

JAMES AND ROBYN GEORGE  
**EPOCH**  
A GAME OF STONE AND SPELL



**W**ide  
House  
Rules

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by James & Robyn George

Electronic Edition

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For Robyn, whose love, support,  
and invaluable insights  
got this fossil out of the ground...

Cover and interior art by  
James S. George, made from the public  
domain the old-fashioned way

In loving memory of  
Ray Harryhausen and Willis O'Brien,  
the masters of stop-motion...

And with an epoch of thanks to  
Ben Baldwin, Kenneth Beggs,  
Brett Bernstein, John Feldman, Tim Fox,  
Matt Jackson, Robert Maynard,  
Kai Puetz (as Gregorius 21778), Jon Salway,  
Talon Waite, any everyone else  
who continues to make it worthwhile

Also, to Loki, the best dog ever...

## CONTENTS

A Letter.....	1	Order of Action.....	16
Introduction.....	2	Attack Rolls.....	16
On Dice.....	4	Injuries.....	17
Characters.....	4	An Encounter.....	17
Clans/Tribes.....	4	Medicinals.....	19
Skills.....	5	Hazards.....	19
Specialists.....	6	Non-Combat.....	20
Shamans.....	7	Item Breakage.....	21
Action Pools.....	7	Figures.....	22
Weaklings.....	7	Advancement.....	22
Hit Points.....	7	Predators/Prey.....	24
Rest/Recovery.....	9	Harvesting.....	32
Languages.....	9	World-Making.....	34
Artifacts/Trade.....	9	Settlements.....	34
Advancement.....	11	Interiors.....	35
Makka.....	11	Terrain Limits.....	35
Shamanism.....	12	Encounters.....	36
Totems.....	12	Rival Parties.....	37
Spellcasting.....	14	Exposure.....	37
Game Time.....	15	The Weather.....	39
Combat Actions.....	16	Exceptional Foes.....	39



2 March, 1929

Dr. W. O'Brien  
1886 M. J. Young Ave.  
Chapel Pines, CA

Dearest Dr. O'Brien,

This dispatch has arrived to you with great difficulty, having been intercepted many times, most recently in Gibraltar, where our best material artifacts, including the red-ochre claw obtained on recent digs, were lost after a scuffle, leaving only this manuscript to sustain our work. I trust it has arrived safely.

What follows speaks of a long-lost epoch at odds with modern scholarship. Giant reptiles, the dinosaurs, ruled this primitive world, with our forebears, lately come, trembling in their wake. It was the battle for our right to survive, and I curse those pirates who, after great violence, destroyed vital evidence.

Take the enclosed papers and get them to our contacts before fate intervenes. As you certainly understand, conditions are worsening here, and I expect to relocate soon, perhaps to South or Central America, where our research may resume uninterrupted. My sources indicate fresh clues about this long-forgotten world.

I remain yours truly,

Dr. R. H. Hausen  
Neandertal, Deutschland



This is a prehistoric fantasy game, the more so because it imagines an alternate timeline where humans and dinosaurs coexisted, creatures from multiple eras living side by side: brontosaurus and mammoths, neanderthals, alongside their modern cousins, and tyrannosaurs, deadly beasts from the nightmares of antiquity...

And it supposes that magic was real. The animism our ancestors doubtless followed, complete with the spirits of nature and spells cast in their name, awaited those who knew how to use it. And like all timeless stories, mighty figures, hunters of renown, populated a world fraught with terrors to match whatever the future held.

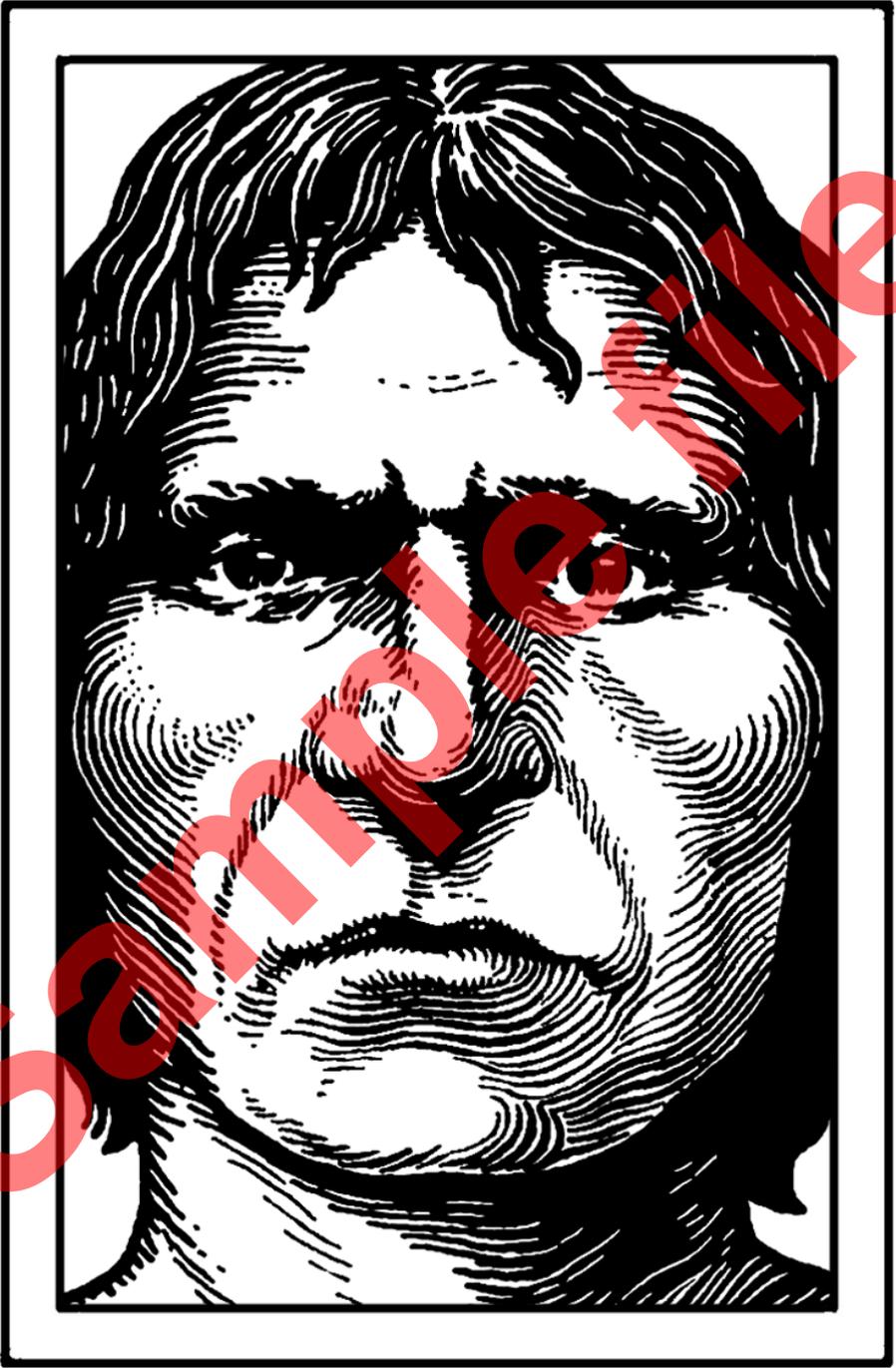
In short, a world of high adventure wrapped in simple rules inspired by roleplay's first epoch...

## INTRODUCTION

Like all games of this sort, one player is the REFEREE, creating an original world setting and acting out its inhabitants (NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS or NPCs), deciding in-game outcomes, often by rolling dice, and otherwise overseeing a fantasy CAMPAIGN. This involves hard work and advance preparation, but the effort pays off.

Everyone else is a PLAYER, roleplaying characters of their own creation and exploring the universe their referee has made, all while working as a team to survive the perils of prehistory. These PLAYER CHARACTERS complete the game as its shakers and movers.

During play, the referee describes what the player characters experience, and the players decide how best to respond, living by their gameplay choices. Inevitably, some will die, replaced with another; but those fortunate enough to survive grow in power and ability, tackling even greater challenges while rewriting history.



Finally, while standalone sessions will happen, most games resume where the last left off as part of a serial narrative, noting that gameplay, however perilous, is never competitive. Referees challenge their players with fairness and impartiality, while players work together for mutual benefit. The end result is fun...

## ON DICE

Epoch uses regular six-sided dice, the ordinary d6, to resolve difficult actions, with the number rolled using a time-tested shorthand for convenience:

Number Rolled	Shorthand
One	1d6
Two	2d6
Three	3d6

In-game actions require 2d6 rolled against a challenge rating established by the referee, with specialists using 3d6 for better outcomes as explained later...

## CHARACTERS

The first step for players is character creation, being equally important to referees, who fashion the NPCs inhabiting their world. In either case, creation employs the following steps, fleshing out aspiring heroes and equipping them for the dangers to come:

## CLANS/TRIBES

Adventurers rarely settle in one place, with their so-called HUNTING PARTIES welcoming all peoples, even outcasts, into the fold. That said, the wandering parties which result might include neanderthals, more modern humans, and sometimes, clever shamans from either camp, channeling what powers the nature spirits give...

All characters hail from a preferred CLAN (or TRIBE) in whatever prehistory beckons them:

The BONE CHILDREN (*homo neanderthalensis*) are a short, stocky tribe with heavy brows for a primitive aspect concealing high intelligence. Physically powerful, Bones possess superior strength, twice that of their modern counterparts, allowing attempts normally impossible for weaker characters. A long-enduring people.

The STONE PEOPLE (*homo sapiens*) are physically modern humans, who, while lacking the primitive might of the Bone Children, enjoy a 3-point ACTION POOL allowing for automatic success when the dice otherwise mean failure, subject to the rules which follow. Resourceful by nature and socially adept, the Stones thrive.

## SKILLS

The prehistoric world is simpler, with all characters having some aptitude with a general body of SKILLS randomly generated by rolling 3d6 in alphabetical order, with each score applying some modifier to any related actions as indicated on the following table:

Score	Modifier	Score	Modifier
3	-3	13-15	+1
4-5	-2	16-17	+2
6-8	-1	18	+3

Scores of 9-12 offer no bonus/penalty.

Players can swap any two scores of their choice, making the character they want and facilitating a strategic balance of capabilities within the party. Moreover, each character must SPECIALIZE in a single skill, rolling 3d6 for applicable actions, subject to what modifiers may apply, except where the referee dictates otherwise.