

SWORD

&

SIGIL

Book Three: Adventure Design

A d20 based tabletop role playing adventure game.

v.2023.03.010.1812 BETA

This is a Test and Review copy.

I'm interested in all opinions. First impressions, formatting problems, character creation, game play, anything you do or do not like would be very helpful in completing the game.

**The formatting is designed for printing at digest size.
(Height 8 ½ Width 5 ½)**

Hello and thank you for taking the time to read Sword & Sigil!

Many aspects of roleplaying games are not realistic. Things like rounds, hit points, and defensive values don't reflect how the real-world works. They are game concessions used to keep the game organized, moving, and fair for everyone playing. The goal of these rules is not to be realistic but to be reality adjacent and to provide a framework for interaction, storytelling, adventure, and dramatic action.

This is your game now. Let your creativity guide you. Make changes. Write in the margins. Cross out things you don't like and add things you like better. Be unafraid of making mistakes. But, most important of all, have fun.

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ADVENTURE DESIGN

Adventure design can be easy or complex. Regardless, there is no reason to struggle. Create simple encounters until you build your confidence through experience. Here is a template to encourage you:

1. Think of a small location.
2. Imagine a theme.
3. Decide on an adversary.
4. Work up stats and find or draw a map.
5. Create a loose cadence or flowchart of how you expect the encounter to progress.

In practice, all the steps are interchangeable: knowing the location helps adapt the theme to fit...knowing the theme may help you chose a better location. You may think of a monster that you want to use then build around it. It's only a starting point. After that, write some notes and find or draw a map as this effort will make the session go much smoother.

What follows is an example of a design process and a high-level view of the play through of each part of the design. These are just samples. Use them if they'd be fun for you! Otherwise, they only serve as encouragement to help new Game Masters learn to create adventures for their players.

SESSION 0 (DESIGN)

“Party at the Tavern!”

Following the encounter creation template:

1. For this scenario I chose a tavern.
2. Assault the characters in the tavern.
3. Zombies are fun and scary!
4. I drew a map.
5. Cadence:
 - a. Zombies come through a window
 - b. Zombies come through another window
 - c. Zombies come through a door
 - d. Zombies come through another door
 - e. Repeat until characters are having fun!

This is an encounter for the first session. It provides an opportunity for the players to interact. It is also for the players to learn to use the rules and their new characters. With those considerations, I'd like to have many iterations of high intensity, but low risk.

Many iterations provide the opportunity to try tactics a few times or adjust and try new things. A contained area allows the freedom to modulate the flow/density of monsters on the field at any one time. For me, zombies require no moral weirdness or decision making to understand: Zombies are horrible, we must destroy them!

If the characters can handle the design without effort, we can increase the rate of the encounter (add more opponents faster). If the characters are getting overwhelmed by the design, we can reduce the rate of the encounter (fewer opponents and/or opponents arriving slower).

The objective with an initial scenario, like this, is to simply create opportunities for the characters to act and execute combat. This will give you and the players a chance to use and understand the dice, while internalizing the flow of the game.

...but why were the Zombies there?

MONSTER CREATION: Zombie

Average damage from a martial weapon (D8) is 4-5 points. I want most Zombies to drop from one hit, so I decide to give each 4hp.

I want the Zombies to be hit often, so the carnage can pile up. I assign a Defense of 10. In this situation, I avoid the temptation to increase the Defense to 11, 12, or possibly 13. The base Defense for everything is 10. If it can't be relevant now, at the beginning, ask yourself, "when will I use it?"

Finally, I don't want the zombies to have any special powers, modifiers, or large damage dice. This is an introductory adversary. D6 damage on a hit and +0 for everything.

Zombies

DEF: 10 HP: 4 Attack: +0 Damage: D6

NOTE: Speed is key

Why does this encounter look this way? Why is its form important?

The big objective here is to have a functional challenge that can be prepared quickly. This session is primarily mechanical...the art is in the delivery. There is so much work to do to get your team together...not to mention, learning the rules and teaching them. You also need to lead your team through character creation. This type of design is meant to provide an opportunity to play as quickly as possible.

There is a momentum that is lost if you must build characters then wait until another session to play. It's also awkward if a player then chooses to retcon their character. Many times, like everyone else, I've designed characters (in many game systems) that didn't work. At the end of Session 0, I always ask if anyone would like to change anything in their build: "Oppps. Did I say Wizard with a goldfish companion? I meant Warrior with a big axe."

The players are real. The characters are not. We are building things to encourage the players to invest themselves in the experience, not punish them for making a choice that didn't work out.

SESSION 0 (DESIGN - Continued)

“Party at the Tavern...Closing Time!”

Party at the Tavern is sufficient for its purpose and could easily make for a memorable evening. That said, I enjoy applying “order” to the chaos. I want to build an explanation for why things are happening (even if the players never see it) and, in this case, I want the players to experience a “boss fight”.

I decided I wanted a ghostly monster that could phase through the wall (for dramatic effect). I wanted it to be relatively tough, but not impossible. I decided on a Wraith, and I wanted it structured to be in play for 4 to 8 rounds.

I decide to give the Wraith a unique ability: everywhere it went, if it passed near a corpse, the body would animate and follow it. Over time, the Wraith accumulated a bunch of animated corpses that it now pushed into this little village.

If you want to embrace the theatrical possibilities, some of the animated corpses may be from different time periods, heritages, or anything you can think of. I will suggest that if you use this, use it to reinforce the feel of your play style and choose to emphasize your mode (humor, gore, oddity, whatever you choose is up to you!).

NOTE: Speed is key (Continued)

Why does this encounter look this way? Why is its form important?

I split the Session 0 Design into two sections for multiple reasons:

- 1. I literally designed this session at two different times and I’m trying to present what design might “feel like” to a new GM.*
- 2. The first part is sufficient for hours of laughs and exhilaration.*
- 3. This second part is more difficult for a new person to stage, and it adds more time to their session prep.*
- 4. Finally, to show that it’s ok to “find answers” along the way: your design work doesn’t need to be perfect! Do what you can. Celebrate the fun stuff and learn from the stuff that doesn’t work out. Every GM has moments where all their planning falls flat.*

MONSTER CREATION: Wraith

Our Warrior had a long sword, +2 Fitness, and the Wizard cast Elemental Weapon (d8+2+d6). This will produce an average of 9-11 damage per hit. I decided the Wraith should be able to take 4 hits before going down.

I wanted the players to experience some other game mechanics. I made the attack use a different mechanic: 1 point of Fatigue and D6 Damage. I made the defense use different mechanic: immune to non-magical weapons.

To balance the weapon immunity, I assigned a moderate Defense. However, I got worried the characters would be too debilitated by this point in the adventure, so I made the creature susceptible to fire to make certain this wasn't an impossible task.

If a Wraith comes within 100' of a corpse, that corpse animates and follows the Wraith under its control.

Wraith

DEF: 14 HP: 40 Attack: +0 Damage: D6 and 2 Fatigue

Immune to non-magical weapons.

Can be damaged by fire.

Animates corpses within 100'

NOTE: *For simplicity, you can use opponents from the Monster Guide. The MONSTER CREATION entries are about teaching the GM that enemies can be flexible. Do not hesitate to build or change whatever you want to be what you need for your game.*

SESSION 0 (PLAYTHROUGH)

“Party at the Tavern!”

In the first few sessions, I let the players start with 3 Bonus Effort. When players have a great idea or do something to enrich the experience of another player, I'll also give Bonus Effort. The purpose is to let these early stories unfold dramatically without having to worry about “balance” or mistakes from inexperience.

We had a Warrior with Cleave, a Warrior with Elemental Weapon, a Wizard with a Familiar and a Spell Focus casting Magic Missile, and a Wizard with Medicine, a Spell Focus, Cure and Elemental Weapon.

I needed a setup. I like making the initial scenario, for a new group, start in media res (“in the midst of things”). This approach gets everyone focused and engaged quickly.

I announced that the characters traveled together as guards for a pair of merchants. They arrived at this town late in the evening. The merchants paid the gate keepers a few extra coins to be allowed entrance after night fall. The merchants stayed in a different building and the characters took a brief meal at the tavern and exhausted, fell asleep in the common room.

The characters were awakened by the sounds of screaming from around the village. The characters used the tables and chairs to block the windows and doors while gathering themselves in the main room. I started with some spooky theatrics and pushed a pair of zombies through a window. The characters managed it easily. I pushed another pair through that window and immediately followed a round later with a third pair through the other front window.

I let them finish these opponents without adding more, then had four zombies burst through a side door. After the characters engaged and settled into dealing with the new threat, a round later, I pushed two more zombies through a front window.

From this point, it was all about acting/reacting in real time. In this way, I was able to engage them with more than 30 zombies. Add some cheesy theatrics: scary music, vocalizations, pictures printed from the internet, some dramatic entrances, and things really start to take shape.

As this wound down, three characters were engaged in the main room and one character in a side room. This is when I phased the Wraith through the wall. Intense combat ensued. I wanted it to last longer, but the players really got into it and unleashed all that the characters had left. The Wraith only managed two hits before it was brought down by Elemental Weapon (fire) and Magic Missile - the characters expended remaining Effort to Critical or get 20+ several times.

The room rippled constantly with desperation, trepidation, and excitement. The players were on the edge of their seats the entire evening!

We now know why the Zombies were there...but why was the Wraith there?!?!?

NOTE: Modulate creatures to fit needs

We are free to decide that a creature has more or fewer hit points, in the moment, if that will serve the story. Maybe a character only does 3hp to a 4hp creature, but I need that creature out of the way to begin a new idea on the battlefield, so I modulate the hit points down from 4 to 3, and proclaim, "you whacked its bits all over the room!" and we move on.

SESSION 1 (DESIGN)

“Here They Come”

Following the encounter creation template:

1. Goblinoids attack the town.
2. Goblinoids following Zombies for opportunistic cleanup.
3. Goblinoids!
4. I loosely traced a map from a book.
5. Cadence:
 - a. Goblins approach the gate.
 - b. Five goblins go left to circle around.
 - c. Five goblins go right to circle around.
 - d. Remaining goblins approach the gate. The Hobgoblins drive them forward to climb over.

I still hadn't figured out why the Wraith was there, but I had to move on. The next play session was near, and I needed something for the players.

It hit me: what if a goblinoid war band had been following in the wake of this undead? What if they were moving along carefully and taking the time to loot whatever remained? This was the premise that inspired me, but I didn't yet know what a goblinoid would be.

Building their story took a few days - not because it must take so long, but because I wanted an answer for myself. Regardless, once this work is done, the effort can be recycled continuously. It will save time in the long run.

The location will be the village around the tavern. I will need to build some stats and find a map. I looked through some books and decided upon a village with a river that forks around it and a draw bridge to cross the river.

The undead will have destroyed everyone in the village during the night. So, the specific design and population of the village is irrelevant: I just need to be able to suggest a village in vague terms.

The village is surrounded by water and a wooden palisade. The focus of the battle will be the draw bridge and the wooden towers on either side. Loosely, the adversaries will attempt to get inside the village by crossing the water and climbing over the gate. The adversary will be a group of 40 goblins and 6 hobgoblins. The Hobgoblins have more HP and a higher Defense (from armour) than Goblins. I've also chosen to arm the Hobgoblins with martial weapons.

For motivation, the hobgoblins know that they have limited time to loot before either military or other usurpers make acquiring the loot difficult. They also feel the pressure of staying ahead of the ogre's food requirements. Then somewhere in the back of their minds is the possibility that they might be able to get the choicest bits if they push this raid ahead of the balance of the other goblinoids (next session). The goblins simply do whatever they're told will provide food and chaos.

NOTE: Build whatever you want

If building the village and creating occupants is of use to you, by all means: build it all! In this situation, I had used all my free time to work out goblinoid ecology. If I'd chosen to also focus on the village, I wouldn't have been ready in time, and we would have had to skip the session. That said, sometimes you will have the luxury to build in more depth to the surroundings. If you keep good notes, anything unused can always be recycled into another adventure. Some things can simply be reskinned and reused. The focus here is to learn what must be developed versus what you would want to develop. Then, spend your effort in a way that returns to you the greatest opportunity to play.

MONSTER CREATION: Goblinoids

For my world, I like to build continuity between creatures. I want to know why some have a symbiotic nature and why some are adversarial. On this occasion, I really wanted to know what exists around goblins. If all goblins are special and capable, why don't they rule the world? I wanted limitations that could be managed so they could be assembled into large factions while still explaining why vast swarms of them weren't continually roaming the landscape. Here is what I decided on:

GOBLINS are animalic. They're bipedal animals with low intelligence. No special abilities. Their focus is surviving and propagating.

Goblin

DEF: 10 HP: 4 Attack: +0 Damage: D6

HOBGOBLINS are goblins with any attribute that gives them any edge over their kin. They live longer, grow bigger than goblins, and they achieve more because they're better able to manage their rivals. Still, they're animalic.

Hobgoblin

DEF: 16 HP: 8 Attack: +1 Damage: D8

Chain mail, shield, battle axe

OGRES are goblin abominations. They only live 10-15 years because of "gigantism". They are goblins that grow continuously. They must eat, and eat a lot, or they're in constant agonizing pain from hunger. If deprived, they will eat their kin. This becomes an important motivator in their society.

Ogre

DEF: 14 HP: 48 Attack: +3 Damage: D12+D6+3

Talent: Slayer

Thick hide and fast reflexes. Great club.

"Misery loves company" as they say, so these groups stay together. They're family, after all. Like ants, or maybe a pack of hyenas, they either roam or work from a den/nest and scour outward around them to obtain enough food to continually feed their group.

NOTE: Bottom Dwellers

Something has a 10 Defense, something has 4 HP. I choose to make goblins this type of creature (zombies and skeletons too). However, to some people, goblins, zombies, etc. all have indelible, iconic Talents. If you fall into this camp, please make your goblins with more hit points and Advantage on Sneaking, or make your skeletons Resistant to slashing and piercing weapons, or whatever Talents are fun for you at your table. But, keep in mind, something needs to be at the bottom. What will that be in your world?

NOTE: Monster Rename/Reskin

What if you renamed the Goblin, Hobgoblin, and Ogre just to confuse and confound the characters? Goblins become Creepers. Hobgoblins become Cutters. Ogres become Crushers. Then the narrative changes to: "Be careful! There are Creepers everywhere...but it's the Cutters that are the scary ones. It's just something about the look in their eyes...the malevolence. But, if you ever see a Crusher, just run. Run and don't even try to look back!"

NOTE: Session Recapitulation

As a session starts, I ask each player to share a few sentences about what they remember from the last session. This is a very useful way to lead the players through the emersion back into the game as they compare memories and discuss the things that resonated with them. Listen through this discussion and ask strategic questions to help facilitate emersion and, where necessary, to correct information that may be important to the flow of the game.

SESSION 1 (PLAYTHROUGH)

“Here They Come”

I have three objectives for this session:

1. Get the players moving (and making decisions) in the world.
2. Combat between the characters and goblins.
3. Level up the characters.

I start with a Session Recap. As the players settle back into the game, I begin unfolding their current setting. I chose to describe the situation as though their last fight took all night, then finish with, “The sun creeps up over the horizon as the dust of the battle settles around you. Everything has gone quiet...except for the wailing of a woman on one side of the village and guttural moans from a man on the other side of the village.”

Everywhere the characters looked, there was carnage. One of the characters went to check the moaning man and found him trapped under an overturned oven with his legs ruined. This player wanted to provide aid, but I explained he didn’t have the skill. He then asked if he could chop his mangled legs off to free him from under the oven. I rolled a Die of Fate to see what happened. The character cast Elemental Weapon (Fire) on his sword and went to work. I rolled a 5 and declared the patient was unconscious, and the wounds were cauterized, but he would need healing to survive.

A character went to the wailing woman and found her inconsolable and unresponsive as she sobbed over the remains of her children. She couldn’t be reasoned with and resisted every attempt to move her.

A character went to the draw bridge and found it had been lowered.

The party discussed what they’d seen after returning to the inn. The innkeeper made an enormous breakfast for them to show thanks...and stall them from leaving. He said there was an apothecary a few buildings over and they might find resources there to help the man and something to render the woman unconscious (so she could be moved). The wizards rooted through the apothecary. One made a tea to put the woman to sleep, took it to her, she drank it reflexively, and went unconscious soon after.

The warriors transported the injured man and the unconscious woman to the inn, then left to raise the drawbridge. The other wizard cast cure on the injured man and tended him.

The innkeeper told them respectfully gathering resources wouldn't matter because no one living remained to claim anything here. By midday, the characters had looted the village and amassed a bit of valuable stuff, cleared out the apothecary, and assembled 6 horses that had been owned by the locals.

This done, the characters climbed to the top of the towers to either side of the drawbridge, to assess the surroundings. In front of the village stands acres of wheat separating it from a forest. As they looked out, they saw a band of goblinoids moving out from the wood and through the wheat field. The players decided to stay out of sight and take no action until the goblins got close, then they'd start attacking.

The 40 goblins and 6 hobgoblins approached and as they got near, 5 goblins broke away to move left and 5 more broke away to go to the right. For reference, these 10 had no chance to act before the main body was routed.

When the goblinoids entered the water, the characters stood up and attacked. One Wizard got a 20+ on a Mysticism check for a Magic Missile (four rounds of 2d6). For the two rounds they're crossing the water, 4 goblins were killed by Magic Missile and 4 killed by bow shot. The Hobgoblins drove the force forward and they started to climb. First round of climbing, 4 more goblins killed with arrows and Magic Missiles. As a group made it to the top of the drawbridge to climb over, the other Wizard cast sleep and failed the Mysticism check but used a point of Effort to re-roll and got a Critical. Four goblins fell asleep and fell to the ground incapacitated or dead. The next round, 4 more goblins were killed with arrows and Magic Missiles. Again, a group made it to the top and we're put to sleep. The Mysticism check was a 20+ and three more goblins fell either dead or incapacitated. The goblinoids become aware that 23 of the 46 of them had been decimated. Their resolve breaks and they turned to flee. The Hobgoblins were killed in the first three rounds, but the remaining goblins (including the 10 that split off earlier) eventually made it back to the forest.

At this point, I let the characters level up from first to second level.

SESSION 2 (DESIGN)

Lions and tigers and things that will kill you a lot, oh my!

Following the encounter creation template:

1. More trouble in the town.
2. Characters get battle.
3. Goblins, Hobgoblins, and Ogres!
4. Stats are easy and I have a map.
5. Cadence:
 - a. Goblinoids attack.

The main purpose of the last sessions was to connect the players to their characters and bind them into the world. Getting treasure, making decisions, and leveling up, reveal players that are excited to be a part of things or reveal the players that haven't been captivated by the story that's evolving. The secondary objective was to collect the data I needed to build this scenario.

I wanted a force strong enough to suffer big losses and still be able to be a threat. So, I decided the goblins that assaulted previously were one of three teams. There remain two teams of 40 goblins, two teams of 6 hobgoblins, and they're all gathered around two ogres. This crew has been informed by a few of the goblins that had escaped and now they're closing in on the town.

The goblins are like locusts moving forward with no thought other than consuming. The hobgoblins are loosely federated with each other knowing they must control the goblin swarm to be effective or the ogres will eat them. They all put up with the ogres because they're the bullies that keep their enemies frightened hence making the group feel protected. These are not healthy relationships.

SESSION 2 (PLAYTHROUGH)

Lions and tigers and things that will kill you a lot, oh my!

Time for Session Recap. The players talk through where they'd left off. I used the discussion as an opportunity to create tension. I ask seeming innocuous questions, but imply possibility:

“What will you do if something attacks again?”

...or...

“Are you sure you're ready to figure out what's next?”

The characters kept watch in the towers beside the drawbridge. The next day, they saw what they expected: a goblinoid war band. Again, the characters waited to attack until the goblinoids got to the water.

When they reached the water's edge, the Wizard cast Arcane Strike (Fire) on the first group and focused on the hobgoblins. This strike killed all the hobgoblins and many goblins in that group. The Warriors managed to shoot an Ogre twice. The other Wizard cast Magic Missile and hit the unwounded Ogre. The goblins began firing arrows mostly ineffectively because the characters had cover.

The goblinoids charged forward harder. The Wizard cast another Arcane Strike - focused on the other hobgoblins. The effect was roughly the same, except I decided their morale faltered, and the goblins all started to run away. Two more arrows hit one Ogre and the other Ogre was hit by Magic Missiles. Both Ogres became enraged, leapt across the water onto the gate, and began to climb.

One of the Warriors wanted her own epic moment and decided to dive over the wall with her great sword to empale an Ogre. I explained what would happen if she missed and what was likely to happen if she hit and said, “Are you sure you want to do this?”

She couldn't be dissuaded. She had taken Berserker and decided to Rage as she went over the side. She burned all her Effort and scored a Critical (in this circumstance I elected to double the damage instead of allowing a second strike). On top of the Magic Missile damage, this was enough to kill the Ogre.

I described that she drove her sword completely to the hilt into the body of the Ogre and the two of them plunged into the moat. Its body floated in the water, she landed on top, like a boat, and the current swept them downstream as she failed to extract her greatsword from the carcass.

As the remaining ogre crested the drawbridge, the wizard lost his nerve and cast Arcane Strike again. The effect killed the ogre, wrent and weakened the drawbridge, while simultaneously blasting the characters backwards.

All gritty. All tense. The players felt the stress, but I think they were lulled by a lack of risk. This will be the focus next session.

SESSION 3 (DESIGN)

“Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained”

Following the encounter creation template:

1. Battle in the forest.
2. Characters get the goblinoid treasure.
3. Goblins and Hobgoblins.
4. Stats are easy and I’ll invent a map as needed.
5. Cadence:
 - a. Lure characters into the forest.
 - b. Attack the characters all around.
 - c. Recover goblinoid treasure if possible.

This session will tie things together for the players and setup the next phase of the campaign. The goblinoids had broken into teams and were sweeping the countryside at a good distance behind the undead troupe. The three teams would crisscross, scouring for signs of the Wraith’s passing. Once they located the latest raid, they’d reform together, and plunder the remains for food and valuables.

The main team of this band of goblinoids also contained two ogres. There were 6 wagons with this band. Two of the wagons were makeshift “nests” for the ogres. Two wagons contain “valuables”. And the last two wagons contain piles of stuff that the goblinoids consider as food. Goblinoids neither know how to use carts nor take care of domesticated beasts. Each wagon had two poorly maintained horses tied by many poorly situated ropes.

This is all a trap. Earlier combat has all happened with the characters protected in a defensible position. Now I want the players to feel the uncertainty of combat without anything to cling to but their own wits. I want them to feel the pressure of an enemy closing in around their characters.

Now I take what I’ve learned about these characters, this group of players, and how they choose to play the game, to design a freeform encounter to provide a difficult challenge.

SESSION 3 (PLAYTHROUGH)

“Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained”

Like Session 1, I have three objectives for this session:

1. Get the characters in an “uncontrolled” setting.
2. Make the characters fight very hard.
3. Level up the characters.

Time for Session Recap and the opportunity to get the players excited.

One of the Wizards cast Beast Form and turned into a Falcon to search the surroundings. He went into the forest to search for the goblinoids and found their wagons. He also observed 30+ Goblins and a few Hobgoblins. Most importantly, he observed the dreadful state of the horses and intended to rescue them. I knew he couldn't resist helping animals in need.

Bolstered by their previous successes, the characters headed straight for the forest to get the wagons. They skirmished with goblins, one or two at a time shooting arrows at them from a distance. The characters made their way to the wagons and when they got close, the remaining goblins and hobgoblins set upon them.

The Warrior with Dual Defense waded into the middle of the goblins just because he could. His progress was slow, but he became a big distraction for the main group. The second Warrior waded in, but without Dual Defense, immediately started taking damage.

A Wizard cast Magic Missile and used that to control the battlefield for a few rounds. The Warrior without Dual Defense had Cleave and managed to kill many Goblins each round before being brought down. The Warrior with Dual Defense closed-in to drive back the attackers and simultaneously, a Wizard moved in to cast Cure.

The characters were under assault from arrows continuously and were taking damage often. The main force, of the remaining goblins, was destroyed, but I had the characters take arrow fire continuously from “stray goblins”.

The Wizards cut the horses free except for two horses on one of the “treasure” wagons. Each of the Warriors had to get a kill each round to avoid getting delayed and face extra adversaries.

By the time the characters escaped the forest, most all their Effort had been used, but they now had the horses with them and one wagon. The goblins no longer pursued them.

They spent the rest of the day shoring up the drawbridge so that it was safe to use (as it had been damaged in the previous encounter). They sorted what things of value they found in the wagon and the things of value on the dead goblinoids. They were about to take these things and the horses into the village and close the drawbridge when they saw the approach of a lone rider.

Previously, the innkeeper told the party to expect that people from the King make rounds through the area, sometimes it’s soldiers and other times it’s a herald.

The horse rider was a herald. The innkeeper recognized him as Sir Lokanad, and he addressed the innkeeper by name (Shiv). The herald questioned the characters about the devastation and all the corpses. They seemed to make peace with each other, moved into the village, and closed the drawbridge.

At this point, I let the characters level up from second to third level.

This was the turning point for the campaign as an idea started to materialize in my mind!

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Little Bo Peep has lost his sheep!

I finally figured out the larger storyline: The herald (Sir Lokanad) is the Apprentice to the King's Wizard, but in disguise. The Apprentice had secretly risen in power, secretly killed the Wizard (who was a drunken lay about), then faked his own death. The Apprentice has killed the real herald (he has a magic ring that lets him maintain or change disguises at will) and has assumed the identity of this herald to gain access to information and use the position to gain advantage over others. The Apprentice's spells are focused on undead and controlling people.

The Apprentice had been controlling the Wraith. He would disguise himself as a Hobgoblin and infiltrate the war band. Then, he'd "follow" the Wraith to observe the carnage. The Apprentice had been using this "war machine", the undead and goblinoids, for months to move around strategically to create confusion and distraction.

His big objective is to build an army of undead and overthrow the King to take over the kingdom. He sees everything, and everyone, as a potential resource. As such, since the characters "bested" his war machine, why couldn't he now use them to do his dirty work?

NOTE: Story Development

Sometimes we're afforded the luxury of a strong storyline before we start. Other times, we just pull together something that can entertain people. I had no idea what the adventure was going to be until right before it happened for each session. And, I didn't have a clear storyline until after the fourth session (0-3).

SESSION 4 (DESIGN)

“The Apprentice”

The last few sessions have been about intensity. Now it's time to concentrate on weaving the characters into the world. Let the characters meet some of the inhabitants of your world. Let them do things in the world that connect them to their surroundings. In this case, I will lead them to buy property.

I had a rough outline: replace his previous “war machine” with the party. The characters needed to meet Sir Lokanad and be enamored by his personality. He'd then use his prestige to get resources for the characters to make them more able to assist him...while simultaneously spending their money to do it.

In game terms, this creates a vector for getting quests into the game while getting treasure out of the game.

In story terms, using some of his contacts to spend their money to buy the characters treasure allows Lokanad the chance to abuse people. Then, simultaneously, letting the players spend excessive amounts of their treasure makes the players think they're special and the non-player characters are further indebted to Lokanad, and this will explain future loyalties.

NOTE: Real Estate

Property creates something the characters must protect and service. It is also a place where they can be found by both friend and foe alike. Do local thugs try to strongarm the characters? Does the new Captain of the Watch try to work out a “payment plan” for “extra protection”? Do they run a business that expands or contracts because of something good or bad? Do they establish an Affiliation with a secret society or a merchant's guild? All these things are excellent plot hooks to begin new or content. For reference, these devices can all be leveraged for some ad hoc storytelling.

SESSION 4 (PLAYTHROUGH)

“The Apprentice”

Sir Lokanad joins the characters for dinner in the Inn. He asks them very detailed questions and pieces together exactly what the characters have experienced here in the village. One of the Wizards starts to catch on and says that he is way too smart for the position of Herald and asks if she can make an Reason or Instinct check for any clues. I asked for a roll...she scored a Critical (natural 20). I explained that from her point of view, this was likely the smartest person she had ever met, including her Wizard teachers. I asked for a second roll to determine the extent of what she discerned. Here she rolled a Botch (natural 1). I explained she feels that something is completely out of place, but she has no idea what it is.

Lokanad asked the characters to please travel with him and explain everything to the king in person. His objective is to overwhelm the characters with splendor and obligate them into doing his bidding. He encourages the characters to gather their spoils (even the arms and armour from the guards) take a wagon from the village, all their horses (one of the Wizards used a day to cast cure spells and do healing on the horses), and follow him to the king's castle.

Along the way, the Apprentice uses his position and prestige to “encourage” the merchants in the towns they passed through to pay full price for the items from the characters (including 10 horses that were in excellent shape).

The Apprentice arranged for baths and new clothes for the characters before meeting the king. They were able to tell their story to the king where the King then confirmed that the undead and goblinoids had been carving a path through the kingdom while continually evading capture or confrontation with the king's soldiers.

The apprentice arranged for the royal smiths to make arms and armour for the characters...but they'd have to pay 1.5 times the normal price for the quality.

Lokanad also arranged for the characters to purchase a two-story merchant building and hire a servant to maintain it.

MONSTER CREATION: The Apprentice (“Sir Lokanad”)

8th Level Human Wizard

Fitness: +1 **Reason:** +3 **Instinct:** +3 **EFF:** 10 **Level Bonus:** +4 **Mystic Bonus:** +2

Skills: Mysticism, Perception, Knowledge

Talents:

Mystic Resistance

Mystical Discovery: Raise Dead

Mystical Discovery: Charm

Mystical Discovery: Read Minds

Mystical Discovery: Scry

Mystical Discovery: Word of Return

Mystical Discovery: Disguise

Mystical Discovery: Obscure

Mystical Discovery: Arcanist

Mystical Discovery: Mystic Focus

Mystical Discovery:

Mystical Discovery:

Equipment:

Ring of Disguise

Ring of Obscuring

Description:

The Apprentice will never stay and fight alone. If something happens and he doesn't have minions, he will use Word of Return and find his adversary later.

Two spell slots are left open as an encouragement to try an evolve what you think his choices would be given the temperament you are now imagining.



BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Social Contract

The Social Contract is an agreement for how your group chooses to treat one another. Its purpose is to protect everyone involved and allow every participant the opportunity to choose if they're interested in trading their time to participate in the experience. It is always best to be clear about expectations.

Things worth considering:

1. Is your game cooperative or competitive?
2. Consider providing a rating (G, PG, R, MA) for complex topics.
3. Are players allowed to harass one another?
4. What should be done if you need to be absent or late?
5. Do you wish to put structure around eating and drinking at the table?
6. Do you wish to put structure around using technology during play?

These are just a few ideas to get you started thinking about how you'd like to setup your Social Contract. Ultimately, it's up to you to outline how you'd like things to work in your gaming sessions.

"Rules" are not enough for "fair play". Players and Game Masters alike can have a tendency to bend/push/ignore/disregard rules. It happens. The point of the Social Contract is to put forth the "spirit" of what you intend...to avoid misuse/abuse of the rules for a single person's interest.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Distance Alternative: Zones

Distance can be abstracted to allow the game to flow quickly and cinematically. The objective is to provide a simple way of representing distance without requiring specific numerical values.

Near You can enter combat with (or throw a dagger at) anyone **NEAR** you. This region is represented by a circle in the center.

Far You can shoot a short bow (or throw a javelin) at anyone **FAR** from you. This region is a concentric circle around **Near**.

Distant You can shoot someone **FAR** or **DISTANT** with a heavy crossbow, long bow, or siege weapon. This region is a concentric circle around **Far**.

To round-out abstracted distance a few more terms are needed for clarity:

Self For spells, some only affect **Self**.

Touch Healing or inscribing require the practitioner to **Touch** their work. This is represented by a character adjacent to their work in any region.

Removed Not able to function in the currently described context for any reason. This is anywhere other than **Near**, **Far**, or **Distant**.

Characters gets two **Actions** per round: one **Move** and one **Standard**.

Encumbered characters get one **Action** per round: either **Move** or **Standard**.

The **Standard Action** may be traded for a **Move Action**.

You may move from **Distant** to **Far** or from **Far** to **Near** with one **Move Action**.

You may move from **Distant** to **Near** with two **Move Actions**.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Quality Items

Sometimes you need to reward characters with items that feel substantive but aren't extraordinarily game changing. In general, these items aren't something that will be found at a store. If the players do earn an opportunity to acquire one of these items, it could have a cost 100 times that of a typical item.

It is completely up to the Game Master to determine whether they want to use any type of item like this. These ideas may also serve as examples for possible rewards in games with very little magic.

Here are some non-magical items to inspire you:

Dwarven Light Crossbow	+1 Attack, D8+1 Damage, reload free action
Dwarven Plate	Defense +7, 4 Encumbrance
Elfin Cloak	ADV on Stealth checks
Elfin Bow	Short bow that functions as a long bow
Elfin Chain	Defense +5, 2 Encumbrance
Grograhm Gambeson	Defense +1, anyone can wear
Quality Short Sword	+1 Attack, D6+1 Damage
Quality Long Sword	+1 Attack, D8+1 Damage
Quality Leather Armour	+3 Defense
Quality Chain Mail	+5 Defense
Quality Plate Armour	+7 Defense

Struck Rankour Wood "Struck Wood" The heart wood of a Rankour tree that has been struck by lightning. On its final use, it is consumed completely.

Rankour Wand	cast spell at +2 levels, 1 use
Rankour Bracers	cast spell at +2 levels, 2 uses (1 per bracer)
Rankour Staff	cast spell at +2 levels, 3 uses

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Magic Weapons and Armour

A **Magic Weapon** is +2 Attack and +2 Damage.

Magic Small Weapon	+2 Attack, D4+2 Damage
Magic Light Weapon	+2 Attack, D6+2 Damage
Magic Martial Weapon	+2 Attack, D8/D10+2 Damage
Magic Great Weapon	+2 Attack, D12+2 Damage

Magic Armour is 2 Defense higher and 2 Encumbrance lower.

Magic Leather Armour	+4 Defense
Magic Chain Armour	+6 Defense
Magic Plate Armour	+8 Defense

There are no **Magic Shields**. The process to create a magic item is costly. A shield is a consumable item. It isn't likely that a Wizard would invest into a shield, nor would a benefactor be willing to pay the cost.

Quality Arms and Armour that are made **Magic** receive the magic bonus instead of the quality bonus as these are **not** additive.

There are no +1 **Magic Weapons** or +1 **Magic Armour** as the cost to create these wouldn't be less than +2 item. These items do not exist.

There are +3 **Magic Weapons** or +3 **Magic Armour**, but they are singularities and legendary. Most characters will never see one of these.

Elemental Damage may be added to a weapon (Fire, Lightning, Force, etc.) to increase damage +D6:

Lightning Dagger	D4+D6 Damage
Magic Lightning Dagger	+2 Attack, D4+2+D6 Damage
Force Hammer	D8//D10+D6 Damage
Magic Force Hammer	+2 Attack, D8//D10+2+D6 Damage
Frost Bow	D8+D6 Damage
Magic Frost Bow	+2 Attack, D8+2+D6 Damage
Fire Battleaxe	D8+D6 Damage
Magic Fire Battleaxe	+2 Attack, D8+2+D6 Damage

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Magic Wand, Staff, and Scroll

These types of items potentially give the spellcaster access to spells that they have not discovered. These types of magic items can only be used by a character who can already cast spells. A wielder of one of these items will retain no knowledge of these spells if access to the item is lost. Their function is to expand the spellcaster's chosen spell list.

Scrolls are consumable and provide access to the spell one time.

Example: A **Wizard** acquires a **Scroll** of **Arcane Blast (Lightning)**. To use the **Scroll** the **Wizard** unfurls it and casts the spell (as they would any spell they know), by expending **Effort** and making a **Mysticism Check**, the **Scroll** is consumed in the process (regardless of whether the check was successful).

Wand and **Staff** are persistent and may be used as often as desired. A **Wand** may contain one spell and a **Staff** may contain up to three spells. The wielder must use their own **Effort** and make a successful **Mysticism Check** to cast the spell.

Example: A **Wizard** acquires a **Wand** with **Sleep** stored in it. The **Wizard** does not know this spell. The **Wand** grants the **Wizard** the ability to use **Sleep** as if it was one of their chosen spells.

Example: A **Wizard** acquires a **Staff** with three spells stored in it: **Charm**, **Dominate**, and **Psychic Surgery**. The **Wizard** knows **Charm** but not the other two. The **Wizard** gains access to **Dominate** and **Psychic Surgery** as if they were their chosen spells.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Unique Magic Items

Here are ideas to get you started. It is recommended that you do not provide a bonus greater than +2 and additive damage shouldn't exceed a D6. Legendary items may be +3 and add not more than 2D6 damage.

The Emerald Fist was made from a severed troll hand. The hand does the will of the wielder. The hand is attached to 15' of lightweight blackened chain and it requires two hands to use. It is a **+2 Magic Martial Weapon** (Attack +2, Damage D10+2). This weapon may be used to perform **Special Actions** up to 15' away (Attack, Trip, Disarm, etc.).

Fang is a broad bladed dagger created from a horn ripped out of the head of Ganagi, an ancient undead dragon vanquished long ago. It is a **+2 Magic Small Weapon** (Attack +2, Damage D4+2). The wielder can shoot a green **Force Missile** once per round up to 30' away (Shoot +2, Damage 2D6+2).

Majnert's Coat of Comfort This beautifully crafted, padded leather arming doublet is covered with 100's or repairs that crisscross the entire piece. Any time the coat is damaged, it repairs itself within 24 hours. It will mold between the user and their armour to make the armour more comfortable. Its main power is to provide **Damage Resistance** to fighting and shooting weapons.

Mourne Siege is a sentient (Reason +3, Instinct +3) greatsword. It is a **+2 Magic Great Weapon** (Attack +2, Damage D12+2). If the wielder is reduced to half Hit Points, that character must make an opposed Reason + Instinct check and succeed, or the sword will force them to **Rage**. The wielder ignores fatigue while raging. If the wielder **Rages**, the sword bestows **Heroism** until the battle is over.

Rootgaden's Bag is the entrance to an extra-dimensional space. It weighs 3 pounds and takes one inventory slot. **Rootgaden's Bag** holds 10 inventory slots without increasing in weight or size. Whatever contents the user reaches inside the bag to retrieve are immediately moved into their hand.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Editing in Real Time

It takes an enormous amount of energy to evolve a group of people who can cooperate and build a great experience together. Each person is sacrificing their resources to participate. I choose to defend everyone's contribution from stupid mistakes.

Most of the time, I underestimate the players. But that doesn't lead to rewarding adventures. I edit the world around the characters in real-time, but not to change the stakes. I decide what the stakes will be ahead of time, but my design doesn't always live up to what it should be.

Are things too easy because a player had a brilliant idea? I do nothing except celebrate victory with the players. These are the moments that make playing the game into an amazing experience. Are things too tough because the players made a poor decision? Well...they will live with the mistakes. I won't change things because even loss makes amazing memories.

Are things too easy because I did something stupid? I correct it by turning up the heat! Intensity makes great adventures. Are things too tough because I made mistakes? I work like a wild man to correct it without getting "caught". The players should feel the intensity, but not be punished for my poor planning. Are things too tough because the players accidentally did something stupid? I will probably make changes that prevent a TPK (total party kill), but I'll leave the characters in misery, so it becomes a learning opportunity.

Creating verisimilitude (the appearance of being true or real) is everything as you build your world...and creating trust between everyone at the table is just as important.

We don't make changes that will destroy the trust that we build with the player. We also can't make changes that break the illusion that our world is real. Players trust that everyone at the table is working hard to make the event into a great experience.

If our changes seem to uphold one loss while repairing another's misfortune, all the players will stop trusting us. If making changes destroys the continuity of our world, the players will lose interest in being there...

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Affiliation

Giving the players an artery to connect them to the heartbeat of your world is done most easily by granting them association with a group that is aligned with their objectives. **Affiliation** may be chosen as a Talent by a player who desires an association, but there is no reason it couldn't be awarded for free instead. This is completely up to the Game Master to decide.

Building a **Retinue** may be explained through an **Affiliation**. The arrival of a **Companion** may be explained through word spreading in the **Affiliation**...or it could be one of the **Retinue** has advanced. All these things can be interrelated.

Leadership should augment these Talents and **All Friend** should augment **Leadership**.

If the character has **Leadership**:

- **double** the number of henchmen for each instance of **Retinue**
- any **Companion** may be one level closer to your level
- the character has a leadership position in any of their **Affiliations**

If a character has **Leadership** and **All Friend**:

- **triple** the number of henchmen for each instance of **Retinue**
- any **Companion** may be your level and attracts their own **Retinue**
- the character is a decision maker in any of their **Affiliations**

Increase or decrease as you see fit.

However, consider that a player who has committed this many opportunities to grow their connections will lack all other appreciable options. That said, if you are not ready for this level of play, do not allow it.

Associations and henchmen give the players a sense of depth and increase their connection to your world!

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Advancement/Experience

How many adventures will you want (or be able) to run for this group? Twenty adventures are a lot of adventures, but that is still only 2 per level. Forty adventures are an awesome achievement, but that is four per level. How many levels do you want the characters to attain in the number of adventures you're going to run?

You can use or provide any illusion you want to disperse advancement. That said, one or two sessions per level until the characters are fifth level. Then, two or three sessions per level until ninth. Finally, three or four sessions for tenth.

But who's to say you can't play one session per level? It is your game.

The advancement of every character is at the sole discretion of the Game Master. But whatever method is used for advancement must be consistent for everyone.

Some guidelines to consider:

Do not advance the characters faster than they can learn the abilities of their current level.

Do advance the characters as quickly as you adjust to them and feel the need to reward the players with a level.

Each character's life is meant to pass into legend. Advance the characters, let them retire...to run a kingdom...or monastery...or school of magic...or secret society...the possibilities are infinite!

There are only ten levels because ten levels are attainable...ten levels, because every story needs a beginning, a middle and an end.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Target Numbers

The Game Master determines the difficulty of a situation. This difficulty is called a Target Number.

- **Target 10** “Typical” - Never use a target less than 10. If the task is easier than a 10, let the character succeed without a check.
- **Target 15** “Hard” - Most rolls will use a target of 15. This represents attempting something difficult or in a stressful situation.
- **Target 20** “Extreme” - Rarely use a target of 20. Reserve this for situations where the possibility of success is very slim but still possible.

The truth: you choose any number you want!

That said, it is important to be consistent. If attacking goblins in the morning requires a 12 and then attacking them at lunch requires a 17, you need to help the players understand the disparity. Otherwise, it feels like your world is inconsistent...like even the effects of light and gravity may change without reason. This ruins suspension of disbelief (if you do want a very chaotic experience, brief the players! Maybe suggest that the evening will look far more like Alice in Wonderland than Frodo in the Shire).

In practice, I tend more towards incrementing even numbers:

- **Minions** 12
- **Mini-Boss** 14
- **Boss** 16
- **Unique** 18 or 20

But even these don't always work as intended. Each time you set a Target Number, that decision informs your next decision. For example, characters will roll a 12 far more often than rolling 18. Do you want that scenario to be lots of misses and a single dramatic hit will end it? Then maybe set a Target Number of 20 and scale hit points to 10. If you want lots of hits that whittle the bad guy down, then maybe set the target number to 10 and scale hit points to 60. For contrast, now imagine a Target Number of 20 and 60 hit points combined.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Grimdark or Changing the Style

This section is about modulating **Sword & Sigil** to suit your needs. Some simple tweaks to make the game more dire from the outset:

- Change **Hit Points** per **Hit Die** from 4 to 3 (or 2!).
- The maximum number of **Hit Dice** is 10.
- Starting characters have **+0 Ability** points for **Agility, Fitness, Reason, Instinct**. You may also consider allowing the characters to have a -1 in a stat to then be able to place a +1 in another stat.
- Characters earn **+1 Ability** points on even levels for a maximum of **+5 Ability** points at 10th level.
- When a character reaches **0 Hit Points**, they are dead.
- Reduce **Effort** from **2+1/level** to **1+1/level** or just **1/level**.
- Remove any or all **Talents**.
- Remove any or all **Spells**.

You can also go in the other direction for a more “heroic” game:

- Change **Hit Points** per **Hit Die** from 4 to 5.
- Starting characters have **+4 Ability** points for **Agility, Fitness, Reason, Instinct**.
- Increase **Effort** from **2+1/level** to **3+1/level**.
- Give each character **+1 Talent** of their choice.

These observations should be enough for you to tailor the resources available to the characters. This type of personalization sets the tone for your game.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Conditions

Conditions are unique to your game. You may wish to vary how a Condition works from creature to creature just to support the mystery for the players. Providing structured detail on this topic to the players, gives them too much information and converts the mystery and intensity into strategic metagaming. We use Fatigue to track these things in a way that is consistent, that requires minimal overhead, and is easy to manage in-game.

Anything is possible! Conditions should be amorphous because the Game Master needs the freedom to use them as is sensible in their estimation. Ultimately, a Condition is only a filter that changes how a character functions for a period of time. The Game Master should consider:

How long should the impediment last?

This could mean understanding the time/distance the character is from a resource that could remove the Condition. Is there a witch in the woods nearby? Is help a kingdom away? Does the party have a Wizard able to fix the problem? The Condition could then be the impetus for a new adventure!

What will the impediment do to the whole party?

Whatever you're dreaming up may seem cool, but consider the implications first. If someone picks up a particular Condition round one, will that setup a death spiral for the whole party? If that's not what you intend, maybe look for different Conditions or for a way to modulate that impediment.

What will be the impact on the players?

Petrification is just death by another name. Paralysis is slow death as the creatures eat your immobile body. Are your players ready for a Condition that may kill their character in an ignoble way or one that could simply make the Character unplayable? Conditions are more than words on pages, they are things that, if mishandled, could ruin a game.

Should I be extra careful and only use easy Conditions?

The point isn't to tell the Game Master whether to be soft or hard on the characters. The point is to encourage that you should be **intentional**: The Game Master needs to think through the implications of their choices before implementing.

Conditions that could be persistent:

BLINDED / DEAFENED

If a person has lived with senses diminished, that person may have worked through strategies to mitigate any impediment. However, being rendered Blind or Deaf, in an instant, is completely disorienting and comes at a cost. Each of these applies 3 points of Fatigue. Anything that **requires** a missing sense can't be attempted. Remove the Condition to remove the Fatigue.

PARALYSIS / PETRIFICATION / INCAPACITATED / UNCONSCIOUS

These conditions are mechanically very similar: you can take no action and they all lead to death if you don't receive aid. These Conditions may be more about how they are rendered/removed, than what happens during. Do you want the intensity of one Danger Check, fail it, and the game is over? Maybe. Or, what if the first failed check gives the character 5 points of Fatigue as they feel their muscles seizing and their body refusing to respond?

POISONED

This is an enormous topic. Even poison vs. venom could become a confusion. And, what if you want the poison to put someone to sleep? What about differences between weak and strong agents? Poison adds Fatigue. The amount of Fatigue is dependent on the strength of the agent. Remove the Poison, remove the Fatigue...or heal the Fatigue and recover from the Poison.

TERRIFIED

Most people have no idea what real fear is, but whatever it is, Terrified is completely different. This is a place from where you clearly see your own demise, are overwhelmed with hopelessness, and feel that inevitability pending. Your mind doesn't function, and the world seems to lose all context. Yes, you can be scared to death.

CONDITIONS (Persistent)

Blinded	3 Fatigue
Deafened	3 Fatigue
Venomous Bite	1 Fatigue
Deadly Bite	5 Fatigue
Ghoul Touch	1 Fatigue
Wraith Touch	2 Fatigue
Terrified	4 Fatigue

Conditions that could be transient:

GRAPPLED

If you are being grabbed by someone in a desperate struggle for your life, it is very different from rolling in the dirt with your friends. If you aren't completely focused, you could easily be killed. Both the Grappler and the Grappled have Disadvantage on actions not directed toward one another. Opponents outside of the grapple have Advantage on actions against those that are grappling.

PRONE

A Prone entity has no movement. If the entity gets up to move, it is not Prone: no Condition, no modifier. Those that are Prone have Disadvantage to Fight or Shoot (unless it is a crossbow). Those attempting to Fight the Prone entity get Advantage. Those that attempt to Shoot the Prone entity get Disadvantage.

***Seven Angels Tower and the Trials of Brigga:** Brigga was repeatedly paralyzed by the risen dead that are kept in the tower for this purpose. Then, she'd be cured of the condition. This process was repeated multiple times each day, for more than a year, before her body was fully resistant. The web of scars that covered her body were hard to look at, but most people died, so it was a small price to pay. Her survival was enough to be awarded robes and given quarters. What she didn't know was that earning her scars was the easiest part of the process.*

NOTE: Disadvantage vs. Fatigue

Consider, you have a room full of people all with potentially different impediments. How do you efficiently (and effectively) track the effects without slowing the game? Typically, Fatigue is a convenient way of tracking the impediments of persistent Conditions and Disadvantage serves better in situations with transient Conditions. The statistical result of using Disadvantage equates to approximate -5. Each point of Fatigue equates to -1.

From session to session, or even within a session, players lose track of things. It is onerous to start a session by reading all the player notes to try and determine the state of the characters from the previous session. Also, trying to track all that "in game" can lead to mistakes of omission. Not to mention asking each player to track their own math has its deficiencies.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: Unique Spells

The following spells are only available at the game master's discretion. It is recommended that these spells be discovered through game play and not granted arbitrarily:

Alchemy

Crafting Time: 1 day / HD

Description: Craft single use magic potions, oils, powders, and salves. The alchemist must invest some of his own energy to bind the magic. The hit dice of the Alchemist determines how many dice can be put into the creation. The cost is 1 day, 100 silver, and 1 Effort per hit die invested.

Crafting an alchemical item is a draining process for the Alchemist, as spent hit dice cause the loss of hit points gained from those hit dice. Spent hit dice are regained at 1/day.

The resources must all be committed at the same time on the first day prior to a Mysticism check. Time to complete the item is based on the initial HD commitment and is not affected by results of the Mysticism check.

Disenchanting Dust - 10' radius cloud destroys spells at 1 level/HD invested.

Enchanting Potion - Gain +1/2 HD invested, to a specific ability.

Holy Silver Dust - Hangs in the air of four 5' squares preventing the passage of undead unless their HD are higher than the HD invested. Can also be used to trace a 10' radius protective circle.

Invisibility - Invisible for 1d6 rounds per HD invested or until making an attack.

Protective Oils - Gain a 1d6 HP protective shield per HD invested against a single type of damage.

Regeneration - If damaged, regenerate 2 HP/round from a pool of HP containing 1d6 HP per HD invested.

Arcanist

Casting Time: 12 hours

Duration: Permanent

Description: You may combine your sigil with any spell you know to permanently sacrifice that spell and store it in an item. For whoever holds the item, the spells contained are considered spells known as if the holder had spent a Talent to have the spell for themself.

Alternatively, and at GM discretion, the effect of a spell can be made permanent. Ex. Enchant Weapon.

Also, if the caster makes a permanent sacrifice (1 Effort, 1 HD, 1 sentient being) they may permanently store a point of Effort in the item. These points of Effort can only be used for casting spells from the item and are replenished at dawn of each day.

Captured Star

Casting Time: 12 hours

Duration: Permanent

Sigil Containment

Description: The caster must build a box of blue steel inlaid with golden sigils of containment. When encountering a star, the caster may trap a piece of it in the box. What they do with it is up to them. Surviving the experience and time and materials costs for creating the box are up to the GM.

Create Monster

Casting Time: 12 Hours

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Description: Modify a creature or combine parts of multiple creatures to create something new. The caster must make permanent sacrifices equal to the number of HD of the creature created. Sacrifices are either 1 Effort, 1 HD, or 1 sentient being.

Severing Blade

Casting Time: Standard Action

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 round / level

Description: Using your **Gold Cord**, you create a blade of energy. This blade will not harm anything but an exposed cord. Exposed cords have Defense 15 and are severed on a successful hit.

Watcher

Casting Time: 1 minute

Sigil: Watch

Description: The caster awakens a disembodied head by tracing their sigil on it. The head will be watchful and report what it sees and hears when consulted by the caster. The head has no recollections of its previous life. It will recognize people and shout out an alarm if enemies of the caster appear. When the spell is cast the head is either preserved and ceases to rot and stink or all flesh turns to dust and only the skull remains.