

CONTENTS

Our minds are our own, our thoughts incomprehensible to others. Should you wish to understand the wisdom of others, that will cost you extra.

• MERROX, MASTER OF THE HALL OF RECORDS •

INHERITANCE	5	DISCIPLINES	35
INTRODUCTION.....	11	To Live Life as an Adept.....	35
The World of Earthdawn.....	11	On Discipline and Identity	35
What is a Roleplaying Game?.....	12	On Individuality and the Adept's Way.....	36
How to Use This Book.....	12	On Becoming an Initiate	36
GAME CONCEPTS.....	13	On the Acquisition of Multiple Disciplines	37
Adepts and Disciplines.....	13	Concerning Other Disciplines.....	37
Character Record Sheet.....	13	Personal Visions.....	37
Steps & Action Dice.....	13	Initiation Into a Discipline.....	38
Action Tests	14	Training for Circle Advancement.....	38
Time.....	16	Half-Magic	39
Distances and Weights.....	16	Discipline Descriptions	39
The Passions	17	Air Sailor.....	42
Magic.....	17	Archer.....	43
The Horrors.....	18	Beastmaster.....	44
NAMEGIVER RACES.....	19	Cavalryman	45
Dwarfs.....	19	Elementalist	46
Elves.....	20	Illusionist.....	47
Humans	21	Nethermancer	48
Obsidimen.....	21	Scout.....	49
Orks	22	Sky Raider	50
Trolls.....	23	Swordmaster.....	51
T'skrang	23	Thief.....	52
Windlings.....	24	Troubadour	53
CREATING CHARACTERS.....	25	Warrior.....	54
Building a Hero.....	25	Weaponsmith.....	55
Choose a Discipline	25	Wizard.....	56
Choose a Race.....	26	TALENTS.....	57
Generate Attributes	26	Using Talents.....	57
Determine Characteristics.....	27	Talent Descriptions.....	59
Record Racial Abilities	29	SKILLS.....	87
Assign Talent Ranks & Spells.....	29	Learning & Improving Skills.....	87
Assign Skill Ranks.....	30	Using Skills	87
Equip Your Character.....	31	Artisan Skills	88
Flesh Out Your Character	31	General Skills	88
Play the Game	33	Knowledge Skills.....	89
Sample Character.....	34	Language Skills.....	91
		Skill Descriptions.....	91



WORKINGS OF MAGIC 104
 The Cycle of Magic 104
 Magic in Our World..... 104
 Astral Space 108
 Astral Sensing..... 110

THREAD MAGIC 113
 Nature of Threads..... 113
 Weaving Threads to Magic Items 114
 Weaving Threads to Pattern Items 117
 Thread Magic and Group True Patterns 120

BLOOD MAGIC 123
 Blood Wounds..... 123
 Common Blood Magic..... 123
 Sacrifice Magic..... 126
 Familiars..... 127

SPELL MAGIC..... 129
 About Spellcasting 129
 Talents for Casting Spells 129
 Spell Threads 130
 Learning Spells 130
 Grimoires 131
 Casting Spells..... 132
 Spellcasting Sequence..... 133
 Spellcasting Methods..... 134
 Dispelling Magic 138
 Illusions 139

SPELLS..... 140
 Discipline Spell Lists..... 142
 Spell Descriptions 146

SUMMONING 211
 On Spirits 211
 How Summoning Works..... 211
 Repeated Summonings..... 212

Banishing..... 213
 Dangers of Summoning 213
 Summoning Named Spirits 213

COMBAT 214
 Combat Summary..... 214
 Actions 215
 Resolving Attacks..... 218
 Using Shields 219
 Effects of Injury 220
 Combat Options..... 221
 Situation Modifiers 226
 Types of Combat..... 228
 Close Combat..... 229
 Ranged Combat..... 230
 Spell Combat..... 232
 Mounted Combat..... 233
 Aerial Combat..... 234

BUILDING YOUR LEGEND 236
 Earning Legend Points..... 236
 Tallying Legend Points 236
 Spending Legend Points..... 237
 Advancing Discipline Circles 239
 Learning New Disciplines..... 241
 Legendary Status..... 244
 Adventuring Groups..... 244

GOODS AND SERVICES 247
 Item Characteristics 247
 Weapons..... 248
 Armor & Shields 254
 Magical Equipment..... 257
 Adventuring Equipment 266
 Services..... 269
 Mounts..... 270
 Thread Items 275
 Clothing..... 281

BARSAIVE PROVINCE 282
 Overview 282
 Plains 283
 Hills and Mountains..... 284
 Jungles and Forests..... 285
 The Serpent River 286
 The Serpent Lakes..... 288
 The Mist Swamps..... 288
 Seas and Oceans 289
 Major Powers..... 289

APPENDIX 293
 Archetype Characters 293
 Optional Rules..... 300

INDEX..... 301
CHARACTER RECORD SHEET..... 303

INHERITANCE

When the Scourge ended, we were determined to reclaim our heritage. But we were not yet ready to pay the price.

• TOLAN ODDEAR, HISTORIAN OF LANDIS •

Yes, it is a fine axe, and tempered in many battles, my friend. Its head has even tasted the blood of a Horror. How did I gain possession of such a fine weapon? Well, fill my mug with more of that fine dwarf stout and I'll gladly tell you the tale. 'Twas during an expedition to the lost city of Jalendale. I shall never forget it. We set out on a cold, wet day, much like today—the elven magician, myself, and the warrior who wielded this mighty axe, the troll called Lorm ...

▲ ▲ ▲

I ran up the steep, rocky slope, breathing in steaming gasps. Over the din of rain pelting the nearby rocks, I could hear the ork scorchers below. I stumbled and rolled down a few lengths then regained my feet, strands of moss now clinging to my matted red beard. As I fumbled to put my helmet back on my head, arrows hissed past, striking rocks upslope. Fear gave my legs new strength and I quickly crested the hill, diving for cover behind the boulder I had seen my companions use earlier.

Glancing up, I saw Lorm's green wart-covered fist holding his huge axe a finger's width away from Mestoph's face. The hair tufts in Lorm's large ears twitched and his nostrils dilated. His rough tongue rimmed his left tusk, and his yellow eyes glared from the slits formed by his pockmarked eyelids. Lorm was one unhappy troll. "Where's all the gold? Where's this lost city? *Where is Jalendale?*"

Mestoph shook his long white hair away from his face, revealing an ugly sneer. He stared at Lorm with the orb of magical amber that served as his left eye.

I wheezed over to Lorm, reached up and tapped him near his belt.

"Wouldn't you rather kill some scorchers?"

"No thanks, dwarf."

"Then perhaps you would consider killing some scorchers before killing me?" Mestoph asked.

Lorm blinked at the elf's question, then pulled his axe away from our magician. Mestoph slumped away from Lorm into a puddle, rain dripping from his aquiline features. Noticing that Lorm and Mestoph had leaned their packs against the boulder, I took mine off too. As feeling returned to my shoulders I looked downhill.

The ork scorchers had taken cover about halfway up the hill. Apparently they were concerned about what sort of defense we would concoct and wanted to consider the possibilities before charging up the last open stretch of ground. They were giving us more credit than we deserved.

I took a step toward Mestoph, and the elf fixed me with his amber eye.

"I swear the maps put Jalendale here, or close to here."

"Well that's great. How about whipping up a spell to take care of a few angry scorchers?"

"I am afraid my 'destroy angry ork' selection is limited."

"Then how about something from your 'take action to make angry troll happy' collection?"

Mestoph nodded. He squatted and crabbed along the ground, careful to stay behind the boulder as he gathered a few pebbles and began to weave a spell.

Lorm and I had seen this one before. I drew my short sword. Lorm grabbed his axe with both hands.

Suddenly the sky above us darkened and within minutes we were enveloped by a blackness so deep we could barely make out the stones at our feet. This was midnight dark, copper-cavern-no-lamp dark. This was Mestoph's darkness. I crouched and waited.

A few moments later we were back to the murky-storm light. A quick glance told me Mestoph had cast the darkness on the pebbles, then tossed the pebbles down the hill at the orks. Confused shouts now came from three large bubbles of darkness where the orks had stood.

Lorm and I scrambled down the hill and waited at the edge of the darkness. An ork stumbled out. Lorm smashed him and the scorchers fell back into the darkness, leaving a trail of red on the rocky slope.

Apparently unable to coordinate their movements in the darkness, the orks kept wandering out haphazardly. Lorm and I took care of as many as we could. As soon as four orks made it out of the darkness at the same time, Lorm and I rushed back up the hill.

The plan now called for Mestoph to take care of the most determined ork pursuer or two with a different spell. Nothing happened.

Lorm strode on ahead while the orks gained on me. They say never look behind you when you're in a close chase because it slows you down. I looked. The orks were maybe fifteen of their strides back, swinging their swords across their bodies as they pumped their arms in time with their legs. They looked angrier than Lorm had looked. Two of them stopped to draw their bows.

I heard Lorm yell, a peculiar fading yell. The lead ork made an extra effort, and I promptly did the same. I reached the crest at top speed and dived for the cover of the boulder. I remember thinking, "That doesn't look like Mestoph's darkness spell," then falling.

Darkness again surrounded me as I fell, interrupted by an occasional flash of blue light ahead of me. Then I hit something, more gently than I expected, and my descent stopped. A blue glow enveloped me, then I was falling again, but not too fast. Another hit. Another blue glow. Another fall.

Soon I realized I was inside some type of shaft carved into the hill, and the blue glows were coming from runes carved into the shaft's walls about every three body lengths. I passed about a dozen levels of runes before landing on the rocks at the bottom of the shaft.

As I checked for broken bones, a flame sputtered, died, then another sputter turned into a warm yellow glow. Mestoph had lit a torch. While Lorm just sat there, looking a bit dazed, Mestoph walked over and handed me the torch. He took another from his pack, but this one took some time to light because it was damper than the first. The torch popped and hissed as it caught, illuminating my pack lying a few feet away. Lorm was already picking his up. Mestoph cleared his throat. "An illusion hid this shaft until one of my spell castings revealed it. Rather surprising."

"Mestoph, take a look at this," Lorm said, pointing to the section of wall near his pack. Mestoph walked over and leaned toward the wall, holding his torch just above his head.

After a moment of exploring the wall with his fingers, he shivered, pulling his hand back. He took a deep breath. His fingers went back to the wall.

The wall was covered with curving lines just slightly thicker than my fingernail. They were carved into the rock to different depths, some as deep as a finger length. Pacing around the shaft wall, I saw that the lines covered nearly every inch of its surface, except for occasional palm-sized blank spots. I counted out seventy paces to circle the shaft. The curlicues rose perhaps five or six dwarf-lengths from the floor of the shaft. The lines were deepest near three pitted, metal triangles hanging above a pillared entrance. We had found Kaer Jalendale.

Stone doors four dwarf-lengths tall lay cracked on the ground. Apparently, we were not the first to discover the city.

Mestoph pointed at the triangles.



"Those metal triangles look like they contain orichalcum. They must have been the wards protecting the town."

Lorm ran his axe across the wall. The rasp was just loud enough to hear above the splatter of rain overhead.

"And this?"

"I think a Horror etched all this. Every single line has an astral image. I think these designs sapped the magic from the wards. But carving these lines would take a year at the very least, and probably closer to five."

"A Horror spent five years breaking into Jalendale?" My voice rose in pitch as I spoke. I thought of something carving a few lines, stepping back, then carving a bit more, scratching lines a jeweler would be lucky to make as precisely. Something carving day after day, year after year, just waiting to get into the town. My desire for treasure was lessening.

"Did they know?" Lorm asked.

"The citizens? Probably not at first, not until the first ward failed. And by then it would have been too late to do anything."

Lorm took a long look through the doorway. I decided to check out my short sword. Mestoph laughed, a quick, high-pitched sound.

"We can wait for the monster out here or look for treasure inside." Mestoph spun in a half turn, then walked over the broken gates. I took a swig of water and thought a bit. I suppose only a desperate dwarf thinks on water. Lorm hurled a stone as far up the shaft as he could, then followed Mestoph inside. I made my most gallant "after you" bow, before crunching over the broken rock just behind our troll.

The town smelled dry, musty, like leaves during a parched autumn. I thanked the Passions for the dry part. Mestoph's map showed a Jalendale built along dwarf lines. The large central marketplace housed the guild building, the courts and jail, and the Passions' temple. Eight streets radiated out from the market to the edge of town, bisected by evenly spaced cross streets, giving Jalendale's road grid the appearance of a spider web.

Give humans and orks a couple of centuries, however, and they can foul up any dwarf plan. My first clue was the rope ladders and hemp-and-slat bridges above us. Jalendale's population must have been larger than planned, and the settlement had expanded up rather than out. A few buildings were even hewn from the rock of the cavern ceiling and used as supports to suspend thick cables and ropes. These ropes, in turn, held platforms and precarious dwellings. Other shacks stood on platforms resting on pillars set atop the roofs of Jalendale's original buildings. An incomprehensible series of ropes, rods, and beams connected the entire construction.

I found a night post with a light quartz that still responded to touch, and Lorm fashioned a lantern from the quartz, some rope, and one of his sacks. It gave off better light than the torches, but Mestoph and I kept ours lit. Light frightens some things, but fire hurts more of them.

Mestoph tried to lead us to the guild building. We started down the main avenue, but an array of pillars and cables supporting the city overhead blocked our passage before we had walked even fifty paces from the gate.

Blocking the main avenue seemed downright ork-stupid. Then I realized that once the gate was sealed, it wouldn't matter if they blocked the avenue this far from the market. Nobody would be coming through the gate until the day the Horror came along, that is. The walls all around the jumble showed more of the scrolling lines, even more intricate than the writing outside the gate.

Mestoph tried another street. It was blocked by shanties. His next choice got us closer to the marketplace before a thicket of stone spikes closed it off. A few of the spikes penetrated the walls of nearby buildings.

As we backtracked, Lorm wandered from one side of the avenue to the other, peering into buildings. I squinted in the glare of the

light quartz as he walked over to me. Lorm shifted the lantern to his other hand, then whispered, "Where are all the bodies?"

"Maybe the Horror ate them all."

"Even all the bones?" Lorm blinked his eyes.

"Maybe it's a very tidy Horror. Maybe it stacked all the bones in a corner somewhere."

"Thief, take a look at these."

I heard the strain in Mestoph's voice. He was standing at the mouth of an alley. Five cracked crystalline shells lay next to a heap of pottery shards. I took a few steps toward them.

A sharp odor stung my nose as I held my torch close enough to one of the empty shells to see the gray-streaked ooze. The shells were cysts. Whoever was in charge had just awakened a welcoming committee.

The shadowmants attacked us when we were nearly halfway to the center of Jaledale. I heard a fluttering sound and looked up just as two dark shapes swooped at Lorm. Blunt heads fanned out into pairs of sleek, featherless wings. Bodies tapered to scorpion-like tails that curved along the under of the creatures. Crystalline-pointed stingers tipped the tails.

Lorm roared, swinging the light over his head like a sling, and the creatures rose out of sight on silent wings.

As I drew my sword, four more of the creatures plunged from the darkness above. Mestoph performed a nimble dive-and-roll to avoid three dark shapes, and I heard him begin a spell.

I had my sword out and up, hoping to impale a swooping shadowmant. But the dark form in front of me furiously beat its wings, halting its forward motion in time to avoid my blade. I parried its tail strike, the stinger coming within an inch of my face.

I stabbed upward without looking and struck something soft. The shadowmant fluttered back a few paces, then came at me again. I blindly thrust my sword again and felt the thud of its stinger against my hardened leather breastplate.

The shadowmant dove at me again. I swung my blade and the creature wobbled back. I crouched low, and when I heard the flutter I struck, driving as hard as I could with my legs and arms. I felt a weight on my blade writhe for a moment, then become still. And I began congratulating myself just as Lorm howled.

I spun to see a shadowmant flopping at his feet, an axe embedded in its dark flesh. Another fluttered over the troll, its stinger lodged in Lorm's neck. I ran and hacked the tail off and the shadowmant careened away. Lorm dropped his axe and fell to his knees, head to the ground, left hand opening and closing spasmodically, right hand clutched to his neck. I pulled out a poultice.

"Don't touch me, worm beard!"

I stepped back, hands to my shoulders, palms facing outward and my fingers apart. Lorm needed the poultice, but I could wait until he felt less like pulling off my arms.

Three shadowmants lay on the ground. Mestoph eyed two dark shapes circling above his head. He spoke and the shadowmants spiraled up and away from us.

Lorm nodded to me. Mestoph walked toward us, but when he saw what I was doing, he turned away. The elf made a big display of studying his map.

I drew one of Lorm's knives, testing it on a plucked beard hair to make sure it was sharp. I tried to cut a small slit near Lorm's wound.

"Ahhoww!"

"Sorry. If troll skin were a little less tough, this would be easier."

"If dwarf hands didn't shake, it would be easier."

I finally managed a clean cut. I applied pressure around the wound with both hands, then tried to suck the wound clean. I felt his neck buzz as he spoke.

"Have you ever seen a Horror?"

I pulled away, remembering to spit. I didn't know whether the bitter taste was the poison or the troll blood.



"No. You?" I went back to the wound.

"Years ago my father's captain received a mind-plea from some Caucavic kin. We launched our ship, flew all damn night, arrived exhausted. We found all the adults dead, lying all about the place in different stages of rot. The children were alive, except for the babies who died from neglect."

I spit a second and third time. Lorm kept talking.

"I was scouting for survivors when I saw the Horror. It was like a slug, mottled yellow and white. It was only half my size, around a corner and two steps away."

"You mean twice your size?" I started shaking the vial containing the poultice. It began to warm.

"No, half. I caught myself thinking, this can't be what killed all these people. It didn't make sense. I took a step toward it. That was as far as I got. Glittering silver lines appeared where its eyes might have been, and I stopped dead. It looked at me, then turned away, moving slower than I could ever walk. I couldn't move until it was out of sight."

I took the poultice from the vial. Warm and moist, it smelled of basil. I carefully placed it into the wound. Lorm flinched very little.

"We took the children back home with us. As time passed, the Horror touched each of them, one by one. One's voice became painful to hear, another congealed mead when she got too close. One by one, we threw the children out of the hold. A couple left before we had the chance."

"Can you sit up?" I helped the troll as best I could by getting a good grip on his shirt near his shoulder blades.

"I remember thinking that the Horror had gotten two holds."

"Can you stand?"

"Not yet. I always wondered what would have happened if I could have taken that second step."

"Probably it would have blown you to flaming bits. Come on, let's try the standing thing now."

I put my back to his hip, planted my feet and pushed. Lorm pushed back, sliding up my back to a standing position. He leaned forward, hands on his knees, gasping for breath.

"Sure your poultice is going to work?"

"Should. I chose these carefully."

"Doesn't feel right yet. Just like this place. This whole place feels wrong. The smell."

"Smells like leaves to me."

"Dry leaves. It's pouring outside. It's desert dry in here."

"Maybe," I stopped talking. None of my maybes sounded good. I finished with a weak, "You should be fine."

Lorm took a step. He winced, a funny expression on a wart-covered old troll. One tusk poked through his familiar, lopsided grin.

"Maybe. Thanks for your help, Ragnar."

I blinked. The three of us had met in Throal.

Somewhere on the road to Jalendale they lost "Ragnar." I became "dwarf," sometimes "thief." It struck me that a person's name was the only thing you could steal by refusing to use it.

"If the short and the tall are ready to go?" I matched Mestoph's mocking bow up with one of my own.

Mestoph led us, which is to say he walked a few steps ahead of us. Each time we found the way blocked, Mestoph would then stand and contemplate the next direction to try, and thus we lurched through the maze of Jalendale.

While Mestoph pondered, Lorm and I poked around in nearby buildings. The shops were in ruins. Not the buildings themselves, just the items inside. A porcelain shop with every plate pulverized, every vessel shattered. A goldsmith's every case shattered, every flattening hammer bent, every foil knife broken in two. I saw not one undamaged piece of furniture, not one whole item of merchandise.

Lorm spent less time searching than sitting down. He was still breathing, so the poultice must have had some effect. Ragged breaths said it was not yet enough.

Following Mestoph's latest direction, we came to a crossroads that led to the marketplace. The intersecting road was gone, replaced by a trench some twenty-five paces wide and, well, much deeper.

As Mestoph and I approached the trench, lights winked on in the square across the way. New lights appeared with each heartbeat, revealing a massive shadow. Mestoph and I gazed at the marketplace. A huge, irregular structure stood where Mestoph's map showed three buildings. Built like a primitive mound, stones of all sizes formed its walls and roof. Soon the open plaza shimmered with the sheen of iridescent blues, purples, and silver-whites.

"Cadaver men!"

Until Lorm's shout I had been unaware that I was staring at the plaza. Mestoph had three steps on me by the time I turned around and saw eight shapes walking toward us.

Lorm had taken cover in an empty shop. He sat inside the doorway, axe lying on the ground beside him.

Mestoph stopped running and crouched in a defensive posture, walking crab-style toward the nearest building. Apparently he'd decided he wasn't going to make it past the cadaver men. My heart and legs thought it was worth a try, but my mind told me to stick with Mestoph. I sidled along with him. My sword only shook a little.

The cadaver men had been orks once. Two still had their ornamental gold tusk-caps. Their braided black hair was dusty and their mummified flesh creaked more than the leather armor they wore. The two with the tusk-caps carried swords and had backpacks slung over their shoulders. Six more staggered along with spears in one hand, rope or wood in the other. They smelled of pepper and rot, as if a chef had tried to conceal the smell of a bad piece of meat.

They walked right past us.

Let me say that again, in case you missed it. Eight cadaver men had us pinned, and they walked right past us. They walked to the edge of the trench. They dropped two coils of rope. The rope twitched, then snaked its way through the air to the other side of the trench.

Mestoph inhaled sharply. His face was contorted in pain. Little by little, he regained control of his expression. His features calmed.

"The Horror is close."

Lorm joined us. We watched the cadaver men as they moved away from the trench one by one. One lone cadaver man pounded in a final stake. He finished his task with a ringing strike, then gathered his tools and rejoined his companions.

The eight cadaver men blocked the road we had taken coming in, and I knew they would stand there forever. Lorm wrung the haft of his axe as if it were a wet cloth.

"Ragnar, when a Horror asks you to visit him, is it foolish to say no?"

Mestoph stared blankly at the bridge. His amber eye went milky, as if the color of his hair had somehow bled through. His eyebrows furrowed, then shot up high on his forehead. He started toward the bridge.

"If he wanted us dead, the cadaver men would have attacked. He wants something from us he cannot get if we are dead."

"So he kills us after we do his bidding," I said.

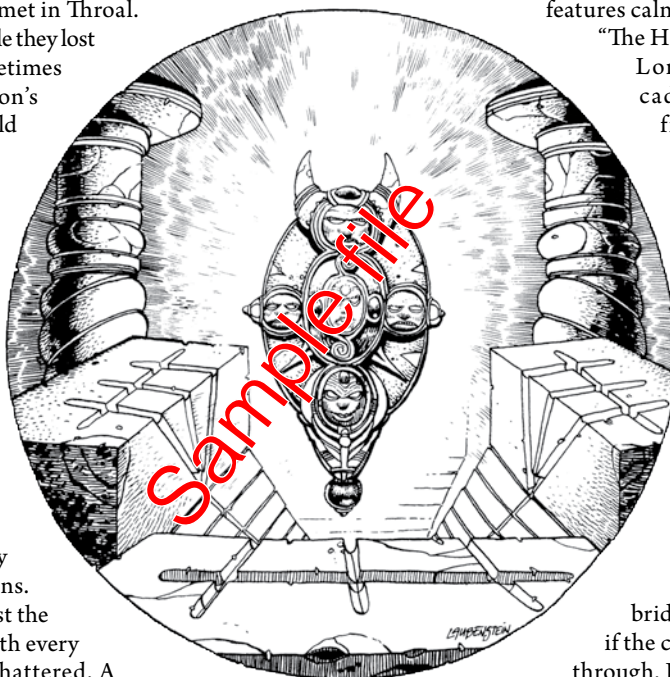
Mestoph stopped for a second, legs apart and arms raised. "We can try to out-think him, out-wait him, or out-fight him. I know which is my best chance." He turned and began walking again.

Lorm took one wobbly step, steadied himself, and followed Mestoph. So did I.

Hundreds of carvings like those by the gate covered the plaza. Our boots made a scratching sound as we walked, as if we were sliding across invisible sand. Each step was like a knife-edge gliding along the soles of my feet, feather-soft yet sharp.

We made our way toward the mound in the center of the plaza. It seemed the only place to go. I could see a pointed archway. Inside the mound was a cool darkness.

I blinked, then it was next to Mestoph. Twice as tall as me, it wore high boots the color of burnished brass. Six-fingered gauntlets curved into moving tendrils the size of my little finger. Each tendril ended in a clear, sharp gem, each with an edge finer than a knife-blade. A brass breastplate of at least a finger's width covered



its torso, and gritty, dun-colored smoke seemed to flow from the breastplate to form its neck and limbs.

The face froze me in my tracks. The whitish-gray color of mushrooms and tree-rot, it looked like a skull built entirely of worms. The worms squirmed in a pattern most active around its eye sockets. A single worm protruded from the center of each socket.

Two droplets of blood burst from Lorm's wound, drawn by magic to the Horror. They exploded with a white flash and sizzle on its armor. The Horror flinched and the worms of its face twitched and rolled a bit faster.

It opened its mouth to speak, revealing the writhing mass of its tongue. When it spoke my lungs burned and my mouth dried.

"The one who brings me the small orichalcum shield shall live. The others ..."

The Horror swept his hand past me. One of the gems on his finger-tendrils touched my face and bones in my legs snapped. Blinding pain accompanied popping sounds as muscle disconnected. I fell forward. Several of my ribs twisted and snapped. I screamed, I blubbered, I tried to crawl away, but I could not control the spasms of my body. I spit up a mouthful of vomit, bitter bile spilling over my lips and matting my beard. My legs jerked wildly. I could not even beg.

Then the pain stopped. My body was mine again, impossibly whole. The Horror stood over me, watching me carefully.

I ran. I ran in a blind panic toward the mound. I slammed into a wall, bounced and fell. I got up, slammed into the wall again, still screaming. Lorm reached out of the mound to pull me the few feet sideways to the door. I lunged inside.

I do not know how long I sat rocking myself. I remember Lorm persuading me to drink something, and Mestoph asking me questions.

"I think our dwarf is with us again."

Mestoph knelt beside me, then handed me one of his flasks. I took a sip of wine, passed it back to him.

"You have been out for some time. Welcome to your new home."

"Where are we?"

"We are in the biggest mausoleum I have ever seen."

The sweep of Mestoph's arm took in the entire building. Atop eight pillars sat light quartz illuminating perhaps forty box-frames, each nearly fifty arm-lengths high. Each frame was like a gigantic library shelf, filled with bodies rather than books. Most were wrapped in burial shrouds, a few in robes or armor. The place smelled overwhelmingly of cloves, with just a hint of dry rot.

Mestoph rose, gesturing to me to follow. As I walked behind him I noticed a couple of new books in his backpack. In the middle of the mausoleum, eight altars surrounded two sloped, square pits, each pit deepest in the center. One altar stood on each side of each square. Each altar was carved with troughs leading to the pits. The troughs fed into notches running to the center of each pit, each holding a brilliant golden shield. The light struck the shields, flowing and dazzling in a way impossible even for pure gold. Orichalcum.

Mestoph brushed a lock of hair away from his ear.

"The shields are magical protections. The magic was strengthened by the blood of the citizens."

"They killed themselves?"

"Sacrificed, almost down to the last man. Last few in here took poison. The larger shield protects this tomb from being entered or harmed by the 'destroyer of our brethren' or his 'unliving servants.' The smaller prevents the 'destroyer of our brethren' from moving more than a few hundred yards away from it."

"Destroyer of our brethren?"

"I think they enchanted eight of their citizens, left them outside this tomb. Their deaths triggered the magic in the shield."

"Those are the cadaver men?"

"Yes, but they would have been alive then."

I thought about the citizens of Jalendale. A Horror gnawing his way through the town's defenses. No magic strong enough to stop him from coming in. But they had one desperate way of preventing the abomination from harming another town.

"They left plenty of loot." Lorm nodded toward a wall. I could see the gleam of neatly stacked gold. Items in chests and bins, weapons laid out in a panoply. It all looked attractive. But not as attractive as I thought it would.

"Pick something light." Lorm held up a gleaming dagger. Itsommel was carved into a wolf's head and its blade gleamed with the same fire as the shields. "Our plan requires speed."

I walked toward the treasure. Lorm directed me to a small pile. "Mestoph separated out some of the more promising items."

I started sorting through the loot. I rejected a sword with five matching emeralds in its hilt, but paused to consider a helmet that was as clear as glass and lighter than ten coins.

"Those bracers," Lorm said, pointing to finely hammered copper bracers adorned with jade and lapis lazuli, "probably have defensive magic. Might as well take something that will help you get out of here."

I fingered the bracers, but took the helmet. Lorm grinned. I tried it on. Fit was a little big, but the helmet felt cool and somehow reassuring. I stashed my old helmet in my pack.

Mestoph was reading one of the books when we walked over. Lorm nodded in his direction.

"While you were worthless, Mestoph read. He's already reversed the levitation magic in the shaft. It should now push us up and out."

"How do we get past the Horror?"

"Mestoph starts working on a spell. I take the shield outside. When creepy comes for the shield, I whack him long enough for the spell to finish. You run out and throw the shield back in here, out of his reach. Elfie throws the spell. While creepy recovers, we head out of town. Got it?"

"I have my doubts about running out there to get the shield. And serious doubts about you whacking creepy long enough for Mestoph to take a breath, let alone finish a spell."

Lorm swung his axe in a lazy arc, stopping the axe in mid-swing. He loosened his grip, letting the haft slide down until his right hand rested just below the axe-head. His left hand tested the edge.

"This is my axe. My grandfather made it for my father. He told my father the axe was destined to blood a Horror, perhaps slay one."

"Sure, once the Horror kills you, he can use your axe to whack his friends."

A page rustled.

"You are unduly pessimistic, dwarf."

"Name's Ragnar."

Mestoph closed his book and regarded me with that amber eye.

"Ragnar. The good people of Jalendale did not die in vain. They left detailed records behind, and so we know this Horror is somewhat vulnerable to life magic. Are we ready?"

Lorm nodded vigorously. I shrugged. Mestoph reopened his book. Lorm set his axe down. He drew his newly acquired wolf-handled dagger and carefully cut his left forearm three times. He sheathed the dagger. The troll picked up his axe and began to apply his own blood to the blade.

I walked back to the pit and got the smaller shield. When I returned I saw Lorm had spread a generous coating of blood on his axe. He looked up.

"Just in case things go wrong, I want you to know the poultice finally worked. You chose well."

"What could possibly go wrong, Lorm?"

The troll snorted. I handed him the shield. We watched Mestoph work his way through the spell. The elf spoke softly, his fingers moving in time with his words. His right eye was closed. His left eye swirled with light. He began to speak more slowly.

"That's the signal."

Lorm took four steps out, then dropped the shield and stood on it.

"Here's your cursed shield!"

The Horror appeared a yard from Lorm, its tongue flailing like a snake on fire. Lorm stepped toward it, swinging his axe. The weapon found the Horror's breastplate, and the blood on the axe flared into white fire. The Horror hissed and screeched. Lorm roared.

I finally remembered to get the shield. I scrambled for it, picked it up as Lorm rang another blow off the Horror's armor. I carried it back into the tomb. Once inside I saw Mestoph fling his arms up and heard him shout three elven words.

Thousands of droplets of water appeared, then coalesced into dozens of spinning blades. The blades flew around Lorm, striking the Horror. The screech turned into a scream. The blades tore whisps of dun-colored smoke from its legs and arms and sliced a tendril off its left hand. They rang and sizzled against its breastplate. The Horror spun around. Two of the blades caught it in the side of his head, sending shreds of white worm through the air.

Mestoph was already running, and so I followed his lead. Lorm took one last swipe then brought up the rear.

"Follow me! I found more maps in the tomb and I think I can get us to a clear avenue!"

We crossed the bridge and turned left. We ran past a plaza with four brass poles, through dusty alleys, down a road with shops with blue doors, then turned right at a dry fountain with lion-head spouts onto a broad avenue. Mestoph's laugh boomed down the dead streets of Jalendale. The magician slowed to a walk. I caught up. Lorm was huffing half a dozen paces behind. Lorm bellowed.

"Whacked him pretty good, I'd say."

The Horror appeared next to Mestoph. Its left eye-worm twitched uncontrollably as it reached out to touch the magician. Mestoph tried to dodge, but the elf reacted too slowly. A sucking, tearing sound came from within him and he began screaming. Then his hair whipped up and forward and his screams suddenly grew strangely muffled.

I screamed too, a dry, pitiful noise. I was staring at Mestoph's eyes and mouth, which were on the side of his face. The Horror had torn the skin loose from muscle and was skinning it around the elf's body.

Mestoph's blood did not flow so much as gush toward the Horror, transforming into burning white ribbons that wrapped around the entity. The Horror's triumphant screams drowned out our own.

The Mestoph-lump collapsed to the ground. The left side of the Horror's face was a smoking, ruined mass. It pointed at Lorm.

"Get me the shield."

Lorm started to run. He took five fast steps, then stopped and turned around. His eyes shone with a silvery web. The Horror hissed.

"Once Horror-touched, never free. Get me the shield!"

I tried to tackle the troll as he started to move, but he batted me aside. The Horror turned his gaze on me.

"Nothing more from you."

I was frozen to the ground. The Horror stared at me with his one good eye. Its seared tongue wiggled back and forth, as if it tasting my fear and anguish.

Apparently the Horror's momentary distraction provided Lorm a brief second of self-control, because he suddenly flung himself at the entity, the wolf's-head dagger flashing in his outstretched hand. The Horror snapped its head around and Lorm crumpled to the ground with a strangled cry. Blisters boiled up on the troll's green skin, releasing rivulets of blood as they burst.

"Nooooo!"

I do not remember whether that was my scream, or the Horror's. The entity tried to reach the troll, but the blood now pooling on the ground sparked when it approached. The Horror staggered back and began to hiss rhythmically.

I struggled to gain control of my legs, then knelt by Lorm. His cloudy yellow eyes met mine for a split second then darted toward the axe at his side.

I grabbed for the weapon, but could barely lift the damn thing. Finally I worked the blade around the pool of troll blood. Lorm's breathing rose and fell in time with the Horror's hiss.

When I charged, the Horror looked up but did not move; its hiss just grew a little louder. The axe wobbled a bit at the top of its arc and my resolve wavered, then I crashed the weapon onto the thing's head. I felt a jolt, heard a brittle crunch and smelled the odor of rotted wood.

The Horror lurched back. I held onto the axe, which jerked free as the Horror moved. The creature had no working eyes. But it kept hissing. I could no longer lift the axe. I looked over at Lorm, and saw he was dead.

I clutched the axe to me. The hiss told me to leave it. I turned around. This hiss told me to stay. I took a step. The hiss grew louder, almost strident. Another step. Then another. The hiss grew weaker, thinner. Then I could no longer hear it.

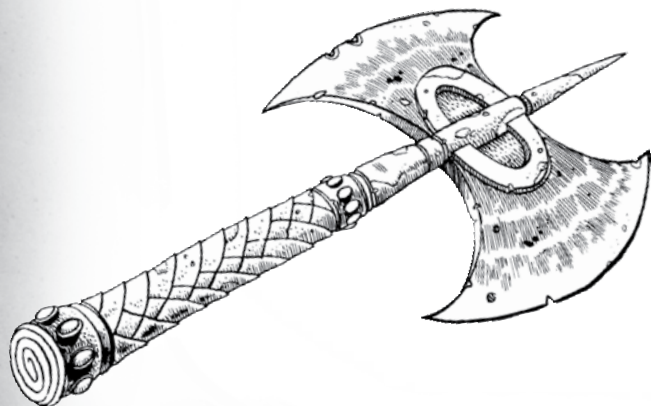
I found my way back to the shaft. Struggling to climb up to the first blue rune, I was dimly aware of the cadaver men entering the chamber, climbing after me. I heard them scabble at the wall. I reached the rune. A warm sensation lifted me, then hurtled me upward. I passed from rune to rune, gathering a little more speed with each.

I shot out of the shaft, over the unsuspecting sentries the scorchers had posted. They might have pursued me if the cadaver men had not appeared to keep them busy. I walked as far as I could, reaching the village of Twin Chin well into the next morning. There I stopped and slept for days. I do not think I let go of Lorm's axe the whole time.

▲ ▲ ▲

Many years have passed since that night, and I have survived my share of adventures. But one task remained unfinished, one I believed I would take to my grave undone. Tonight I walked into this tavern and saw you and heard your tales, the stories of your adventures. Now I have hope that it will be completed. Take this axe. It is Lorm's axe. His grandfather made it for his father. It has blooded a Horror. Perhaps now it shall slay one...

▲ ▲ ▲



INTRODUCTION

After the Scourge, we found the world black, shattered, and twisted. Are you a hero? I hope you are a hero; because by the Passions, the world already has enough villains.

• J'ROLE, EYE OF THROAL •

After centuries of hiding beneath the earth, humanity has ventured out into the sunlight to reclaim the world. Trolls, dwarfs, elves, orks, and humans live side by side with other, more exotic, races: the lizard-like t'skrang; the small, winged windlings; and the earthen obsidimen. Creatures both magical and mundane dwell once more in the forests and jungles. Arcane energies offer power to those willing to learn the ways of magic.

Once, long ago, the land grew lush and green. Thriving forests sheltered plants and animals, and people grew and prospered off the land's bounty. Then the Horrors came, and drowned the world in darkness. The world's flow of magic rose and at its height dread creatures from the darkest depths of astral space crossed into our world, leaving suffering and destruction in their wake. The world's inhabitants named these fell creatures the Horrors. They laid our world to waste in a terrible time now known as the Scourge. The lush forests died. Bustling towns vanished. Beautiful grasslands and majestic mountains became blasted, barren terrain, home to the Horrors' twisted mockery of life.

The Horrors lusted to destroy all life, but they did not succeed. Before their coming, the magicians of the Theran Empire warned the world, and the people of the Earth took shelter under it. They built fantastic underground cities called kaers and citadels; their children and their children's children grew up within these earthen enclaves, never seeing the light of the sun. For four hundred years the Horrors roamed the land, devouring all they touched while the people hid in terror, until the slow ebb of the world's magic forced these loathsome creatures to retreat to the astral pit that spawned them. The Horrors departed before the magicians and wise men had believed they would; the wary people emerged slowly from their kaers, facing the world half in hope that the Scourge had truly ended and half in fear that the Horrors lingered. Though most of the Horrors left this world, many of them remain, inflicting cruel anguish and suffering on other living creatures. As humanity struggles to remake the shattered world, they must combat the remaining Horrors who seek to prolong the destruction and despair of the Scourge.

Now heroes travel the land, rediscovering its lost legends and exploring its changed face. For the world has changed, almost beyond recognition. Many people died during the Scourge; the Horrors breached some kaers and citadels and destroyed their inhabitants. Other kaers remain sealed, from unknowable disaster or simple fear; their contents await discovery by bold explorers. Should they find any folk still living within, these brave adventurers may lead such fear-darkened souls out to live again in the light.

The dwarf kingdom of Throal lies at the center of the province of Barsaive, the largest inhabited province in the known world. The dwarfs seek to unite Barsaive's far-flung cities and people

under one crown and banner, the better to repel the advances of the Theran Empire that ruled Barsaive before the Scourge. The Therans returned to the province shortly after the Scourge ended, seeking to bend it again to their yoke, but the people of Barsaive rejected the Therans' iron rule and rallied behind the dwarfs of Throal. Beaten for the moment, the Therans gather strength and wait to strike again. As Barsaive's heroes search for lost treasures and battle fantastic creatures, they must also fight the Therans, who plot to rob Barsaive of its new-found freedom and make its people pawns of their vast Empire.

In the Age of Legend, heroes band together fighting the Horrors and reclaiming the wounded world for those born in it. As they explore the altered land, searching for legendary cities and treasures, they become the legends that will light the coming days. Like those who went before them, tales of their deeds will live forever in men's hearts. From many paths, the heroes come to join in common cause. Those who seek honor and glory come from many Disciplines, and battle evil to redeem the world with a multitude of gifts. A band of heroes may include an Illusionist, a magician who combines deception and reality to confuse those around him; a Swordmaster, one trained in the art of fighting with melee weapons; or a Beastmaster, able to train and command the beasts of the earth and sky. The world holds countless heroes, but all share one trait: a willingness to fight to reclaim the world from that which threatens it. Through noble deeds and sacrifice, the heroes of the world will forge its future.

THE WORLD OF EARTHDAWN

Earthdawn is a roleplaying game designed for two to six players. Like many other roleplaying games, **Earthdawn** has an open-ended style of play. That is, the game has no definitive ending, no preset time limit or number of turns of play, and no single goal that, when achieved, marks the end of the game. Unlike other types of games, however, there is no winner or loser. The object of the game is to have fun while exercising your imagination. When this happens, everybody wins.

The world of **Earthdawn** is one of legend. Its people and places are larger than life, the stuff of song and saga. Heroes fight the monsters of this and other worlds; their bold exploits light a beacon of hope for the future, as word of their deeds spreads across the troubled, fearful land. **Earthdawn** is a world of high adventure, high magic, and terrible danger. Those dangers lurk not only within long-forgotten kaers, but also within the minds of people forever corrupted by the Horrors. To rebuild its heart and soul as well as its outward aspect after the devastation of the Scourge, the world needs heroes. The players of **Earthdawn**, by creating their characters and playing the game, provide these heroes.

In contrast to many other roleplaying games, characters in **Earthdawn** do not simply survive each adventure and become a

little smarter or a little richer. **Earthdawn** adds another dimension to roleplaying; its characters become heroic figures, accomplishing deeds so impressive that generation after generation will honor their memory in song and story. The world of **Earthdawn** brims over with legends, heart-stirring tales of famous adventurers told by the fireside to while away the night. **Earthdawn** player characters can become the figures in those legends. As they build their characters' legends through play, they create the fireside tales that their descendants will tell about them. Gaining this heroic stature through daring deeds is as important a part of playing **Earthdawn** as any lesser gain in riches or experience.

For those with experience in roleplaying, some of the following explanations will sound familiar. Those readers might want to skip ahead to **Game Concepts**, p.13, or the **Creating Characters** chapter, p.25, and dive right into the **Earthdawn** game. The opening short story—**Inheritance**—provides atmosphere and a taste of the language and style of **Earthdawn**. Specific chapters cover every aspect of the game and how to play it in detail.

For those who are new to roleplaying, the following text introduces the concept. This introduction will not answer all your questions, because most roleplaying is more easily learned from other players than from reading a book. This brief overview will give you the idea behind roleplaying; to learn more, find others who are familiar with roleplaying games and learn by playing. Together you can explore the world of **Earthdawn**, and discover the fun of roleplaying in the Age of Legend.

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

Everyone has read a book or seen a movie where the protagonist does something so utterly wrong that the reader or viewer wants to shout a warning to the character. But no warning from the audience can keep that character from doing what the plot demands, no matter how much trouble it lands him in. The readers and viewers can't change the character's behavior; we're just along for the ride. A roleplaying game turns this situation on its ear. In a roleplaying game the players control the actions, or play the roles, of their characters and respond as they wish to the events of the plot. If the player doesn't want his character to go through a door, the character won't. If the player thinks his character can talk himself out of a tight situation rather than resorting to that trusty sword, he can talk away. The plot of a roleplaying game is flexible, ultimately based on the decisions the players make for their characters.

In roleplaying, stories (the adventures) evolve much as they do in a movie or book, but within the flexible story line created by the **gamemaster**. The story outlines what might happen at certain times or in reaction to other events. The story remains an outline, with few concrete events, until the players become involved. When that happens, the adventure can become a drama as riveting as that great movie you saw last week or the book you stayed up all night to finish.

Though the players all contribute to the story, creating it as they play, the gamemaster creates the overall outline and controls events. The gamemaster keeps track of what happens and when, describes events as they occur so that the players (as characters) can react to them, keeps track of other characters in the game (referred to as gamemaster characters), and uses the game system to resolve the players' attempts to take action. The gamemaster describes the world as the characters see it, functioning as their eyes, ears, and other senses. Gamemastering takes both skill and practice to master, but the thrill of creating an adventure that engages the other players, tests both their gaming skills and the characters' skills in the game world, and captures the players' imaginations



makes the gamemaster's job worthwhile. While there are many published game supplements and adventures to aid the gamemaster, talented gamemasters always adapt the game world to suit their own and their players' style.

A roleplaying game offers its players a level of challenge and personal involvement unmatched by any other type of game. Because the players and gamemaster create the adventures they play, what happens in the course of a roleplaying game is limited only by your imagination. The game is not a contest between the players and the gamemaster, however. The gamemaster may control all the bad guys, but he should work with the players to build and experience a tense, exciting adventure.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The **Earthdawn** game is very easy to learn. The **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Guides** contain all of the rules you need to run an **Earthdawn** game. Since most roleplaying games are played as ongoing campaigns, these books provide enough material for years of play. If you can't get enough, the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Companions** feature advanced rules, high-Circle opponents, legendary spells—you name it, you'll probably find it in one of those books. However, you only need to be familiar with a fraction of the material in order to get started.

The best advice we can give beginning players and gamemasters is this: **only use the rules you need**. You can safely ignore everything else; optional rules, for instance, can be integrated later when you are more comfortable with the game. Much of the content in our books is sorted alphabetically (talents, skills, spells, and so on), with other content organized in a similarly accessible order—goods and services, for instance, are grouped by type.

While you might want to read everything from cover to cover, you will soon realize how boring it can be to read hundreds of talent descriptions at a sitting (something your brain might just take serious umbrage at being subjected to). You don't need to memorize everything. Instead, focus on remembering where to find the information you need. A comprehensive **Contents** and **Index** are included in each book to help you find things quickly. The **Appendix** should prove useful as a quick reference as well.

The **Game Concepts** chapter also summarizes a number of basic rules and game mechanics that are covered in detail in later chapters. Armed with this knowledge, you should be in a good position to quickly get up to speed with the **Earthdawn** game and therefore get your first game running as soon as possible. Welcome aboard!

GAME CONCEPTS

The magic of the world follows rules. Understand them and use them, as others will surely use them against you.

• BLACKSHARD, WIZARD OF THE CRYSTAL RAIDERS •

This chapter introduces you to the **Earthdawn** game and explains the key concepts and terms used. Some are terms common to most roleplaying games, others are unique to **Earthdawn**.

Whether you are an experienced gamer or new to roleplaying, once you understand how these concepts operate in **Earthdawn**, the rest of the rules will fall easily into place.

ADEPTS AND DISCIPLINES

The world of **Earthdawn** is filled with magic. The most talented characters, including yours, are initiated in the use of magic. Such characters are called **adepts**. Some adepts train to cast spells; some train to use swords or other weapons; others train to work with animals. The form of magical training chosen by your character is his **Discipline**. This training focuses the magical energies of your character into special abilities called **talents**. Each Discipline offers unique talents. Characters of some Disciplines—collectively known as **magicians**—possess the ability to cast **spells**.

All adepts are rated in their Discipline according to their knowledge and experience. These ratings are called **Circles**. Adept characters usually begin the game at First Circle. Though characters tend to specialize in one Discipline, some learn talents from other Disciplines, or learn a new Discipline in addition to their first.

The gamemaster awards **Legend Points** after each game session. Your character uses Legend Points earned through adventuring to increase the Ranks of his talents and abilities, in turn allowing him to advance his Circle. Each time an adept reaches a new Discipline Circle, he gains new talents and abilities. Your character gains Legend Points based on how well he performed during the gaming session, but based also on how well you, as a player, roleplayed your character.

The different Disciplines are fully detailed in the **Disciplines** chapter, starting on p. 42. The talents available to each Discipline are described in the **Talents** chapter, p. 57. Descriptions for non-magical skills can be found in the **Skills** chapter, p. 87. See the **Workings of Magic** chapter, p. 104, for more information on magic and magical theory.

See the **Building Your Legend** chapter, p. 236, for more information on how you use Legend Points to improve your character's talents and skills, and how the accumulation of Legend Points affects those who come into contact with the character, in person or by reputation.

CHARACTER RECORD SHEET

Characters represent the players in the game of **Earthdawn**. As a player, you control a character. Everything you know about your character will be noted on

a **Character Record Sheet** (see p. 307 for a reproducible copy or download one from our web site at earthdawn.com). This is where you record your character's abilities, possessions, physical appearance, and other facts about him. During the course of the game, the gamemaster will describe to you events or situations.

Using your Character Record Sheet as a guide, you tell the gamemaster what your character would do in a given situation. The gamemaster will probably ask you to roll some dice, and the resulting numbers will represent your character's attempted action. The gamemaster uses the rules of the game to interpret the dice rolls and the outcome of your character's action.

Attributes measure a character's natural abilities, what he can accomplish without training or magic. **Talents, skills, and spells** also appear on the Character Record Sheet. Like Attributes, these are measured in Step Numbers.

The Health section of your Character Record Sheet tracks any damage your character takes. The number of Damage Points a character has taken is reflected in his Current Damage total. When the Current Damage total equals your character's **Unconsciousness Rating**, he falls unconscious. When the Current Damage total equals or exceeds your character's **Death Rating**, he dies.

The **Wound Threshold** represents the amount of damage it takes to wound your character from a single attack. **Wounds** are serious injuries that heal more slowly than normal damage and can impair your character's ability to carry out actions. You use your character's **Recovery Tests** to recover from injury. The test result reduces your character's Current Damage total or allows you to heal Wounds. Your character may make only a limited number of Recovery Tests each day.

More information on the game statistics of your character can be found in the **Creating Characters** chapter, p. 25.

STEPS & ACTION DICE

Almost all abilities in **Earthdawn** are rated by Rank and Step Numbers. The **Rank number** is the measure of proficiency in a skill or talent. Rank numbers are often added to an Attribute Step to determine a **Step Number**. The Step Number determines what **Action Dice** a player rolls to attempt an action, cast a spell, and so on. Action Dice are ordered on a scale, from lowest to highest. **Each level of this scale corresponds to a Step Number**. The Step/Action Dice Table lists consecutive Step Numbers and their corresponding Action Dice.

Whenever a player rolls his Action Dice, he is making an **Action Test** (p. 14). All individual die results are added together to determine the **test result**. **Earthdawn** uses four different types of polyhedral dice: six-sided (D6), eight-sided (D8), ten-sided (D10), and twelve-sided (D12) dice. These dice don't come with the game, but are available in most gaming stores.

Me'gana has a Dexterity Step of 7 and Rank 3 with the Melee Weapons talent. This gives Me'gana a Melee Weapons Step of 10 (7+3=10). Looking up this Step Number on the Step/Action Dice Table, Me'gana notes that she rolls 2D8 Action Dice when making a Melee Weapons Test. When Me'gana hits an opponent in combat, she uses Step 12, which is the result of adding her broadsword's Damage Step of 5 to her Strength Step of 7.

Increasing or decreasing the Step Number changes the Action Dice rolled. Adding +1 Step to Step 10 puts you on Step 11, which resolves to D10+D8. Subtracting -2 Steps from Step 8 puts you on Step 6, which resolves to a D10 Action Die.

The Step Number corresponding to an Action Dice combination equals the average roll for that combination of Action Dice, taking into account the chances of rolling one or more Bonus Dice (see below). For example, the average result of a D10 roll is 6 (Step 6 uses a D10). The average result of a D8+D6 roll is 9 (Step 9 uses both a D8 and a D6).

BONUS DICE

When you roll the highest possible number on an Action Die, you immediately get to roll another die of the same type—this is a **Bonus Die**. Add the result of the Bonus Die roll to the result of any Action Dice already rolled to determine the test result. If you roll the maximum on a Bonus Die, you roll another Bonus Die of the same type. This continues for as long as you continue to roll the maximum possible result for the Bonus Die.

A player rolling for Poohrt, a windling Thief character, rolls a D8 and a D6 Action Dice (a Step 9 Action Test). The results are an 8 and a 6, the highest numbers possible on each die, respectively. He gets two Bonus Die rolls. On his D8 Bonus Die he rolls a 2, and then a 6 on his D6 Bonus Die—this entitles him to another D6 Bonus Die for which he rolls a 3. Adding together the final rolls gives the player a total of 25 for his Action Test result (8+6+2+6+3=25).

Steps 1, 2, and 3

Steps below 4 aren't usually rolled during an **Earthdawn** game, as they are generally too small to create usable results for an epic game. If, for any reason, you do need to roll dice at those Steps, use the following table.

Total any Bonus Die rolls before subtracting the modifier from the result. **Regardless of modifiers, the minimum result is 1.**

KARMA

All adepts, as well as some of the more powerful creatures of the world, are able to tap into the magical energy of the world in order to enhance their use of magic and magical abilities. This magical energy is known as **Karma**. The use of Karma is simulated through Karma Points and Karma dice.

When an adept uses Karma on an action, he spends a **Karma Point**. Unless noted otherwise, this allows him to roll an additional D6 when performing the action. The result of the **Karma dice** is added to the result of the other dice rolled for the Action Test. Karma dice can be re-rolled as Bonus Dice. Although all characters use the same Karma dice of Step 4/D6, special circumstances, magic, or even Horror-taint can increase their Karma Step later in the game.

Adepts cannot use Karma on just any Action Test; they can only use Karma on talents that allow the use of Karma. As they progress to higher Circles, adepts are allowed to spend Karma Points on other actions as well.

ACTION TESTS

Whenever a character attempts to take an action such as casting a spell, swinging a sword at an opponent, tracking a Horror, or flirting with a barmaid, the gamemaster or the player rolls dice to determine the action's outcome. These dice rolls are called **Action Tests**.

To make an Action Test, the player or gamemaster rolls the appropriate Action Dice and adds the individual die results together to determine the **test result**.

BONUSES AND PENALTIES

Test results may be modified by a **bonus** or a **penalty** indicated in the rules where appropriate. As a general rule, the modifier is applied to the Step Number of the Action Test before the Action Dice are rolled. For example, a character using the Aggressive Attack combat option adds +3 Steps to his Attack and Damage Steps. A character who is Harried subtracts -2 Steps from all of his Action Test Steps. **Regardless of modifiers, the minimum Step Number is 1.**

However, this method can slow down game play while players recalculate Step Numbers and Action Dice on the fly. If the gamemaster feels that it would be beneficial to the game, he may instead apply temporary or one-time modifiers to the test result after the dice are rolled. As per the above example, the Aggressive Attack combat option would add +3 to the character's Attack and Damage test results.

TEST RESULTS

A test result is interpreted or used in several ways. In most cases, the test result is compared to a **Difficulty Number**. If the result is at least equal to this number, the test succeeds (see below for more information on Difficulty Numbers).

EFFECT TESTS

Sometimes the test result simply represents a value, which is not compared against a Difficulty Number. The most common examples of these tests are Recovery Tests, in which the

STEP/ACTION DICE TABLE

Step Number	Action Dice
4	D6
5	D8
6	D10
7	D12
8	2D6
9	D8+D6
10	2D8
11	D10+D8
12	2D10
13	D12+D10
14	2D12
15	D12+2D6
16	D12+D8+D6
17	D12+2D8
18	D12+D10+D8
19	D12+2D10
20	2D12+D10
21	3D12
22	2D12+2D6
23	2D12+D8+D6
24	2D12+2D8
25	2D12+D10+D8
26	2D12+2D10
27	3D12+D10
28	4D12
29	3D12+2D6
30	3D12+D8+D6
31	3D12+2D8
32	3D12+D10+D8
33	3D12+2D10
34	4D12+D10
35	5D12
36	4D12+2D6
37	4D12+D8+D6
38	4D12+2D8
39	4D12+D10+D8
40	4D12+2D10

STEPS 1, 2, AND 3

Step Number	Action Dice
1	D6-3
2	D6-2
3	D6-1



die roll result equals the amount of damage healed; Damage Tests, which determine the amount of damage inflicted on a target; and Initiative Tests, which are used to find out who acts when and in what order during a combat round. These types of tests are known as **Effect Tests**.

Effect Test results can determine the duration of a spell, a creature's Attribute values, the Difficulty Number for Action Tests made by opponents, and so on. For example, a magician casting the *Mind Dagger* spell makes a Spellcasting Test to determine whether he affects his target. If successful, he makes a spell Effect Test to determine how much damage his spell inflicts.

THE RULE OF ONE

If all of the Action Dice rolled for an Action Test each show a result of one (1), then the character automatically fails to accomplish the action, even if the Test Result total is equal to the Difficulty Number needed. This is known as the **Rule of One**. The character is considered to have achieved a Pathetic Result (see **Result Levels**, below). At the gamemaster's discretion, the Rule of One only applies to the results of Action Tests where two or more Action Dice are rolled. The Rule of One is not applicable to Effect Tests, such as Initiative Tests, Recovery Tests, Damage Tests, spell Effect Tests, and so on.

DIFFICULTY NUMBERS

The **Difficulty Number** represents how easy or hard it is for each character to accomplish any given task. In many cases when the player characters must make a test, the required ability is shown with the Difficulty Number of the task in parentheses. For example, a Perception (13) Test means a character uses his Perception skill to make an Action Test against a Difficulty Number of 13. The Difficulty Number is otherwise given in the ability's description or determined by the gamemaster.

RESULT LEVELS

Frequently, a test result determines not only success or failure, but the degree of success. A test may have one of six result levels: Pathetic, Poor, Average, Good, Excellent, and Extraordinary.

The Test Result is compared to the appropriate Difficulty Number on the Result Level Table. If the result falls within the range of numbers on that row, it achieves the result level indicated at the top of the table for that column. For example, an Action Test roll of 9 made against a Difficulty Number of 7 indicates an Average Result. An Action Test roll of 16 against the same Difficulty Number would be an Excellent Result.

A **Pathetic** Result is a bad enough failure that the gamemaster may impose unpleasant side effects. Some talents, skills, and other types of tests include side effects for Pathetic Results in their descriptions. The gamemaster can choose to disregard such results, but he may also choose to use negative side effects on Pathetic Results for all Action Tests. A **Poor** result usually indicates simple failure. An **Average** Result, equal to or barely exceeding the Difficulty Number, means that the character accomplished his action—but only just. A somewhat better roll yields a **Good** Result, and a roll close to double the Difficulty Number garners an **Excellent** Result. To achieve an **Extraordinary** Result requires an even better roll again. The Result Level Table shows the Test Result range required to successfully achieve each different result level.

Better-than-Average result levels may give the character an extra reward for his efforts—additional information or clues, reduced armor for foes, and so on. The amount of gain for each result level is usually provided in the ability's description, but is ultimately determined by the gamemaster.

Leandra swings her sword at a charging Theran guard. The Difficulty Number to hit the guard is 10. Leandra's player rolls a 21 on the Action Dice. The gamemaster tells the player that 21 is an Excellent Result. Leandra hits the guard with a blow that punches right through his armor, ignoring the protection it would normally provide, and inflicting considerable damage on the unfortunate Theran.

TIME

Time is important in **Earthdawn**. A standard **day** is twenty-four hours long. A **week** is seven days, corresponding to the length of the Throalic week. (The Theran Empire, by comparison, measures the passage of time in five-day weeks.) Unless stated otherwise, all references to a week in the game rules are assumed to be a standard seven-day period.

A **month** is thirty days long. Each **year** has twelve months, with a separate five-day adjustment period in the middle of the year, bringing the total number of days per year to 365.

ROUND

A **round** is a time-keeping unit used to keep the action of the adventure flowing. It represents the time required to carry out most actions and equals approximately six seconds of game time.

During combat, a round of action is referred to as a **combat round**. See the **Combat** chapter, p. 214, for more information on what you can do during a combat round.

DISTANCES AND WEIGHTS

Throughout the **Earthdawn** game you will see references to distances and weights expressed in the Imperial system of inches, feet, yards, miles, pounds, and tons. Recognizing that many gamers are more familiar with the metric system, we have attempted to make conversions from Imperial to metric as simple as possible.

While not strictly accurate, Imperial units can be converted to metric units for game purposes as shown in the Distance/Weight Conversion Table. These approximations have been used to make the math simpler for 'on-the-fly' game calculations.

Most distances are given in yards in the **Earthdawn** game, making it a simple matter to replace "yards" with "meters" to get a (near) metric equivalent. This is especially useful when taking into account the tactical distances in which most action occurs in **Earthdawn**.

RESULT LEVEL TABLE

Difficulty Number	—Result—					
	Pathetic	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Extraordinary
2	*	1	2-4	5-6	7-8	9+
3	*	1-2	3-5	6-7	8-9	10+
4	*	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-11	12+
5	1	2-4	5-7	8-10	11-13	14+
6	1	2-5	6-8	9-12	13-16	17+
7	1-2	3-6	7-10	11-14	15-18	19+
8	1-3	4-7	8-12	13-15	16-19	20+
9	1-4	5-8	9-14	15-17	18-21	22+
10	1-5	6-9	10-15	16-19	20-22	23+
11	1-5	6-10	11-16	17-20	21-24	25+
12	1-6	7-11	12-17	18-22	23-26	27+
13	1-6	7-12	13-19	20-24	25-28	29+
14	1-7	8-13	14-20	21-25	26-30	31+
15	1-8	9-14	15-22	23-26	27-30	31+
16	1-9	10-15	16-23	24-27	28-32	33+
17	1-10	11-16	17-24	25-29	30-33	34+
18	1-11	12-17	18-25	26-30	31-35	36+
19	1-11	12-18	19-27	28-32	33-36	37+
20	1-12	13-19	20-28	29-33	34-38	39+
21	1-13	14-20	21-29	30-35	36-40	41+
22	1-14	15-21	22-30	31-36	37-41	42+
23	1-15	16-22	23-32	33-37	38-42	43+
24	1-15	16-23	24-33	34-38	39-43	44+
25	1-16	17-24	25-34	35-40	41-45	46+
26	1-17	18-25	26-35	36-41	42-46	47+
27	1-18	19-26	27-36	37-42	43-48	49+
28	1-18	19-27	28-38	39-44	45-49	50+
29	1-20	21-28	29-39	40-45	46-50	51+
30	1-20	21-29	30-40	41-46	47-52	53+
31	1-21	22-30	31-41	42-47	48-53	54+
32	1-22	23-31	32-42	43-48	49-54	55+
33	1-23	24-32	33-44	45-50	51-56	57+
34	1-23	24-33	34-45	46-51	52-57	58+
35	1-24	25-34	35-46	47-52	53-59	60+
36	1-25	26-35	36-47	48-53	54-59	60+
37	1-26	27-36	37-48	49-55	56-61	62+
38	1-27	28-37	38-50	51-56	57-62	63+
39	1-28	29-38	39-51	52-57	58-63	64+
40	1-29	30-39	40-52	53-58	59-65	66+

* No such thing as a Pathetic result for this Difficulty Number, except if the **Rule of One**, p. 15, is being used.

THE PASSIONS

Barsaivians worship twelve **Passions**, living, physical embodiments of the wishes, hopes, beliefs, and strongest emotions of Barsaive's people. A Passion is summoned wherever its ideals are strongly felt, grievously violated, or aggressively defended.

Some say the Passions are mysterious magical beings given control over pieces of people's lives by the universe. Some say they are the people's hopes given form by the legend that springs from the Namegivers' collective thoughts. Some say that whether a Passion exists or not is up to the believer alone, created by the moment. Whatever the truth, it cannot be denied that the Passions exist, wandering the roads, visiting Barsaive's towns, and touching people in thought and sometimes helping lift their burdens through gifts of healing, comfort, or strength.

The Passions do not appear in any single place or in any one form. Rather, they shape their surroundings and likenesses in a fashion that gives either slight clues or absolute certainty about their identity—the former when they set a test, the latter when they bring a message.

For more information on Passions and Questors, refer to the *Gamemaster's Companion*.

QUESTORS

Even the Passions cannot be everywhere, tackling every task, healing every sick person, and inspiring every man to chop wood with renewed energy so he will have fuel to keep warm in winter. For this, they have their **questors**, Namegivers taking to the ideals of the Passions. Questors serve to bridge the gap between their patron Passions and the denizens of the world. To be a questor means to regard all of the Passions, but to quest for the ideals of one. The Passions grant magical powers to the questors, with which they inspire and help Barsaive's people.

MAGIC

The world of **Earthdawn** is touched by magic in every aspect. The tide of magic brought the Horrors into the world, but also enabled magicians to devise the means to protect people from them. Heroes wield powerful magical weapons that bear their own Names, and magic has allowed civilizations to be built and maintained as airships travel the sky and structures that defy the laws of physics are erected in the cities. There are a number of established magical theories, facts, and laws detailed below that are recognized by all scholars throughout Barsaive and the Theran Empire.

NAMES

Names hold power, and the ability to Name an object, place, or person bestows power over and a link to that object through magical means. Indeed, some say that because the Therans Named Barsaive when they made it their province,

they will forever hold power over it, unless that Name is not used anymore and forgotten.

The power, imagination, and will to create things by Naming them is what makes the races of Barsaive and beyond **Namegivers**, even though other sentient beings exist. Most scholars also include the dragons among the Namegivers, although their abilities and motives are beyond the short-lived lives of the other races, and their numbers are few.

Patterns

Naming a thing or place solidifies what is called its magical pattern, stabilizing its ever-changing interaction with the world's magic. All living things have patterns, as do objects and places that have interacted with powerful magic or spawned mighty legends. When successfully Named, these items and places gain a sort of life of their own, and from then on are able to magically influence all with which they interact. The Name and knowledge of the deeds done with an item grant access to the power in such patterns. Heroes are famous for seeking out powerful magic items to research their patterns, which enables them to make use of these objects with greater efficiency.

THE PLANES

Besides what is known as the physical world, there are an infinite number of planes, domains, and realms—only accessible by magic—that are collectively known as the netherworlds. One of them is the origin of the Horrors, while others bear stranger life or none at all. Some have been visited by travelers and are known throughout the magical community, while more remain to be found and explored. Bizarre laws rule the netherworlds.

The netherworlds are home to various spirits, those of deceased Namegivers as well as those alien to the physical world. Many magicians have summoned these spirits to serve their whims, although they may appear without a summoner's call. They seldom have reason to do so, however, as their motives have passed beyond the physical world.

The Elemental Planes

Among the netherworlds are the five elemental planes. They are each mostly made up of one of the five True elements, the planes of air, earth, fire, water, and wood. Travelers cannot survive on these planes without powerful magic, and they are home only to elemental spirits.

The elemental planes are said to intersect with the physical world in numerous places, frequently attracting elemental spirits and leaving behind kernels of True elements that are gathered or mined to be used in enchantments. Orichalcum, a perfect combination of the True elements, is the most potent magical ingredient known.

DISTANCE/WEIGHT CONVERSION TABLE

Distance
1 inch = 2.5 centimeters
1 foot = 30 centimeters*
1 yard = 0.9 meters**
1 mile = 1.6 kilometers
Weight
2 pounds = 1 kilogram
2 pints = 1 liter
1 quart = 4 pints
1 ton = 1,000 kilograms
General
1 foot = 12 inches
1 yard or meter = 3 feet
1 mile = 1,760 yards
1 pound = 16 ounces
1 ton = 2,000 pounds

* Round to .33 meters
** Round to 1 meter

OPTIONAL RULES

By design, the **Earthdawn** game is extremely flexible. This means there are many places where more complex rules can be used by those who like more detail in their games. Throughout this book you will find sections presented as **optional rules**. These rules are intended for use only where the gamemaster and players feel they add to the overall playing experience. Often this requires trying the rule out for a while to see if it suits the group's playing style. We have presented a number of different rule options, but they are by no means the only ones available.

Another reason for including optional rules is for those players using older published rulebooks and supplements. Some optional rules in this book are actually standard rules for earlier editions of the **Earthdawn** game. They are included here for players and gamemasters who prefer to use them.

BLOOD MAGIC

Blood magic is magic fueled by the life force of a living being, and as such is even available to individuals who cannot wield magic by spell or other natural ability, as every living thing has a life force. Blood magic comes at a price, though, as the life force nourishing it is weakened while the magic is in effect. There are two main forms of blood magic: life magic and death magic.

Life magic is the sacrifice of small amounts of life energy to create or uphold minor magical effects. The most common ways of using it are to empower minor magical items known as **blood charms**, or to spill blood during a ritual to strengthen its effects or make oaths binding.

Death magic usually results in the death of the donor of life force, and often the donation is not voluntarily (if it is voluntary, the term Sacrifice Magic is sometimes used instead). Dark rumors are spoken of the Therans' use of blood magic, wasting away the lives of their slaves to empower great rituals and propel their magical vessels.

LEGENDS

Legends, tales, and stories are said to play a major part in the balance of all things magical. As all things interact with magic, so does the telling of heroes' legendary deeds, of tales and news from faraway places, and of stories from olden times. As a city is shaped by the actions of its inhabitants, as a company grows rich and influential by the efforts of its founders and employees, so does a magical pattern grow by the attention it receives when its tale is told.

The people of Barsaive recognize someone's or something's legend as a measure of that object or person's strength, its status in the world of magic. Thus, people strive to make their legend noteworthy, to be recognized in the way they deem right and remembered in the centuries to come. Many of the strongest magics of Barsaive and the Thera Empire, whether magical items or famous places, are part of the greatest legends told to this very day.

THE HORRORS

For hundreds of years, the world of **Earthdawn** suffered under a reign of terror perpetrated by beings known collectively as the **Horrors**. Though the world always had magic, the level of ambient magic gradually increased, and so did the activity of the Horrors. Magic eventually reached a level that allowed the Horrors to routinely breach the extra-dimensional barriers between their world and the world of **Earthdawn**.

The time during which the Horrors freely roamed the world, causing terror and destruction, is known by many names, the most common being **the Scourge**. During the Scourge, many cities and nations fell to the Horrors' power. Some individuals and communities embraced dark magics to defend themselves, some becoming little better than that which they feared. Now the Scourge is over. Many Horrors remain, but their power is diminished enough that civilization has begun to rebuild. Many people still tremble inside the walls they built to protect themselves and their families, afraid to venture out into the strange, changed world. The few brave enough to face it are the heroes of **Earthdawn**.

TAIN AND CORRUPTION

While the forces of magic were never to be fooled around with, the forming and channeling of raw magical energy always exacting a toll from the user, the Scourge has changed much of the magical energy in the physical world. The destruction wrought by a Horror or caused by its mere presence can spoil life and magical energies, and during the Scourge, the Horrors were everywhere. As a result, using magical energies became dangerous for magicians



after leaving the shelters (which were safe as long as no Horror had entered them, as they were shielded against tainted magical energies). Using magic in an unsafe area could not only seriously harm the magician, but could even attract Horrors. Thus, magical constructs called matrices were devised as a way to filter the most dangerous parts of taint from the magical energies. Spells became less powerful, but could be used very safely. Not using matrices can ease the casting of a spell, but using magic in its raw and now tainted form often spells doom for the magician.

Traces of Taint

While the taint of magical energies is only visible to those with command over magic, the physical representation of the Horrors' corruption can sometimes be observed by mundane means. The taint and corruption caused by any one particular Horror is unique to it, but there are often common themes to the taint. For example, a Horror lairing in a natural environment might cause plants and animals in the vicinity to become mutated and wicked, resembling undead life or the terrible constructs that Horrors forge. In such an environment, animals may become hostile, stone may develop sharp edges, and even plants may lash out at explorers, spreading newly developed poisons.

The most dangerous form of corruption is that of Namegivers, though. People under the influence of a Horror might open their kaers' doors at the Horror's command or start to slaughter innocents to satisfy the Horror's hunger for misery. Horrors can even mark the patterns of living things, thus exerting greater control over a person, thing, or place. Such corruption is difficult to detect, but a great many people believe the loss of beauty and the inability to create art is a clear sign of corruption, as Horrors do not seem to be able to create, only mimic and despoil.