got an interesting character. Simply basing a personality around an appearance will dilute you're NPC's to the point of boring the players. Changing them constantly will keep the players on their toes, or at least stop

them from treating the characters as archetypes.

USING THE 'MOP'

The acronym in the above title is what you will use to give the character depth. There are usually three things that make up an individual - Motivation, Objectives and Personality. MOP.

When designing a fresh NPC think of MOP and make a separate heading for each letter of the acronym. Make a brief list of what kind of impact the character will have on the game you've designed and then list their MOP statistics under each heading. Don't put too many reasons under each one - after all, if an NPC is in the game because they want pretty much everything for every reason then you may as well create one stock character and use them for every game. Cue player boredom.

M - Motivation: What makes the character do what he does? If they're brutish and mean, why? Has one of the player characters crossed them in the past? Does he have a secret he's worried the players will discover? Does he have something on him he wants to keep hidden? The motivation for a person is a strong part of the psyche and must be treated with care. If the NPC is going to be with the campaign a while those motivations may change - hate into respect, keeping the secret into sharing the knowledge. Make sure the change of motivation suits not only the storyline but the character also. A broody, mean character will not suddenly become happy and friendly when something goes right or the players help them out. They may become a little more relaxed, but not a total reversal overnight.

Motivation powers the next step.

O - Objectives: The character you have created has motivation, but what exactly is he or she in the campaign for? Are they there to protect a secret, for

money or for some personal reasons? Do they intend to aid or hinder the players? At the end of the day an individual does something to reach a goal. You make your dinner with the intention of eating it. You aid a person to resolve a favour. You do the job to make the money. Every action has a result; it's just that with the NPC you've created the result is usually a lot more important than simply preparing food or helping out a friend. Let's say the NPC wants to help the players capture a crime boss. Why would he help? Is there a substantial reward? Has the crime boss done something to the NPC that revenge is the goal? Give the NPC a target and then send them off - their personality will determine exactly how they go about achieving that goal.

P - Personality: Even though the NPC may have the motivation and the objective, these reasons will not be communicated to the players until it's appropriate. It's the way the NPC acts that the players will get to know first. Take the character's appearance, motivation and objectives and try to create an interesting individual. Don't always go for the obvious. You know that kindly old alien who helped the players secure that medicine for the pilot

of the team so that he could get over the fever? Well, it turns out she picked their pockets whilst they were asleep and skipped the town. That nasty old fellow in the corner with the dark eyes and the big rifle? It's all for show - he's actually never seen combat and is about as useful as a chocolate sun hat. A good mix of appearances and actions always serves to build a good character. You can still have your dirty mugger, your darkly-dressed bounty hunter and your clean shaven heroes but it pays to throw in the odd contradiction every now and then.

So there you have it. Take an appearance and MOP it. At the end of the day what truly creates a memorable NPC is the GM; the way the character is portrayed is very important. Glare at the players if the NPC has a grudge, smile lots and keep batting your eyelids if the NPC is happy but nervous. Take these traits and blow them out of proportion. If they act in a certain way and talk in a certain manner it's possible to just start playing the NPC without introducing them by name. If one of the players turns around and says 'that's so-and-so, that is' then you know you've done your job.

SAMPLE CHARACTER

Grone Darkwin, human bounty hunter

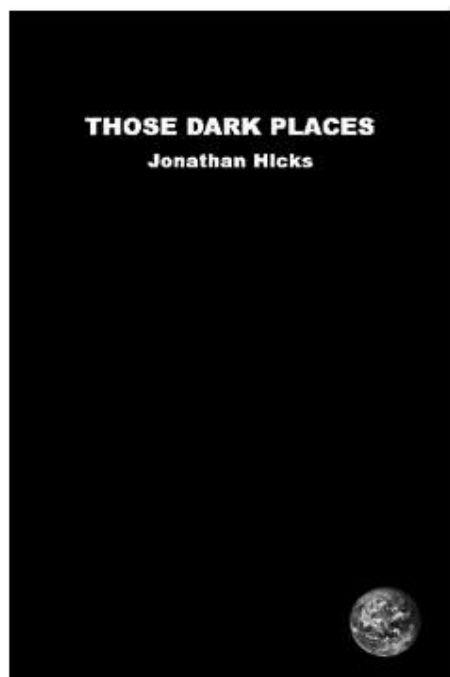
Appearance - Grone is a short human with dark green and brown conflict clothes, usually worn under armour but, as far as can be told, worn here as part of his general attire. A rough flight coat with upturned lapels gives the otherwise rounded, boyish face a guarded look. Wide eyes topped by thin brows, a furrowed forehead and racing goggles holding back long, matted hair. A pistol hangs from a cord at his waist, his cracked black boots reaching his knees but obviously of two different sizes.

M - Fame. Grone wants to be feared and respected as a bounty hunter.

O - To track down Turgen, a local ganglord. The players are going after Turgen, so he'll utilise their help for his own ends. If he gets Turgen, he'll get the reputation he's been looking for.

P - Very gruff and short-sentenced, but after a few minutes he'll relax. He's very forthcoming with stories of his achievements but keeps his mouth closed about his failures. As far as he's concerned he's already famous, and he doesn't mind letting anyone around him know that.

Advertisement



Jonathan Hicks, published twice in the British Science Fiction Association's writer's magazine 'FOCUS' and the mission designer/dialogue writer of the mobile telephone game of acclaimed television show 'Battlestar Galactica', presents twelve short stories about the little people in the big universe.

"I grew up with the grandiose science fiction tales, in books and on film, with great galaxy-spanning adventures or life-changing technologies. In this book I concentrate on the 'little guy', the people who work behind the scenes and those who get a less than stellar deal out of the supposed adventure travelling the galaxy and exploring new technologies offers."

Available from all leading bookstores

ISBN 978-1-84753-669-3

Contains strong language and some violence

MACABRE

A Devilishly Simple Roleplaying Game



A Free SKETCH System Roleplaying Game
From
FARSIGHT GAMES

Designed and Written by
JONATHAN HICKS

Interior Artwork from
www.godecookery.com

© 2008 *Farsight Games*

Welcome to MACABRE, a free roleplaying game system presented by ODDS, The Tabletop Roleplaying E-Magazine.

MACABRE is an extremely simple roleplaying system that utilises a single six-sided die, otherwise known as a D6. The D6 is used for every aspect of the game.

MACABRE is a game about something that is a part of every culture's history – witchcraft. As the game is supposed to be short and sweet, to include a long description about witchcraft and it's history, lore and impact on the varying cultures would fill up a whole book in itself, let alone a short 20-page emagazine such as this.

So, as this is an internet magazine and from that it can be concluded that you have accessed this e-zine via the internet (my investigation skills know no bounds) what I have done is include some links to the website 'Wikipedia', which contains all kinds of information and links to all kinds of other information, that you can read and use in your games.

Please be aware that the use of Wikipedia is purely for practical purposes, and there are plenty of links from that site to other websites that can help you. Wikipedia can be edited and updated by anyone with a modem and so the information may be just someone's opinion so don't take the information as total fact. Still, there's plenty of material you can use for your games.

The main Witchcraft entry is here:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witchcraft>

There's an article about the Middle Ages, the primary time period of the game, here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages

Here's information about witch-hunts:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witchhunt>

Here's a general Spells section, but there's plenty of links off here depending on what kind of magic you're going to use in your game:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spell_\(paranormal\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spell_(paranormal))

Curses are always good fun - here's a link:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curse>

And here's a selection of links to different sections of the site that deal with Magic:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic>

Finally, the illustrations and some other great stuff can be found here:

<http://www.godecooking.com/macabre/macabre.htm>

DISCLAIMER

After putting those links up I feel I need to explain something to the reader. I do not, have not and do not intend to get involved with anything to do with magic. Ever. Let's ignore the fact that I'm posting these links to help you with a make believe history for a moment and let's be clear about this. I do not believe in magic and refer to it only as a tool to be used in a game. I'm sure there are people out there who do believe in, maybe even practice, magic and more power to them – that's their business and I'm not intruding on or mocking that at all. I'm using historical magic as a tool to entertain and I'm not trying to offend, disgust or outrage anyone. If you do find this offensive, don't play it. That's all the advice I can give.

THE CRUX OF THE GAME

There are several ways to play MACABRE. As it is a game about witchcraft, primarily in the Middle Ages, there will be some, if not a lot, of magic involved. The players will decide the style of game. The options are:

Witchcraft is evil – the players must do what they can to destroy it!

Witchcraft is good – the players must stop themselves from being destroyed!

Witchcraft is a tool – players (spellcasters and normal people alike) must work together to stop its evil use.

This game is under the assumption that most players will go for option 3 and allow a mix of characters in the game. To this end, the game is styled around groups of adventurers who know both combat and magic and use their skills to stop evil magic users and daemons from walking the Earth. These groups of adventurers are called ‘Seekers’.

The Church (or the equivalent religious body) use groups of Seekers to root out evil magic and creatures to help protect the lands. They are also hired by traders and whole towns and villages to help rid them of evil scourges.



THE RULES

All characters are represented by two things – their **STRENGTH** and their **SKILLS**. **STRENGTH** is a single score that decides how much physical damage a person can take. This is decided by rolling 1D3 and adding 2 to the result, to get a number between 3 and 5. If this score ever reaches zero, the character is unconscious. If it ever goes *below* zero, the character is dead.

$$\text{STRENGTH} = 1\text{D}3 + 2$$

SKILLS are divided into six groups. The Character rolls a 1D6 for each skill group – this number is what the player has to roll or less on 1D6 to succeed in an action. This means that during character creation, the higher the roll the better!

The Skill Roll Golden Rule is:

Rolls of 1 are always a success; rolls of 6 are always a failure.

Each skill group, from Agility through to Sorcery, covers abilities that are unique to that group. This means that if the character has an Agility score of 4, then any action that required a physical action would have a skill level of 4. Agility would cover all actions such as climbing a rockface to leaping a gorge to riding a horse. So, instead of reading down a long list of individual skills, the player would simply choose the skill group the action they wish to perform is most likely covered by and they roll against that skill group's level.

The time it takes to perform a skill is up to the GM, but in general each action takes one round to perform. A single action round is five seconds long.

So, for jumping onto a moving wagon, the player rolls against their Agility skill level. For shooting at someone with a bow, they roll against their Combat skill level. To con an NPC out of their money they roll against their Personality skill level.

All skill rolls are made this way, with the exception of Opposed Rolls and certain types of combat. See the skill group descriptions below to get a better idea of where skills should be placed.



Roll 1D6 for each Skill Group

Agility - This skill allows the character to do all kinds of non-combat physical actions, such as climbing, jumping, horse riding or lifting.

Artisan – This skill gives the character the ability to do work of a delicate nature, such as carpentry, metalwork and pottery. It is also used for intelligence-based skill rolls, such as reading, writing and arithmetic.

Combat – The ability to use fists, swords (both one- and two-handed), spears and bows.

For hand to hand or weapon combat, use the 'Opposing Rolls' system, by each player rolling a D6 and adding their Combat skill level to the roll. Whoever rolls the **highest** number wins the round and the loser takes damage. If the rolls are tied, they have parried each other in that round, no damage has been taken on either side and they must roll again.

For missile weapons, such as thrown item and bows, roll against the Combat skill level as you would for a normal skill roll.

Personality – Use this skill when you need to charm, bargain, persuade or even seduce another character (note that this skill cannot be used on PCs).

Water – If you take to the water you need to know what to do. This skill covers rolls for swimming, boating and anything to do with sailing.

Sorcery – This skill allows the character to use magic; witchcraft, sorcery, divination, summoning... this skill covers them all. See the SORCERY section below for more information.

To succeed in a roll a player must roll 1 six-sided die. If the number rolled equals the skill number or lower then the roll is a success. If they roll higher than the number, then it is a failure.

Therefore, if the character has a skill level of 4, then the player must a 1, 2, 3 or 4 on a single six-sided die to succeed. Any other number rolled is a failure.

Remember the Skills Golden Rule is:
Rolls of 1 are always a success; rolls of 6 are always a failure.

The GM can change the character's skill level if they feel that the action they wish to perform is more difficult, or even easier, than normal. They can raise the skill level to simulate an easier action, or lower it for harder ones. The general guidelines are:



<u>Difficulty</u>	<u>Change Skill Level By:</u>
Very easy	+3
Easy	+2
Normal	0
Hard	-1
Very Hard	-2
Extremely Hard	-3

OPPOSING ROLLS

If for any reason two characters ‘face off’, pitting either wits or physical skills against one another, then do the following; each player rolls the D6 and adds their applicable skill level to the result. Whoever rolls the highest wins the face-off. If the rolls are tied then roll again until someone wins.

For hand to hand or weapon combat (**not** missile weapons), use the Opposing Rolls system, with each player rolling a D6 and adding his or her Combat skill level to the roll. Whoever rolls the highest number wins the round and the loser takes damage. If the rolls are tied, they have parried each other in that round, no damage has been taken on either side and they must roll again.

IMPORTANT!

Ignore the ‘ones are always a success, sixes are always a failure’ rule for opposed rolls.

DAMAGE

If a character ‘takes damage’, then this means they are reducing their STRENGTH score by the amount of damage they have taken. For every 1 point of damage taken, the character reduces their STRENGTH by 1 point. If the STRENGTH score ever reaches zero, the character is unconscious. If it ever goes *below* zero, the character is dead.

If a PC wants to heal, they’ll get 1 STRENGTH point back per 24 hours of rest.

Below are the common causes of damage. The ‘damage’ number is the amount of points that have to be taken from the STRENGTH score.

<u>Damage Source</u>	<u>Damage</u>
Hand to Hand (punch, kick, headbutt)	1
Knife, dagger, club	2
One Handed (Sword, Mace, Axe)	3
Bow and Crossbow	3
Two Handed (Sword, Axe, Mace and Polearms)	4
Falling – 1 damage point for every 3 yards fallen.	
Suffocating – 1 damage point for every 1 round (five seconds) the character is deprived of air (drowning, choking etc)	
Collision – 1 damage point for every 10 yards an hour an object is moving.	

Characters can save themselves from combat damage if they are using a shield or wearing armour, and armour is used the same way as skill levels.

Each type of armour is given a skill level depending on its protective capability. This means that the better the skill level, the better the armour is at stopping damage.

If a character loses a combat round they can roll their shield or armour skill rank – if they succeed, they do not take any damage.

A shield cannot be used in conjunction with bows, crossbows or two-handed weapons. If a shield is used in conjunction with another armour type then you can roll for each one once, first for the shield then the armour. If the shield fails to stop the blow then the armour just might.

The types of armour and their skill ranks are listed below.

Shield	1
Leather Armour	2
Chainmail	3
Plate Armour	4 (Plate armour is quite cumbersome – lower Agility skill level by 2 points when worn. Rolls of one are always a failure and sixes are still a success)

SORCERY

Or magic. Or witchcraft. Or devilry. Whatever you want to call it – sorcery is a skill like no other.

Having the sorcery skill does not automatically mean that the character is capable of casting spells. It is also a knowledge skill, so that if the PC comes across anything that they may think is linked to sorcery, they can roll against this skill to see if they're right. It's a way of determining what the PCs know about magic and witchcraft.

Of course, it is also a way of casting spells. MACABRE is not made up of long spell lists, explaining results and making rolls, and it certainly isn't about casting fireballs or striking your enemy with lightning from your fingertips (although you can if you want!). Rolling against the sorcery skill enables the caster to cast a spell – and it is up to the caster what they want to happen.

Have a look at the links provided to see what kind of magic is possible, but pretty much anything the caster wants to happen can happen. If they want a cow's milk to curdle – roll against sorcery. If they want a man's hair to fall out – roll against sorcery. If they want to fly through the night on a broom – roll against sorcery. All they have to remember is that every time they cast a spell they use up 1 point from their STRENGTH level *but only once they have successfully cast the spell* – they can roll failures as much as they like but it's only once the spell is successful the STRENGTH point is taken away.

The lowering of STRENGTH works in exactly the same way as normal damage, so be careful! Too much spellcasting might be bad for your health. This STRENGTH

reduction lasts for 24 hours for each point, so if the caster uses up 2 points of STRENGTH, they'll get 1 point back every 24 hours, and so must wait for a full 48 hours before their strength returns.

Here's an added bonus, and it's always fun at parties – if a PC or an NPC wants to curse someone, they lose 1 point off their STRENGTH score permanently, unless the curse is lifted or broken or the cursed character dies. If a curse is put on a family, the caster loses 2 points of STRENGTH permanently, and to curse a bloodline through the ages also costs 2 points of STRENGTH but note that, unless the bloodline comes to an end in their lifetime, bloodline curses will result in a permanent 2 points of STRENGTH loss from the caster. For dramatic effect, it's always effective to curse someone on your deathbed. It can be a bit of a letdown if you fail the Sorcery skill roll, though.

It's important to remember to be realistic when the spells are being cast, and it's best to restrict yourself to the spells and incantations used in the links above. It gets a bit awkward when players want to drop the Moon on someone's head – it's a nice idea, but not very realistic.

THE THING IN THE HOLD

A short encounter for MACABRE

INTRODUCTION

The following short encounter has been designed with the beginning character in mind.

The whole event revolves around one generic docking pier which can be in the south of England, or the north of France, or anywhere you think is suitable or wherever you're setting your MACABRE games.

This information is for the Gamemaster's eyes ONLY!

If you intend to be a player then don't ruin the game by reading any further.

ENCOUNTER OUTLINE

The PCs are asked to travel to the port to oversee the transfer of cargo from the trade ship *Moonwatcher*. There have been several rumours concerning the ship, about how it uses dark magic to get from port to port in record times. As Seekers, the PCs have been asked to cast their eyes over the proceedings by the local religious figure, Father Tiberius Flute, who has been contacted by a tradesman called William Shipper.

The encounter will drop the players in the middle of the situation and then it's up to them how they get out of it.

THE NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

There now follows the NPC's that will also be included in the encounter.

THE EMPLOYERS



Father Tiberius Flute - Strength: 4, Agility 2, Artisan 3, Combat 1, Personality 3, Water 3, Sorcery 5.

The NPC the players will be working for is a businessman named William Shipper. He is a thin wiry man with long hair and a penchant for bemoaning his bad luck.

William Shipper – Strength: 4, Agility 5, Artisan 3, Combat 3, Personality 2, Water 4, Sorcery 1.

William Shipper's second is a dark-robed man named Hans. He appears to be William Shipper's bodyguard but has never actually seen any action, making him nervous and indecisive.

Hans – Strength: 5, Agility 3, Artisan 5, Combat 4, Personality 2, Water 2, Sorcery 1.



Then there are four other heavies that work as labourers for William Shipper. They all have Strength 4 and skill group levels of 3. They will take no part in any action unless things get really hairy.

THE CREW OF THE *MOONWATCHER*

This is the enemy of William Shipper, who immediately becomes the enemy of the NPC's whilst they work for him. He is the master of the Moonwatcher and his name is **Armand De Gwynn** is the self-proclaimed master of the seas, although he wields very little power. He is a huge man with a horrendously scarred face, which he tries to keep hidden behind a scarf.



Armand De Gwynn – Strength: 4, Agility 2, Artisan 4, Combat 2, Personality 1, Water 3, Sorcery 3.

Armand De Gwynn's heavies are his crew, numbering 24 in total.

Armand De Gwynn's Heavies – Strength: 3, Agility 3, Artisan 2, Combat 3, Personality 5, Water 2, Sorcery 1.

THE ENCOUNTER

It can start however the GM wants it to – maybe the players are relaxing in an alehouse and are approached by William Shipper and Father Tiberius Flute with a job offer. Perhaps they're actually looking for work and find out that William Shipper needs help with this particular problem.

William Shipper has three tons of cargo he is having delivered by the Moonwatcher. All the players have to know is that William Shipper wants the cargo unloaded quietly, but he is outraged that Armand De Gwynn is charging him a ridiculous price for the shipment. He has accused the trader of witchcraft and this has gotten Father Flute involved. As the spiritual leader of the port he feels he must look into the accusations and has therefore approached the PCs to help.

Upon arrival at the port, the players will be shown to the Moonwatcher by Hans and William and told that the cargo will be unloaded shortly. It is at this point William Shipper should show his nervousness. He will wring his hands and continually question why the cargo hasn't already been shipped off.

A short time later, effectively just as the players themselves get nervous, a large group of men turn up.

Armand De Gwynn has sprung a trap.

Heavies appear across the edge of the port, along the top of the walls, and take aim with crossbows.

Armand De Gwynn calls out that the ship should be left alone or the players will die. William Shipper says that Armand De Gwynn will kill them anyway, and he runs for the ship – the only place where they can all take cover once the crossbows start firing.

Which they do.

Don't have lots of bolts fired at the PCs – the chances are they'll be cut down. The idea is to have them chased onto the ship, so just make sure the shots land close and are getting closer, herding them to the ship.

The PC's are now trapped on the Moonwatcher. The players have to figure a way out, either fighting or subterfuge. Armand De Gwynn will send three-man teams in every ten real-time minutes to try to flush them out so that he can take back his boat.

POSSIBLE ESCAPE SOLUTIONS

Using the ship – Unfortunately, the Moonwatcher needs a crew. Simply sailing away is not an option.

Fighting their way out – With the odds against them this is the riskiest option. There are a lot of men, all armed with crossbows and swords.

Bargaining – What do the player's have that Armand De Gwynn would want in exchange for their lives?

Sneaking out – Armand De Gwynn's Heavies will have the entrances covered, but is there any other way out? Somehow sneak past the men?

THE HOLD

Deep in the hold of the Moonwatcher is the reason that Armand wanted the players and William away from the ship – there is a daemon down there, a creature of Beelzebub that has been summoned by Armand to cast spells that increase the wind, driving the ship forward and making journeys in amazing time.

The creature has the body of a man and the face of a beast – it also has a beaked face on its backside that is always spouting abuse at whoever it's facing. It gibbers and growls.



The daemon has the ability to conjure wind and it will keep the PCs back by blasting them with it – they must make successful Agility skill rolls or keep falling down.

WIND DAEMON: Strength: 7, Agility 3, Artisan 2, Combat 5, Personality 1, Water 6, Sorcery 5.

Spells: Wind blast – a successful roll knocks over anyone it is facing.

The encounter will need improvisation on behalf of the GM, but the situation is a dangerous one – if they see an opening then give them a chance. The encounter should not be drawn out and lengthened or the players will simply get bored of the situation they are in.

MACABRE

CHARACTER SHEET

Player Name: _____

Character Name: _____

Age: _____ Height: _____ Weight: _____

Description:

STRENGTH: _____

Equipment:

Agility _____

Artisan _____

Combat _____

Personality _____

Water _____

Sorcery _____

Spells:

Notes:

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