



CONAN

—> THE HYBORIAN AGE <—



THE ROLEPLAYING GAME
QUICKSTART

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WELCOME TO AN AGE UNDREAMED OF



/// Know, oh prince, that between the years when the oceans drank Atlantis and the gleaming cities, and the years of the rise of the Sons of Aryas, there was an Age undreamed of, when shining kingdoms lay spread across the world like blue mantles beneath the stars—Nemedra, Ophir, Brythunia, Hyperborea, Zamora with its dark-haired women and towers of spider-haunted mystery, Zingara with its chivalry, Koth that bordered on the pastoral lands of Shem, Stygia with its shadow-guarded tombs, Hyrkania whose riders wore steel and silk and gold. But the proudest kingdom of the world was Aquilonia, reigning supreme in the dreaming west.

Hither came Conan the Cimmerian, black-haired, sullen-eyed, sword in hand, a thief, a reaver, a slayer, with gigantic melancholies and gigantic mirth, to tread the jeweled thrones of the Earth under his sandalled feet. **///**

With those words, a timeless legend of heroism and valor was born. The story this quote appeared in was “The Phoenix on the Sword” penned by Robert E. Howard, called by many the greatest pulp author who ever lived. This tale was the first appearance of Conan of Cimmeria, a barbarian hero, and featured Conan at the peak of

his career, crowned king of the greatest kingdom of the ancient and as-of-yet unchronicled Hyborian Age.

Howard not only created the barbarian archetype as it is known today, but he also created that unique combination of genres where tales of fantasy, adventure, and horror meet. Some argue that sword-and-sorcery, a term coined after Howard’s death by Fritz Leiber, has roots

much older than 1929, but most agree that Howard's Kull story "The Shadow Kingdom" marks a reasonable starting point for this kind of storytelling. And it is this brand of storytelling that the system and themes of **Conan: The Hyborian Age** strives to capture.

Sword-and-sorcery stories, as Leiber meant the term, are often grounded and focused on outsider protagonists with personal goals they'll risk their hides to achieve. Gold, jewels, wine, sex, the freedom of the open road—these are the lifeblood of the Howardian protagonist. Rarely do these characters concern themselves with the epic struggle between light and dark or good versus evil. Their intentions are often mercenary and, at times, morally gray. That isn't to say these characters are incapable of doing the right thing or behaving heroically; it just means they are likely to protect the innocent or save a kingdom only if it is on their way to reaching their own goals.

Conan stories span many genres and tones but are always filled with the driving force of Howard's narrative style and the central figure it follows. The genres range from sweeping desert adventure to weird horror, exploration into lost or forgotten worlds, piracy on the high seas, locked-room mysteries, frontier tales, ghost stories, and stories of vengeance and mystery. Into each of these settings and tones Conan is plunged, or emerges as a central figure, and they play out to a tense conclusion, with Conan always the victor or, at the very least, a survivor.

It is a world of ancient and diabolical magic, with alien gods and long—and sometimes barely—extinct races of beings. Vibrant kingdoms strive against one another, and in the frontiers and desolate spaces loom abandoned ruins of a bygone people and time, their inhabitants clinging to inscrutable practices and oft-diabolical rituals. It is a morally uneven world, without a clear definition of good but all-too-real manifestations of evil. Demons and horrific beings of lesser aspect prey upon the meek, and everywhere is defined by the intensifying struggle between civilization and primitivism, order versus barbarism, the gentle versus the bold. There is little doubt which side of this equation Howard's sympathies lie, though the author's fatalism is tempered

with an appreciation for the pleasures that the civilized world affords his greatest literary creation.

Conan is thus the epitome of the world and the Hyborian Age he inhabits, an uncultured barbarian who nonetheless uses his sharp intellect, superhuman strength and prowess, and keen instincts to master every situation he finds himself in, besting nearly every foe he comes up against, save for those who simply cannot be slain by mortal means. Conan's adventures in some ways are all thrillers, gripping tales of survival and relentless willpower against great and seemingly unconquerable odds.

Conan's era is filled with thieves, rogues, and pirates; beasts, demons, and aliens; gods and goddesses; warriors, sorcerers, and megalomaniacal military leaders. Unlike much popular fantasy, magic in the Hyborian Age is rare. While many of the original Conan stories feature magic, it is never well understood or commonplace. Sorcery also seems to come at a cost to the wielder, the landscape, or some poor sacrifice, be it person or beast.

THE HYBORIAN AGE

This Quick Start for **Conan: The Hyborian Age** presents a setting drawing primarily from Howard and extrapolating as little as possible from the pastiche material. Where necessary, detail crafted in a Howardian spirit has been provided but never contradicts anything from the original stories nor suggests themes or content inconsistent with Howard's vision.

This is far from Conan's first appearance in a tabletop game, but **Conan: The Hyborian Age** presents a fresh take on the material and on gameplay, with easily understood rules and a focus on the adventures themselves, letting the everyone work together to spin yarn after yarn of high adventure without being limited by rules and references.

The themes of this game are heroic and fast pulpish action and adventure, exciting battles in evocative settings, and flexible character development. The game attempts to stick close to the tone of Conan's stories, with the focus on dramatic conflict versus deep world immersion—with the Player Characters always front and center.

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

A roleplaying game, or RPG, is a shared storytelling experience where one player, the Game Master, assumes storytelling duties and judicial power, and each other player takes on the role of a particular Character inhabiting the Hyborian Age. The Game Master typically presents a scenario or sets a scene within a scenario, and the other players decide what they want their Characters to do. How well they succeed is determined, in part, by smart decision-making and teamwork but also by the aptitude of their Character and a degree of chance.

Chance plays as important a role at the tabletop as it does in Conan's own stories, and in **Conan: The Hyborian Age**, when gameplay leads to a conflict or an outcome is uncertain, whether the Characters succeed or fail is determined with the roll of dice, modified by the Characters' innate abilities. The primary purpose of the rules is to explain if and how the Characters can accomplish what the players want them to, and how they can grow and improve through experience.

The role of the Game Master is a more complex one, as they must evoke the setting and those who inhabit it, describing the world around the Player Characters just as Howard described the Hyborian Age around Conan. The Game Master is an impartial judge of the rules but also presents challenges and threats for the Player Characters to overcome. Game Mastering is covered in more detail later in the book.



CORE THEMES OF THIS GAME

Conan: The Hyborian Age has been crafted with the following principles in mind, design pillars that informed every step of the rules development and content creation.

- ▲ **Adventure:** Above all, this game is about fast and frenetic adventure, emulating the exhilarating momentum of Howard's stories.
- ▲ **Big Risk vs. Big Reward:** Fortune favors the bold, they say, and gameplay is designed to encourage risk-taking, dramatic action, and immediate rewards in the form of gold and glory.
- ▲ **Sword and Sorcery:** This game is first and foremost a sword-and-sorcery game, that unique flavor of heroic fantasy, and adventures should revolve around opportunities for dazzling swordplay, often directed at diabolical magic.
- ▲ **Forward Momentum:** Stories should never falter while Characters don't know what to do, and even a loss is more a temporary setback, opening new avenues for advancement.

Whenever a question emerges in gameplay that the rules don't cover, the Game Master and players should determine the outcome based on those gameplay pillars, ensuring a consistent and enjoyable experience for all.

As with all rules, however, there are exceptions and convincing examples to the contrary. The core themes may be ignored entirely (especially if players are already familiar with this setting) or fully embraced to help set these game sessions apart from more generic types of fantasy.

Adventure is a key component to many Conan stories and fundamental to the sword-and-sorcery genre. Players should embody Characters who wish to feel the wind in their hair or even those willing to push beyond the threshold of the material world, into the mysteries of the hells or the Outer Dark. A proper Hyborian Age protagonist should have an insatiable lust for life and all its possibilities. They should be willing to risk skin and soul to do whatever it is that makes them feel alive.

Whether they desire gold, respect, lost sorcery, or just to seize their own freedoms, Characters in this game should welcome risk, if the reward is of sufficient allure.

DICE AND OTHER MATERIALS

This game requires a standard set of polyhedral dice, typically sold in specialty shops but also widely available from online retailers and bookstores. The game primarily uses the following dice: D6, D8, and D10. The D stands for die/dice (singular and plural respectively) and the number represents the number of sides it has. Having each of these dice in two different colors is recommended. Other dice required (but used less frequently) are the D4, D12, and D20. Occasionally, a player may need to roll more than one of the same type of die. This is always described as 2DX, 3DX, etc., with the first number indicating how many dice to roll and the X representing the dice type. For example, 3D6 would represent the rolling of three 6-sided dice.

These dice are rolled and combined with numbers (representing the attributes of a particular Character) to determine the success of Actions taken. Only one set of dice is typically necessary, though players and Game Masters may choose to have their own sets, and the Game Master might want to have multiples of common dice types on hand for when dealing with hordes of creatures.

Players may also wish to have access to scrap paper and pencils or pens for making notes. A variety of tokens or counters can also prove helpful where combat is concerned, though they are not required.

SAFETY AND PLAYER COMFORT

Though the original Conan stories are frequently lurid and occasionally veer into uncomfortable stereotypes of race and culture, there is no reason that the tabletop experience needs to mirror these elements. The Game Master and players should establish the boundaries of comfort for the content and behavior within the game, identifying any potentially troublesome aspects that will make players uncomfortable, at the risk of spoiling their enjoyment of the game.

Various methods exist for establishing table rules, whether safety tools such as X cards (cards that can be shown when a subject should be dropped), player checklists of undesirable topics, or a simple conversation before play about potentially problematic subjects. Not everyone has the same limits, and these should be respected equally. If a player doesn't want to experience scenes of torture, cruelty, degradation, racism, sexism, or something less obvious, the Game Master and other players should respect that and adjust the gameplay accordingly.



THE MAKING OF A HERO



This Quick Start includes five pregenerated Characters, allowing up to five players and one Game Master (sometimes shortened to GM) to get playing straight away. The following section provides a quick insight to the various numbers and other information on the Character Sheets, which can be found at the end of this booklet.

STATS

In *Conan: The Hyborian Age*, four Stats determine a Character's overall prowess and capabilities: Might, Edge, Grit, and Wits.

Each Stat ranges from 1 to 8, though few humans possess a Stat greater than 6. In addition to the value of a Stat, each Stat has an allocated Stat die, which is usually D6, D8, or, in rare circumstances, D10.

Each of the four Stats are described here in detail:

- ▲ **Might:** Might is a measure of physical strength and is used not only during combat when making Melee Attacks and inflicting Damage, but also for climbing, swimming, lifting, or any other physical Actions.
- ▲ **Edge:** Edge is a measure of a Character's physical sharpness, deftness, intuition, alertness, dexterity, and hand-eye coordination. It is used for situational awareness, to avoid detection, and when making Attacks with Thrown or Ranged weapons.

Edge is also used to determine a Character's ability to avoid incoming Damage and to calculate their Initiative during combat.

- ▲ **Grit:** Grit is a measure of a Character's pain tolerance, stamina, constitution, and resistance to poison or the elements. It is used when trying to tough out the elements or overcome fear or intimidation. Grit is used to determine a Character's total Life Points and Stamina Points (see below), which allow the Character to do more during any given situation.
- ▲ **Wits:** Wits measures a Character's eloquence of speech, rhetoric, ability to decipher languages and symbols, knowledge base, deduction, and ability to read people and detect and tell lies. Wits is also used by sorcerers to decipher magical languages and, in some cases, enhance the effectiveness of spells.

OTHER VALUES

Each Character has a few values that must be tracked; these are all stated on the relevant Character Sheet.

Physical Defense: Physical Defense is a measure of a Character's ability to defend themselves and is used during combat against Melee or Ranged Attacks.

Sorcery Defense: Sorcery Defense is used to protect against and resist the effects of sorcery and dark arts and is used whenever a Character is targeted by a spell.

Life Points: Life Points are a measure of a Character's physical well-being, with a higher value representing the ability to sustain more physical harm before facing any ill consequences. Life Points are lost through being harmed or attacked and should be tracked at all times.

Stamina Points: Stamina Points allow for versatile and spontaneous strategies, representing the Skills of truly legendary warriors. Stamina Points may be used during the game to provide a range of bonuses (see pg. 22). Though there is no upper limit to how many Stamina Points a Character can have, their available points will reset to whatever their Grit Stat is at the start of each Tale.

Flex Die: The Flex die is a special die that is rolled every time a Character rolls dice for any reason. When the Flex die rolls its maximum value, it triggers a Flex, which provides a number of boons for the Character during that situation (see pg. 9).

STARTING EQUIPMENT

No adventurer or great warrior is complete without the tools of their craft. Each Character profile provided with this Quick Start lists that character's weapons, armor, and equipment on the Character Sheet, along with any applicable rules.

SKILLS

Skills are what set Player Characters (PCs) apart from the common person. Typical PCs are above-average warriors, rogues, sorcerers, or soldiers. They are people who defy odds, burn with life, and live to slay another day. Though human, they, like Conan, have the potential to become legendary for their strong bodies, keen minds, and silver tongues. Such prowess is represented by Skills—the experience and finesse those who live by the sword learn throughout their tempestuous lives.

For the purpose of this Quick Start, any Skills possessed by a PC will be stated on the relevant Character Sheet, giving some Characters a boost in key areas or access to a specific ability that can be used during the game. In the full game, Skills are gained through experience and are the key way that a character can develop.



RULES



CHARACTER TYPES

Many of the rules throughout the game apply to, or target, a particular type of Character(s). In order to make understanding this easier, the following terms are used throughout:

- ▲ **Character:** A broad term used to describe all people, creatures, and living beings within the game, from the players to the foes they may be facing. Characters are often referred to as PCs and NPCs (see below). Characters who work together or who are on the same side during combat are considered to be allied with each other. For example, Player Characters are considered to be **allied** with each other and with any Friendly Characters, whereas all Enemy Characters will most commonly be allied with each other.
- ▲ **Player Character:** A Player Character (PC) is a Character controlled by a player.
- ▲ **Non-Player Character:** A Non-Player Character (NPC) is a Character controlled by the GM.
- ▲ **Friendly Character:** A Friendly Character is an NPC that is allied to, or friendly toward, the PCs.
- ▲ **Enemy Character:** An Enemy Character is an NPC that directly opposes or works against the PCs. Enemy Characters are split into two designations: **Antagonists**, who are typically quite powerful, and **Minions**, who usually have fewer capabilities and rules.

THE FLEX DIE

The Flexibility die (usually referred to as the **Flex Die**) represents how Actions and Attacks have a tendency to swing. That is, sometimes a blow results in a bruise; other times it results in a crushed skull. The Flex die is an additional die that PCs must roll **every time** they roll dice (unless a specific rule instructs otherwise). Players should be sure their Flex die is distinct from the other dice they're rolling, so as not to confuse their results (a different color or motif, for example).

***Note:** The following table references a number of rules that have not yet been discussed. Due to the Flex die being a pivotal part of the game's core mechanic, we have chosen to introduce it as early as possible in the rules, so players can better understand its implication for the various dice rolls they will make.*

Each PC starts with a D10 Flex die, but this can be improved by Skills to a D8 or D6. Though the number of sides on the die gets fewer, this should be considered an upgrade because the likelihood of triggering the Flex die is increased. Whenever a Flex die roll result is the maximum value that die can roll (a 10 for a D10; an 8 for D8, etc.), a special effect (called a Flex) is triggered. To be clear, the Flex die's resulting number is not added to any totals; it is only used to trigger its effect (or not).

***Important:** A Flex result is still triggered even if the Check or Attack it is being rolled with results in a failure.*

Characters may spend a successful Flex result in one of three different ways, and these options can depend on the type of roll a Character is making. Note the Flex die is only used by PCs; NPCs never roll a Flex die.

FLEX SPENDS	EFFECT
Stamina	When a Character scores Flex as part of any roll, they may immediately gain 1 Stamina Point.
Success	When a Character scores a Flex as part of any Check or Attack that fails, the Check or Attack is instead automatically passed.*
Massive Damage	When a Character scores a Flex as part of a Damage roll, they may choose to inflict Massive Damage. To do this, total the Damage roll as normal, but also add to the total the maximum result that the weapon's allotted Damage die could roll. If the weapon has a static Damage value instead of a die, then double the Damage instead.**

***Note:** Some Tales use a varying scale of success for Checks, providing more notable outcomes for those who obtain a higher result. When using this Flex result on these types of Check, the Character is assumed to have attained the lowest level of success—a pass, but only just!

****Example:** Grom makes an Attack, scores a hit with his short sword, and rolls for Damage. He rolls 1D6 for his weapon's Damage and scores a 4. He also rolls a 10 on his Flex die, triggering an effect. Grom adds his weapon Damage (the 4 he rolled) to his Might Stat (which is 5), and also, because he triggered the Massive Damage Flex, he adds the max value of his Damage die (6 for a short sword). All said, he does 15 Damage to his foe!



CHECKS

In **Conan: The Hyborian Age**, the Actions of Characters are governed mainly by **Checks** and **Attacks**. **Checks** are made whenever the outcome of a Character's Actions is in doubt. A Character does not need to make a Check to walk up a flight of stairs, nor do they need to make a Check to speak. A Character who needs to climb a steep cliff, however, must make a Check to determine whether they can do so successfully. How successful a Character is at making a Check depends, in part, on their **Stats**.

*Likewise, a Character with an axe does not need to roll to chop down a tree. Trees aren't moving targets and they don't defend themselves. But a Character who wants to use that same axe to strike another Character (who does not want to be struck) must make an **Attack** to do so. Attacks are discussed later in this chapter.*

It is important to note that while an Attack involves a roll much like a Check, they are in fact two separate things—any reference or bonus to a Check does not apply to an Attack, and vice versa.

When a Character must do something beyond the mundane, such as scaling a wall or creeping by enemies to avoid detection, they must roll a Check. To perform a Check, the GM should determine which Stat is most relevant to the situation. When a Stat has been chosen, the Character must roll their corresponding Stat die and add the number rolled to the corresponding Stat value. The Character may also add any applicable Modifiers from Skills or bonuses provided from their Origin. The total of the roll + Stat + Modifiers should be compared to the Difficulty of the Check, which is determined by the GM, in order to determine success.

DIFFICULTY OF A CHECK

The GM is the ultimate authority in determining how difficult a Check should be. They assign a **Difficulty** to any in-doubt Action, using the table below. Any result

of a Check that is equal to or greater than the assigned Difficulty is considered a success. A final result that is lower than the assigned Difficulty is considered a failure.

	DIFFICULTY	EXAMPLE
Mundane	N/A	Sharpen a blade, walk in a straight line, navigate a crowded room—no Check is needed!
Easy	4–6	Catch a tossed object
Moderate	7–9	Cross a rope bridge, pick a lock
Tough	10–12	Climb a cliffside in the rain, tend to wounds of a critically injured person, pick a lock while distracted
Legendary	13+	Split a taut rope with an arrow, swim to safety while heavily burdened

Example: Conan wants to crash through the walls of a Pict hut. To do so, he spends an Action to charge the wooden beams of the dwelling. The GM considers this a Moderate Check (assigning a Difficulty of 8), using the Might Stat, meaning that Conan needs at least an 8 to pass. He rolls a D10, scores a 4 and adds his Might Stat of 6 to the roll, giving him a 10. He has no other bonuses to add, so the total remains a 10. Success! Had he failed the Check, the GM might have ruled the movement Action was wasted, or perhaps have Conan suffer a Damage for slamming into the beams. Perhaps both!

Note: A GM may wish to offer degrees of success to Characters. In order to do this, they should select a Difficulty required for the minimum degree of success and may reward Characters who achieve a higher result. For example, the GM determines that in order to spot a foe, the Character must pass an Easy (Difficulty 5) Check. However, if the Character's

Check results in a value of 8 or more, the GM may divulge additional information about the lurking foe that may give the Character an advantage in the coming encounter.



THE WINDS OF FATE— ROLLING A 1

Whenever a Character rolls a 1 on their Stat die as a part of a Check or Attack, that roll is immediately failed, even if the result of their Stat +1 would usually meet the Difficulty of the roll. A Character may use their Stamina Points (see pg. 22) to increase the roll of a 1 to a 2 (or more), or trigger the Success Flex Die result, thus avoiding the failure. As NPCs do not have Stamina Points, they will always fail a Check or Attack when they roll a 1, unless they have a special rule that states otherwise.

CHECK MODIFIERS

Whenever a Check is made, the GM should consider whether any of the following Modifiers should be applied.

The Rule of Threes: Rather than provide a strict list of situational Modifiers to represent the various advantages and disadvantages a rugged adventurer might face, GMs are encouraged to think in terms of threes. Advantages to Checks should be represented by applying a +1, +2, or +3 Modifier to any results. GMs should be aware that even a +1 can significantly impact the result, a +3 significantly so. Likewise, a -1, -2, or -3 Modifier represents any disadvantages the Character might face. As an example, a Character who is attempting to spot someone in an Area of extreme darkness may get a -1 or -2 Modifier to their Check, or a Character climbing a cliff face may get a +1 Modifier if they have ropes or other items to assist them. In a Contest, the Modifier can be applied to either side (or both) as required.

Assist: If a Character is helped by another Character to complete a Check, the GM should use the Rule of Threes to grant the attempting Character a bonus. One additional Character assisting might provide a +1; two additional Characters might grant a +2; three additional Characters might grant a +3. The GM may also rule that a particular Action isn't one that can benefit from an Assist. For example, a Character trying to maintain concentration during a chaotic scene isn't likely to benefit from an additional distraction.

Rerolls: Skills and certain other rules sometimes offer chances to reroll dice. These may be done at any time as long as the Character has the ability to do so. That said, **a single roll may only ever be rerolled once**, regardless of a Character's reroll capacities.

CONTESTS

In a situation where two (or more) Characters are struggling against one another using the same abilities, such as wrestling or a chase, they are considered to be in a **Contest**. When a Contest occurs, rather than the GM determining a Difficulty for the Check, all Characters involved should make a Check, with the highest score being considered the winner of the Contest. Ties are resolved in favor of whoever has the higher relevant Stat; if there is still a tie, then both parties should reroll the whole Contest until a victor is decided. As with any Check, a roll of a 1 indicates an immediate failure. In a Contest, this indicates one side has lost, regardless of the opponent's result. If, however, both parties roll a 1, the contest is considered a tie and the Contest should be rerolled as above.

Example: Conan is trying to sneak past some Guards in order to free a group of captured allies. The GM determines this is a case for an Edge Contest, as the Stat is used for both stealth and detection. Conan makes an Edge Check by rolling a D8 and scores a 5. He adds his Edge Stat of 5, for a total of 10. The GM does the same for the Guards, rolling a D6 (scoring a 6) and adding their Edge Stat of 2, for a total of 8. The GM rules that the situation doesn't have any obvious call for Modifiers on either side. Conan's result is

higher and so he wins the Contest, sneaking by without alerting the Guards.

EXAMPLES OF COMMON CHECKS AND CONTESTS

Might

Kicking open a door; holding a door closed while enemies try to beat it down from the other side; bending bars; snapping chain or rope; jumping over a chasm; climbing; lifting something heavy; wrestling and arm wrestling (Contest); tug of war (Contest); pinning someone to the ground or holding them in a headlock.

Edge

Painting a picture; forging a signature; tracking; trying to notice a clue; hiding, sneaking, or detecting others attempting to hide or sneak (Contest); picking a lock; walking on a narrow ledge; detecting or disarming a trap.

Grit

Resisting fatigue/exhaustion, poison, disease, thirst, hunger, torture; running for a long time; resisting exposure to the elements; swimming for a long time; chasing someone or being chased by someone (Contest); fighting off the effects of fear or intimidation (Contest).

Wits

Deciphering languages and symbols; lying; detecting a lie; persuading or charming others; instilling fear (Contest); delivering an impressive speech; using academic learning/knowledge; understanding the intricacies of magic.

COMBAT

Danger lurks in every corner of the Thurian continent: foul creatures hide in the shadows, great beasts prowl the wastes looking for their next meal, and fury-driven tribes patrol their homelands, eager to best those who would wander too far onto their sacred ground. Wherever a brave warrior might journey, at one time or another they will find themselves needing to swallow

the duress of combat. Few can explore the wilds without coming face-to-face with a blade.

Of course, not everyone can fight like a veteran of many wars, but for those who choose to travel the continent, being able to protect themselves is not just a suggestion, it's essential. Whether it be by blade, hammer, bow, or even one of the mystical Disciplines of sorcery, knowing how and when to strike may well be the difference between life and having your name drift into an age of memory.

ROUNDS AND TURNS

Combat in *Conan: The Hyborian Age* is divided into **Rounds** and **Turns**.

A single **Round** includes all the **Actions** of all the Characters engaged in combat. Each Character engaged in combat (including Friendly and Enemy NPCs) takes their **Turn** by spending all of their **Actions**. Once finished, another Character spends their **Actions**. Once every Character has taken their Turn, a new Round begins and the Characters spend their **Actions**, one Character at a time, once again. The order in which the Characters take their Turns is determined by **Initiative** values.

Current Combat

*The term **current combat** is one that appears in a number of places throughout these rules, usually in relation to the duration of an effect. These rules are considered to last until the current combat has ended, be that a fight against a single mercenary or an entire horde of warriors. Once the ongoing combat has ended and the Characters are able to stand over the bodies of their vanquished foes, any effects that last for the current combat will end.*

INITIATIVE

In combat, it is important to determine the order in which combatants act/Characters take their Turns. Whenever combat is imminent, the GM alerts the players, and Initiative values should be determined. When this happens, each PC calculates their own

specific Initiative value for the current combat in the same way as making an Edge Check (Edge Stat value + die value) and adding any bonus granted by Skills and/or other rules. There is no Difficulty for this Check; players are simply trying to determine a value that will be compared to other combatants.

Important: *As an exception to the usual rules, a Character does not roll their Flex die when rolling to determine their Initiative value.*

The GM should determine the Initiative of Enemy Characters by making one roll using the lowest Edge Stat among all the Enemy Characters. All of the GM-controlled forces will act at the same time in the Initiative rotation based on this total. It is advised to record the GM's Initiative value as well as the players' values and display them at the game table so that all players can see the order.

Optional Initiative Rule

*The GM may make one Initiative roll for all Minions of the **same type** and another for each Antagonist, allowing them, like Player Characters, to use their own specified values, separate from whichever other Enemy Characters they are fighting alongside. While this process may result in more Initiative steps, it allows for a more varied and realistic approach to combat.*

During combat, all combatants act in descending Initiative order, with the highest Initiative value taking their Actions first and the lowest Initiative value taking their Actions last.

Example: *Pelias and Conan face a group of Guards. The GM tells the players it's time to determine Initiative. Pelias rolls a 4 for his Edge Stat roll and adds his Edge Stat of 4. His Initiative total is 8. Conan scores a 10. The GM rolls for the Guards and their total is a 9. The Initiative order for the combat is determined to be Conan first (10), the Guards (9), then Conan's ally Pelias (8).*

If a Character has the same Initiative as another Character, they are considered tied. Tied Characters who are allied to each other may share the number and choose, each Turn, who acts first during that slot in the Initiative order. If a PC is tied with an Enemy Character, the PC may spend a Stamina Point to beat the tie, placing them just above the Enemy Character they were tied with (but not ahead of any other Characters in the Initiative order). If a Player Character does not choose to spend a Stamina Point to break the tie, then the Enemy Character will act before them.

ACTIONS FOR PLAYER CHARACTERS

An Action represents a Player Character's deliberate choice to do something. Thinking is not an Action, nor is blinking or breathing. Drawing a sword, however, is, as is driving it through the guts of a foe. Actions taken by PCs only need to be detailed and ordered if they are taken during combat or a Contest.

In combat, a PC may perform 2 **Actions** per Turn (though certain Skills and/or Stamina Point spends can allow for more). A PC must use or lose all of their Actions on their Turn. They may not wait to see what an ally does and save an Action for later; however, during their own Turn, a PC may take their Actions in any order they wish (Attack, then Move; Move, then Attack; Manipulate, then Attack; etc.).

Note that the GM is free to ask for a relevant Check to be made in order to perform any Action. For example, while moving in open ground may be easy enough to do, taking a Move Action through dangerous terrain or over a large obstacle may require a Check in order for the Action to be successful.

A Character may perform the same Action twice in their Turn if they wish. These are the available Actions:

ACTION	# OF ACTIONS	DETAILS
Move	1	Move to a new position (see Range and Area, pg. 15, for details on the distance moved).
Manipulate	1	Pick up, retrieve, interact with, or pass an object or physical item; ready a weapon (in this case, a Character may both sheath/store their current weapon and draw another weapon as a single Action).
Attack	1	Make a Melee, Thrown, or Ranged Attack.
Focused Attack	2	Make a Melee, Thrown, or Ranged Attack with a +2 Modifier.
Defend	1	Gain +2 Physical Defense until the Character's next Turn. This Action may only be used once per Round. A Character that Defends may not gain any bonus Actions through Stamina Points or Skills, etc.
Cast a Spell	1 or 2	Cast a spell or make a Sorcery Attack. See spell details for Action cost. Some spells also have additional costs.
Free Action	0	A Free Action is anything being done by a Character that does not use up one of the Character's Actions for their Turn. Free Actions include, but are not limited to, receiving an object passed from another Character, communicating a simple command, answering a simple question, looking around, dropping an object, etc. The GM gets final discretion on what constitutes a Free Action.
Anything Else	1 or 2	Anything else not covered by the above options and deemed suitable by the GM.



ACTIONS FOR ENEMY CHARACTERS

The Actions of Enemy Characters (Minions and Antagonists) are dictated by their profiles, which are found in this book as well as other supplements. The number and type of Actions these Characters will take during a Turn can vary, so be sure to read each entry carefully. Unless stated otherwise, an Enemy Character may do anything a Player Character can do, including performing a Focused Attack or choosing the Defend Action where the GM deems it necessary. Typically, Minions will only take Move and Attack Actions; Antagonists, however, will often have more variety and powerful capabilities such as spells or special Attacks, and make more use of the various Actions available.

Enemy Characters may also suffer or benefit from any Modifiers or Conditions, just like Player Characters. Beyond these, GMs should not have to flip through the book to find rules for Enemy Characters; all the necessary elements are contained within each Enemy's entry within the included Tales.

RANGE

During combat, **Conan: The Hyborian Age** uses a simple abstract method of determining the relative distance between each combatant. This is defined as **Range**.

Important: While the following rules provide a detailed approach to determining the distance between various Characters, GMs may wish to ignore them entirely, simply using the Range table as a guide for the distance of movement and of Ranged/Thrown weapons. The GM should use whichever approach best suits their group, without interrupting the flow of the action.

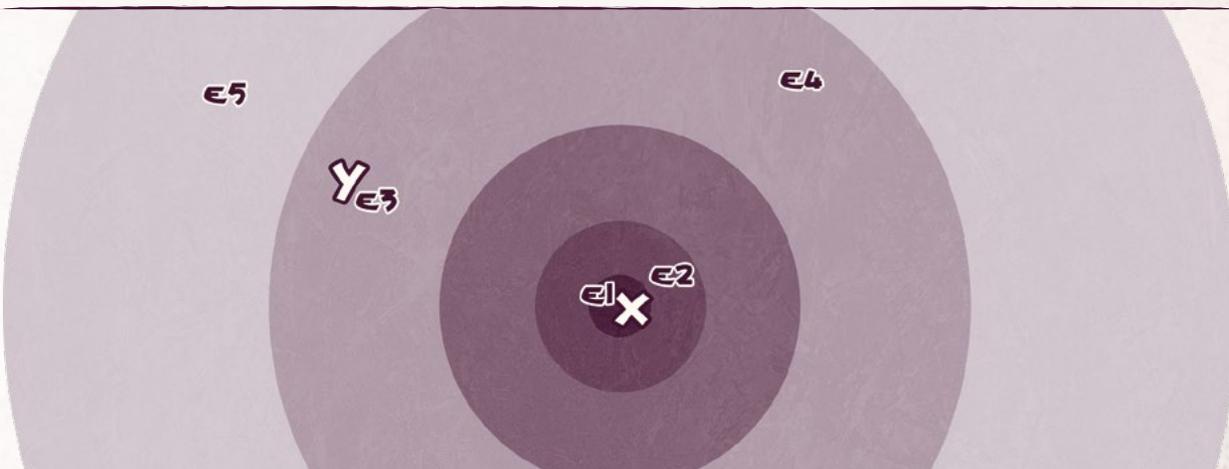
All distances in a combat situation are measured by Range zones to allow the action to take place without needing exact measurements between combatants and other objects. When combat begins, the GM should specify up to five zones: Touch, Close, Medium, Long, and Distant, depending on the size of the location where the combat is taking place. The Touch zone is **always**

used during combat. In addition, a fight in a small room may only require the Close zone to be applied, whereas a fight in a wide-open landscape may require all five

zones—the exact need for zones is to be determined by the GM. Typically speaking, zones can be described as follows:

RANGE	DESCRIPTION	ZONE SIZE
Touch	Touch Range represents objects within arm's reach and is the typical Range for most Melee weapons.	The Touch Range zone is always within Range of a Character.
Close	Close Range represents a distance just beyond arm's reach and a distance that can be reached with a few strides. Close is the typical Range for war spears and polearm weapons.	The Close Range zone is roughly 1 Move Action wide.
Medium	Medium Range represents a distance roughly equal to the opposite side of a large room or across a street or stream. Medium Range is the typical Range for Thrown weapons.	The Medium Range zone is roughly 2 Move Actions wide.
Long	Long Range represents a distance much greater, where a Character can see but not throw an object to. This zone may be quite large and is the typical Range for Ranged weapons such as Bows.	The Long Range zone is roughly 4 Move Actions wide.
Distant	Distant Range represents a great distance that is at the very boundary of a battlefield. It is the largest of the zones and only a few Ranged weapons can reach this far.	The Distant Range zone is as wide as needed, but typically 8 or more Move Actions wide.





The easiest way to imagine a zone is to picture a number of circles radiating from whoever is performing an Action, with each circle in turn getting larger—much like a drop of water hitting a pool. As such, Range is unique to each Character. The following diagram shows how various Ranges can apply to a single Character.

Example: Conan (X) is faced with multiple Enemies. The GM determines the approximate zone boundaries for the various Ranges and determines that Enemy E1 is in Touch Range, already engaged in Melee combat. E2 is in Close Range, E3 and E4 are both in Long Range and E5 is still far away in Distant Range. There are no foes at Medium Range. Zorthan (Y), an ally to Conan, is engaged in Melee combat with enemy E3, meaning they are effectively in Touch Range. The GM is free to determine how far away Zorthan is from each enemy by following the same process.

GMs should remember that Range is designed to be an easy-to-apply abstract measurement and they should not get too hung up on exact distances, simply stating an appropriate Range for any declared Attack or movement as required.

Movement and Ranges

Though the GM is free to adjust the distance being moved as they deem appropriate, as a guide, it is suggested that each Range zone cover a distance equal to a number of Move Actions as shown in the Range table. Once a Character has moved, their Range to all objects

will be changed accordingly. For example, if Conan moved to Character E2 in the above diagram, he would now be within Touch Range of that Enemy and Close Range of E1.

LINE OF SIGHT

In order to make a Thrown or Ranged Attack, a Character must have a line of sight to their target; that is to say they must be able to see the Character or object that they are aiming at. While firing blind may seem cinematic, the outcome is rarely successful, and a GM should only allow such an Action in very specific circumstances. It should also be noted that if a Character moves out from cover in order to use a Thrown or Ranged weapon, they will be in a position where Enemy Characters can fire Thrown or Ranged weapons at them unless they have a Skill or spend a Stamina Point to Move back into cover. The GM should remain aware of this to prevent players attempting to pick off enemy combatants while remaining entirely hidden from view.

ATTACKS AND DAMAGE

To make an Attack, the Character must first determine the kind of Attack they're making: **Melee**, **Thrown**, **Ranged**, or **Sorcery**. Melee Attacks use the Might Stat; Ranged and Thrown Attacks use the Edge Stat; Sorcery

Attacks use the Wits Stat. Make a Check for the relevant Stat as usual, applying any bonuses or Modifiers from Skills or other rules. Once the total for the roll has been determined, compare the total to the appropriate Defense value of the target: Physical Defense for a Melee, Thrown, or Ranged Attack, and Sorcery Defense for any Sorcery Attacks. If the total is equal to or greater than the target's Defense value, the Attack has hit. If the total is less than the relevant Defense value, the Attack has missed.

The Winds of Fate—Rolling a 1

As with a Check, any Attack roll of a 1 will always miss its target, even if the Character's Stat + 1 would otherwise hit. See pg. 11 for more on this.

If an Attack hits, Damage must be determined as follows:

Melee and Thrown Damage is determined by adding a Character's Might Stat to the result of the weapon's Damage roll (see pg. 20). Add any Damage bonuses granted by Skills or other rules.

Ranged Damage is determined by a Ranged weapon's associated Damage die. Unlike with Melee Attacks, which add the Might Stat to Damage, the Edge Stat is **not** added to the Damage value of Ranged Attacks. Add any Damage bonuses granted by Skills or other rules.

Sorcery Damage is determined according to the specific spell being used. Like a Ranged Attack, the Wits Stat is **not** added to the Damage value of the Attack. Add any Damage bonuses granted by Skills or other rules. Note that for the purpose of this Quick Start, the only Sorcery Attack exists at the hands of an NPC.

If the target of an attack has an **Armor Rating (AR)**, subtract this value from the Damage rolled to determine the total Damage inflicted.

Example: *Grom has a Might of 5. When he Attacks with a battle-axe (a Melee Attack), he rolls a D6 for his Might die then adds the result to his Might Stat, which is 5. Grom rolls a 4 and adds his Might Stat (5), which*

totals 9. His target has a Physical Defense of 8 (he needs to meet or beat his target's Physical Defense), so Grom hits! To determine the Damage of the Attack; Grom adds his Might Stat (5) to a roll determined by his weapon, in this case, a battle-axe, which does 1D8. His roll is a 6 and his Might Stat is a 5, so he does 11 Damage. His foe is wearing leather armor, which has an AR of 2. This reduces Damage sustained by 2. His foe takes 9 Damage. Unfortunately for his foe, Grom decides to spend his second Action for another Attack. Repeat the same process.

MODIFIERS AND CONDITIONS

The following table details the various Modifiers that may apply to Attacks. Note that some Skills or Spells may cause additional Modifiers to be applied. Many of these Modifiers are directly connected to Actions, discussed on pg. 14.

MODIFIER	RULES
The Rule of Three	-3 to +3 to Attacks.
Focused Attack	+2 to Attacks.
Defend	+2 to Physical Defense.

The Rule of Three in Combat: As with non-combat Checks, any advantage to an Attack should be represented by applying a +1, +2, or +3 Modifier to any results. As a general rule, during combat, the Modifier should be applied to the Character taking the Action. Thus, a Character who shoots a bow at another Character who is behind bushes would apply, perhaps, a -1 Modifier to their Attack; the Character in the bushes does not also apply a +1 Modifier to their Physical Defense.

Important: *The Rule of Three should be used in conjunction with any other Modifiers that may be applied from the chosen Action (such as Focused Attack), Skills, or Sorcery, as well as any special rules imposed by Enemy Characters.*

The following examples serve to demonstrate how a GM may apply these Modifiers during combat:

- ▲ A Character is targeting an enemy that is hidden behind terrain features. The GM applies a -2 Modifier because the target is hard to hit.
- ▲ A Character is heavily outnumbered by foes, is stricken with fear, or is fighting in an Area of low visibility. The GM applies a -1 Modifier to the Character's Attacks.
- ▲ A Character has caught their foe off guard and attacked from the rear. The GM applies a +1 Modifier.
- ▲ A Character has charged the enemy with a full platoon of soldiers, striking fear into the hearts of the enemies and overwhelming them. The GM applies a +3 Modifier as the Character mows down their foe!
- ▲ An archer stands atop a hill, giving them a clearer view of their enemies. The GM applies a +2 to their Attack rolls.



ARMOR AND ARMOR RATING

Each type of armor has an Armor Rating (AR) value, which is a measure of the protection it provides. After an Attack hits a target and Damage has been calculated, the target of the Attack should subtract their AR value from the Damage inflicted to determine the total Damage they suffer.

MINIMUM DAMAGE RULE

If a Character hits their target with an Attack, the target will always suffer at least 1 Damage, regardless of their Armor Rating.

Each of the various armor types are described in the following table, which includes these categories:

- ▲ **Specific Make:** Thematic details about what the armor is made from.
- ▲ **AR:** The amount by which the armor reduces incoming Damage from Attacks.
- ▲ **Stipulations:** Details of any rules, requirements, or limitations imposed on a Character while they are wearing the armor.

ARMOR TYPE	SPECIFIC MAKE	AR	STIPULATIONS
Light	Hide, Leather, Bone	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ -1 to all Sorcery Attacks. ▲ -1 to all Checks while attempting to Move stealthily.
Medium	Breastplate, Cuirass, Hauberk	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ -2 to all Sorcery Attacks. ▲ -2 to all Checks while attempting to Move stealthily. ▲ May never take more than 2 Move Actions in a Turn, regardless of Skills, Stamina Points, or any other rules.
Shield	Wood, Metal, Makeshift	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ +1 Physical Defense value. ▲ Requires the user to have one hand free to hold it.

WEAPONS

Weapons provide various bonuses to Damage during combat, and certain weapons also provide specific rules. Rather than utilizing an exhaustive list of different tools of war, weapons are grouped into a number of simple categories. For gameplay purposes, all weapons within a category are considered to be the same as each other. Conan is someone who could make deadly use of just about any weapon he got his hands on. Crom's teeth, he could even wield a beef bone to deadly purpose! Thus, players are encouraged to fight in many styles and wield various weapons to crush their enemies.

As noted under Actions (pg. 14), a single Manipulate Action is required to ready a weapon. This includes sheathing any weapon in exchange for another, thus allowing a Character to completely switch fighting styles during combat.

The details of a Character's weapons can be found on the relevant Character Sheet or NPC profile. Each weapons entry provides the following details:

- ▲ **Type:** The type of weapon, including its weight and how many hands may be needed to use it.
- ▲ **Range:** The maximum Range the weapon may be used at. Enemies beyond the stated Range cannot be targeted with this weapon.
- ▲ **Damage:** The amount of Damage that the weapon will inflict during an Attack. Remember that Melee and Thrown weapons add a Character's Might Stat to their Damage value, but Ranged weapons do not.
- ▲ **Rules:** Any special rules or bonuses granted by the weapon.

LIFE, DEATH, AND THE WILL OF FATE

Each Player Character's overall health and well-being depends on their Life Points. During the game, the value a character starts with is considered the maximum number of Life Points they may have.

When a PC's Life Points reach 0, they hit the ground in a heavily wounded state, unconscious or barely clinging to life. When this occurs, the PC must immediately pass a Grit Check (Difficulty 8). A player may use a Flex result to apply a success to a failed Grit Check as usual, and a GM may apply Modifiers using the Rule of Three as applicable.

If this Check is failed, the PC has died gloriously in battle and their adventures through the Hyborian Age have come to an end. If, however, the PC passes the Grit Check, they will remain in an immobile and vulnerable state until their allies have eliminated the immediate threat and the current combat has ended, after which the PC is returned to 1 Life Point.

***Note:** A GM may wish to keep track of how many times a Character has attempted and passed the above Grit Check, increasing the Difficulty by 1 each time they do. After all, there are only so many times one can escape the clutches of their own demise.*

If all allies end up in this state before the end of the battle, then with no one left to deliver suitable aid, all PCs are considered to have fallen foul of their injuries and are killed, unless the GM deems it a suitable moment for a Fateful Intervention.



FATEFUL INTERVENTION

When a PC is killed in battle, or when all PCs are reduced to 0 Life Points during a combat, the GM should decide whether to allow those Characters to perish or to provide a Fateful Intervention. Conan's world is brutal and violent, and the occasional death of a Character should be expected. However, where a Character is pivotal to the ongoing story, or where the GM is just feeling generous, a Fateful Intervention can be used to add a narrative reason for saving a Character.

The GM is free to determine how many Life Points are returned to each Character that is saved in this way, though some examples are included below.

Examples of Fateful Interventions:

- ▲ The Characters' foes believe the Characters are already dead and leave them for the buzzards. Each Character regains 1 Life Point as they crawl from the battlefield.
- ▲ The Characters' foes decide the Characters will make a good sacrifice to the foes' god if they revive them. Each Character regains 5 Life Points and must try to find a method of escape before the sacrifice.
- ▲ The Characters make an extremely daring escape with their final breath, rolling off a cliff into a river far below, or perhaps crawling into a drain, down into the slop of a city sewer to lose their foes in the twisting tunnels. Each Character regains 1–3 Life Points but must swim to safety.
- ▲ A fighting force, or perhaps a wild animal, interrupts the fight, giving the Characters a chance to slip away or fall into friendly company. Though it takes some time, each Character may return to half their maximum Life Points and continue their adventure.

Enemy Life Points

Enemy Antagonists have Life Points, in the same way as Player Characters. A GM may always choose to spare the life of an Enemy Character who is reduced to 0 Life Points, if there is a special narrative reason for it (such as wanting them to return in a future game session). Enemy Minions do not have Life Points and instead use a **Threshold**, as described below.

Minions and Thresholds

Unlike Player Characters and Enemy Antagonists, Minions do not have Life Points. Instead, Minions have a Threshold value; this is the amount of Damage that needs to be inflicted with a single blow in order to kill the Minion outright. If a successful Attack inflicts an amount of Damage equal to or greater than the Minion's Threshold, that Minion is immediately killed. If the Attack inflicts an amount of Damage less than the Minion's Threshold, then the GM should note that the Minion has been hit. Once hit, **any** subsequent Attack that inflicts at least 1 Damage will kill that Minion.

In the interest of maintaining a brisk pace in combat and to reduce mental load on the GM, Minions don't have AR scores; a Threshold effectively emulates the benefits of armor and general toughness.

RECOVERY

In order to regain Life Points during a game session, Characters must perform a Recovery. As a standard, each Character may take **two Recoveries per Tale/game session**. Some longer or particularly dangerous Tales may instruct a GM to allow for additional Recoveries, and the GM is free to provide the Characters with more (or fewer!) if they deem it appropriate.

Important: A Recovery can only be taken when Characters are not under duress or in a position of danger. For example, a Recovery can be performed after combat, when the Characters are a safe distance from any enemies, but could not be performed mid-conflict or when they are suffering from the effects of crippling fear. The GM is the final arbiter when it comes to allowing a Character to Recover.

A Recovery allows Characters to tend to wounds, rest their muscles, and take a relaxing breath. In narrative terms, a Recovery should take just enough time for the Characters to fix themselves up before they start moving again, though it can also represent a period of sleep. Each time a Character performs a Recovery, they regain 50% of their maximum Life Points (**rounding up**), and gain 1 Stamina Point.

Important: A Character regains 50% of their maximum value, rather than returning to 50% of their maximum value. For example, a Character with 30 Life Points would regain 15 Life Points from a Recovery, adding them to whatever their current Life Points value is. If that Character had been reduced to 10 Life Points and took a Recovery, they would therefore be returned to 25 Life Points.

STAMINA POINTS

Player Characters in **Conan: The Hyborian Age** are exceptional individuals—adventurers beyond the capabilities of a typical civilian or tribe member. Though their skills and experience may be greater than those without worldly experience, it is the ability to react to situations in unexpected and daring ways that really sets them apart. During the game, these abilities are represented by Stamina Points.

A PC may spend Stamina Points as they wish on their own Turn or, where applicable, on an opponent's Turn. These options allow for versatile and spontaneous strategies, representing the skills of truly legendary warriors. The effects of spending a Stamina Point apply immediately.



PCs start each Tale with a number of Stamina Points equal to their Grit Stat. For example, if a Character has a Grit Stat of 4, they will start with 4 Stamina Points. Though there is no upper limit to how many Stamina Points a Character can have, their available points will reset to whatever their Grit Stat is at the start of each Tale.

Stamina Points may be spent as follows:

STAMINA POINT EFFECT	STAMINA POINT COST
Make an additional Move Action.	1
Increase the value rolled on the Stat die during a Check or Attack by +1 (after the roll), or pay 2 Stamina Points to increase it by +2.	1 (2)
Increase the Damage of a single successful Attack by 1D4 (after the roll), or pay 2 Stamina Points to increase the Damage by 2D4. Do not roll the Flex die along with these additional dice.	1 (2)
Increase the Range of a Thrown weapon by one additional Range Zone (i.e., from Medium to Long).	1
Spend a Character's final Stamina Point when rolling for Damage, to apply the Massive Damage Flex result. The Character should still roll the Flex die as normal: if they roll a Flex, they may apply Massive Damage a second time, but may not apply any other Flex result.	Final Stamina Point

In addition to the table above, many Skills and certain other rules allow Characters to spend Stamina Points in order to activate a given rule. Such uses of Stamina Points are explained by the given rule.

POISON

When a Character has been Poisoned, the GM should select one or more of the following penalties to apply to that Character until the effects of the poison are neutralized:

- ▲ The Character applies a Modifier of -1 to all Checks and Attacks.
- ▲ The Character loses 1 Life Point at the end of every Round.
- ▲ The Character may not spend Stamina Points.
- ▲ The Character does not roll their Flex die.

Poison is neutralized (removing all penalties) whenever a Character takes a Recovery, or when they regain any Life Points as the result of a Sorcery Skill.



SORCERY



Sorcery is an ancient and often dangerous art learned and practiced by acolytes or individuals who pore over lost books, perform sacrifices, or commune with demons and otherworldly beings. In some cultures, sorcery is revered and respected, but in many lands of the Hyborian Age, it is something to fear. Though sorcery can cover “mundane” magic, it also includes incredible and devastating powers that can change the course of a battle or the fate of the caster.

In **Conan: The Hyborian Age**, sorcery is represented through spells, each of which is defined by a Sorcery Skill. For the purpose of this Quick Start, very few Sorcery Skills are available, with just one of the pregenerated Characters having access to them. The rules for these Sorcery Skills are noted on the relevant Character Sheet. Sorcery is expanded upon greatly in the game’s core book.

Sorcerer

*The term **sorcerer** is used throughout the rules to describe a Character that possesses one or more Sorcery Skills or rules that permit a Sorcery Attack or spell, such as those sometimes possessed by NPCs.*

Casting Spells

Using a Sorcery Skill costs the caster a number of Life Points or Stamina Points, representing the significant drain that sorcery has on the user when casting a spell. Most spells also require the use of a number of Actions during combat, as specified by the spell’s rules. Outside of combat, the GM is free to determine exactly how long it takes to cast a spell. Any additional requirements for casting a spell, such as a target being within a certain Range, will be detailed in the rules of the specific Sorcery Skill.

Sorcery Attacks

When a spell asks for a Sorcery Attack, it should be treated like any other Attack, but it uses the Wits Stat. The GM is free to apply any Modifiers they deem fitting to Sorcery Attacks. If a Sorcery Attack is failed, the spell doesn’t take effect. Assuming the Sorcery Attack succeeds, the effects described by the Sorcery Skill will take effect—most commonly to inflict Damage, but in some cases other effects may apply. The only Sorcery Attack that appears in this Quick Start is from Thuul The Formless in “The Seal of Acheron” Tale.

Sorcery Disciplines and Inherent Spells

Each Sorcery Skill is connected to one of five Disciplines. For the purpose of this Quick Start, the pregenerated Character Davor has access to the White Magic Discipline. Each Discipline also contains a number of **inherent spells**. These spells do not have specific rules and instead provide a number of magical narrative tasks that the sorcerer can achieve. Inherent spells are considered to be known by any sorcerer who also possesses **at least one Sorcery Skill from the given Discipline**; for example, because Davor possesses a White Magic Sorcery Skill, he also has access to the list of White Magic inherent spells.

WHITE MAGIC

Life comes in many forms. From those who walk the wilderness to the ancient trees in the continent’s densest woodlands. From the smallest creature on the desert floor to the weather thundering high above. Sorcerers who embrace these energies may learn to understand the feelings of those around them, to sense magical potential in others, and to speak to the many beasts

that roam the world. White Magic is the study of life, healing, and nature, combined with a deep understanding of all aspects of sorcery.

“Civilized men laugh,’ said Conan. ‘But not one can tell me how Zogar Sag can call pythons and tigers and leopards out of the wilderness and make them do his bidding. They would say it is a lie, if they dared. That’s the way with civilized men. When they can’t explain something by their half-baked science, they refuse to believe it.”

– Robert E. Howard, “Beyond the Black River”



White Magic Inherent Spells:

- ▲ **The Signs of Jhebbal Sag:** The sorcerer can read and write symbols that can only be understood by beasts or those who remember the ancient language. In addition, the sorcerer can read the emotions and intent of any nearby animals, though the sorcerer cannot command or influence them.
- ▲ **Sense Sorcery:** The sorcerer can sense sorcery being used nearby and is able to tell if an item or person is under the effect of spell by placing a hand upon the item or upon the person’s bare skin.
- ▲ **Life Sight:** The sorcerer can determine the physical and mental well-being of any living creature by placing a hand upon their bare skin. This includes knowledge of any harm they have suffered, pain they are in, fear they are under the effect of, or emotional state they may be in.

NAME	EFFECT
Healing	Spend 1 Stamina Point: Use 2 Actions to heal. The sorcerer or another target within Touch Range regains Life Points equal to the sorcerer’s Wits die. A sorcerer must be able to lay their hand on the target’s bare skin to use this spell on another Character.
Call Wolf	Spend 5 Life Points: Use 2 Actions to call a Wolf (see Davor Character Sheet) to within Medium Range, which acts as a Friendly Character until it is defeated or the current combat ends, at which point it will flee. The Wolf shares the same Initiative as the sorcerer. The Wolf may take a Turn immediately after the Sorcerer on the Turn it is summoned.

GAME MASTERING



THE ROLE OF THE GM

The Game Master is, first and foremost, a storyteller. Whether that means sticking closely to the story beats of a pregenerated Tale or creating their own narrative threads, the GM is expected to spin a yarn for the players at the table. For some, this is a natural talent, and it is often the reason they are selected for the role of Game Master; for others, this will be uncharted territory. Novice GMs should not feel intimidated, however, as this RPG has been designed to make game mastering as easy as possible. Regardless of the GM's training or talents, they should always keep two important points in mind.

Judicial Power

The GM is the judge. While they should adhere closely to the rules as written (which helps avoid upsets or miscommunications), it doesn't mean they should never bend them to their liking. It is best practice to inform the players ahead of time of any adjustments being made to the rules of the play, but sometimes the GM has to think on their feet. Whether it's a situation where the rules aren't clear regarding a specific event or a scenario that the rules don't cover at all, the GM gets the final say. That said, the opinions, wants, and ideas of the other players at the table should be heard and considered—and that shouldn't apply exclusively to rules matters.

Shared Storytelling

While the GM serves as the overall narrator and embodies, however briefly, the many NPCs who populate the setting, they aren't the only one in charge of telling a story. Each player at the table is encouraged to embody their Player Character to whatever extent they're comfortable. Thus, GMs should pay close attention to the PCs' goals, personalities, fears, etc. A mindful GM will

try to incorporate narrative threads that appeal to the interests of the players and their Characters. While it is expected that the PCs will suffer deceits, traps, storms, and the like, the GM should ensure the players have some sense of agency and freedom, even when a Tale sees them captured, weaponless, or with a literal knife to their throat.

Running a Game

Tales, such as those found in this Quick Start, serve as strong examples of how a session of **Conan: The Hyborian Age** should play. While Tales will suggest the number of foes and which type the PCs should face for each encounter, GMs may find battles are either too easy or too difficult. And although rules such as the Rule of Threes and Minimum Damage ensure even the weakest mobs of foes can become deadly, the best way to keep players on their toes is by providing the right mixture of Minion tiers and Antagonists. A GM should always feel empowered to adjust whatever details they, or their group, need in order to keep the action (and the fun!) flowing.

NPCs' Defense and AR Values

Each of the accompanying Tales includes the Stats and types of Attacks (and special rules) for each NPC that will be needed. It is worth noting that NPC Physical Defense, Sorcery Defense, and AR values are presented as a range, such as 7–9. The variable nature of these values allows a GM to quickly adapt the level of threat on the fly, thus tweaking the defensive capabilities of the NPCs being used, depending on what kind of challenge is required. The GM is the final arbiter when it comes to choosing the right Defense Values or AR and should feel empowered to treat the numbers provided here as guidelines, to be adjusted as they see fit.

Dynamic Battlegrounds

The rules for taking Actions assume that GMs provide dynamic encounter locations—ones that will see PCs and NPCs having to Move and Attack, or Attack then Move, or perhaps spend an entire round or two

just Moving or Attacking. In reference to the above, it should also be noted that allowing PCs to stand still and make two Attack Actions per turn while foes run into them will likely make easy work of the opposition. GMs should note that most Melee Attacks occur at Touch Range and so movement is crucial. The opportunity to Attack twice in a single turn should be a less common option.

The best practice is to ensure these encounters mix things up. A PC built for speed or Ranged combat should be able to take advantage of their talents. The same goes for a Character who is built to slay waves of Minions. Likewise, NPCs who have dug into fortified positions should present a challenge for the PCs who have to attack them. It is important to keep players on their toes by offering different challenges throughout a given Tale.

WEALTH AND POSSESSIONS

The idea of money, wealth, and belongings in **Conan: The Hyborian Age** is deliberately abstract; that is to say that players need not record gold or valuables, and possessions do not come with a material cost attached. In fact, aside from weapons and armor, other belongings and equipment have no inherent rules. Instead, GMs are encouraged to use the Rule of Threes to emulate the presence of (or lack of) an item that would aid something. For example, a Character with some rope may gain a +1 (or more) Modifier to any Check related to climbing. Alternatively, the GM could apply a -1 Modifier to all PCs that do not possess a rope. This level of flexibility is designed to make things quick and simple.

TALES

The Seal of Acheron is designed to provide the concept of adventure and present players with a number of different combat types against beast, monstrous, and human foes. It serves as a good introduction to the game's mechanics and basics of combat.





THE SEAL OF ACHERON

INTRODUCTION

The Player Characters begin in a tavern, reveling in the mirth that comes from crushing enemies and earning coin. One of their dog brothers, Radan—a fellow mercenary whom they fought alongside during a recent border skirmish—has a secret to share.

GMs may set this Tale anywhere in the Hyborian world where there would be desert and border disputes, which provides a lot of possibilities. Some suggestions are Zamora, Zamboula, or Shadizar. That said, GMs could easily adapt it to take place anywhere there could be sellswords, a tavern, and a nearby ruin.



Read Aloud

The air of the Brazen Buzzard is thick and purpled with smoke. At this late hour, most patrons slump in their chairs or squat in the alley outside, emptying their guts. A few snickering rogues toss dice in a corner, but after long days battling on the border, most of these sell-swords arrived weary, spent all their earnings, and now barely cling to consciousness.

And then there's Radan, your brother in arms, who sits erect, gnawing at an hours-old joint of beef. He leans in, licks his lips, and whispers, "I've been meaning to propose you all somethin'—somethin' that might prove more lucrative than sword-sellin'. What say you? Fancy risking your hide for more coin than you could spend on a prince's ransom?"

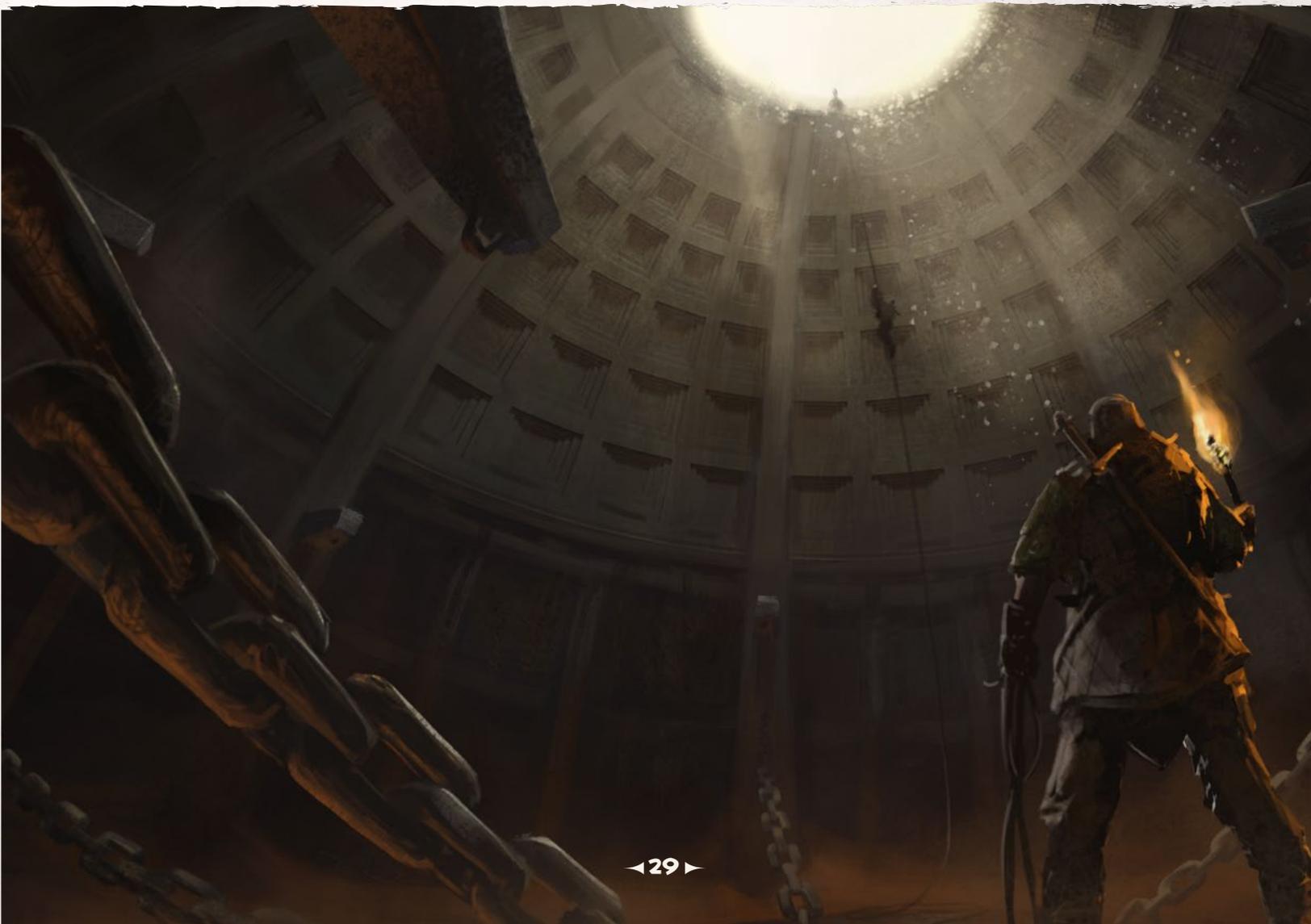
OVERVIEW

According to Radan, a recent earthquake followed by a massive sandstorm in the southeast has unearthed an ancient ruin, the topmost portion of which seems to be a dome. At its center is a tiny aperture—a seal—where a capable thief might gain entrance. What lies inside? Gold, jewels, relics? The mind reels with possibilities. Radan took an arrow to the leg during the most recent battle and therefore cannot make the two-day journey to the site, let alone descend into its depths on a treasure hunt. The man who told him about the ruin mysteriously died the morning before the men went off to battle, so now Radan alone knows the location. In exchange for directions to the site, he asks only for a fair share of the wealth.

Allow the players to discuss how they wish to answer Radan. Remind them this is a game of high adventure,

and just about any Character in this setting who knows how to swing a sword and cast a spell would find the offer enticing. They may also wish to bring him along to find the place. Radan will refuse on account of his leg. GMs should note, his wound is a ruse, and he isn't actually injured. To maintain this lie, however, if intensely pressured, he will agree to join the PCs. In truth, Radan is setting them up. He has a few other mercenaries working for him. If he doesn't accompany the PCs, he will follow them in secret with some of his cohorts. If he does join the PCs, his cohorts will follow them all in secret.

In either case, at any point after the last PC enters the depths of the ruin, Radan or one of his mercenaries will close the seal, locking them inside. His plan is to have them deal with any threats and then die of thirst. After that, he and his people will enter and take what they want.



SCENES

JOURNEY TO THE RUIN

GMs should feel free to describe and expand upon any aspect of the two-day journey to the ruin. While the PCs should not be prompted to make needless Checks to navigate the terrain or locate the site (Radan will have provided clear instructions), anything could happen in the lawless spaces between camps and kingdoms.

Perhaps the PCs spot droves of sellswords departing for more promising lands. Maybe they encounter a group of Bandits, or a pack of Hyenas or ravenous Wild Dogs. To allow for these encounters, the profiles for these NPCs have been included below. Game Masters should use this opportunity to present the dangerous and brutal setting of the Hyborian Age.

BANDIT								
Human - Minion								
MIGHT		EDGE		GRIT		WITS		
2	D8	2	D6	2	D6	1	D6	
PHYSICAL DEFENSE		5-7	SORCERY DEFENSE		4-6	THRESHOLD		3
MELEE DAMAGE			Knife (Range: Touch)			1D4+2		
THROWN DAMAGE			Throwing Knife (Range: Medium)			1D4+2		
A Bandit may take 2 Actions per Turn, but only 1 may be an Attack.								
Skulkers: A Bandit applies a +1 Modifier to any Edge Checks related to hiding and stealth.								



WILD DOG

Beast - Minion

MIGHT		EDGE		GRIT		WITS	
2	D8	3	D6	3	D4	2	D4
PHYSICAL DEFENSE	4-6	SORCERY DEFENSE	4-6	THRESHOLD	4		
MELEE DAMAGE	Bite (Range: Touch)			1D6+2			

A Wild Dog may take **2 Actions** per Turn, but only 1 may be an Attack.

HYENA

Beast - Minion

MIGHT		EDGE		GRIT		WITS	
2	D8	4	D6	3	D6	2	D4
PHYSICAL DEFENSE	5-7	SORCERY DEFENSE	4-6	THRESHOLD	5		
MELEE DAMAGE	Bite (Range: Touch)			1D6+2			

A Hyena may take **2 Actions** per Turn, but only 1 may be an Attack.

Pack Mentality: A Hyena gains +1 to their Might Stat when there are at least three Hyenas involved in a combat.



THE RUIN ENTRANCE

The ruin is a site of unknown origin. Mostly buried as it is, the dome is tough to spot. Those who do find it will notice something strange: the ancient stone looks fresh, as if it had never been exposed to years, decades, perhaps centuries of desert weathering. The dome itself bears carvings and glyphs of an unknown origin. The aperture—what appears to be the only way in—is actually a sort of lid or plug. It has a wheel to tighten, lock, and loosen the lid, which is made of some ancient metal, well preserved. Wits Checks will determine the following:

Wits Check (Difficulty 5) The PC notices the lack of weathering.

The PC notices what's described above and also that the site seems to have been buried soon after it was constructed. Why would those who raised it bury it so quickly?

Wits Check (Difficulty 8)

The symbols seem reminiscent of Stygian. Perhaps these were early ancestors.

Wits Check (Difficulty 11)

The PC notices what's described above, and also that the symbols are actually Acheronian—the lost culture of debauched sorcerers. While this may hint at danger, it also hints at value: any relics or treasures from Acheronian hoards will fetch a pretty sum.

Surprisingly, the entrance is not trapped nor locked (*Game Master's note: the seal was meant to keep things from getting out, not from getting in*). Once the seal is opened, it rests to one side and can be slid back in place as needed and locked from the outside. Removing the entire contraption would mean destroying it and making a lot of noise. (If PCs attempt to do this, the GM may decide that a swarm of Giant Scorpions take notice and attack—the profile for which can be found on pg. 33.) From this aperture, it's about twenty feet to the bottom of the Ritual Chamber.

If the PCs decide to keep a guard outside the temple entrance while the rest search the depths, and at no

point do they all pass beyond the dome, have Radan and his people rain arrows on those who did not enter. This should be sufficient motivation for them to take cover within the dome. The PCs should be unable to determine the exact number of mercenaries, nor who is shooting at them, due to being hidden behind cover.

THE RITUAL CHAMBER

Once the first PC enters the depths and lights a torch or a lantern, read aloud the following.

Read Aloud

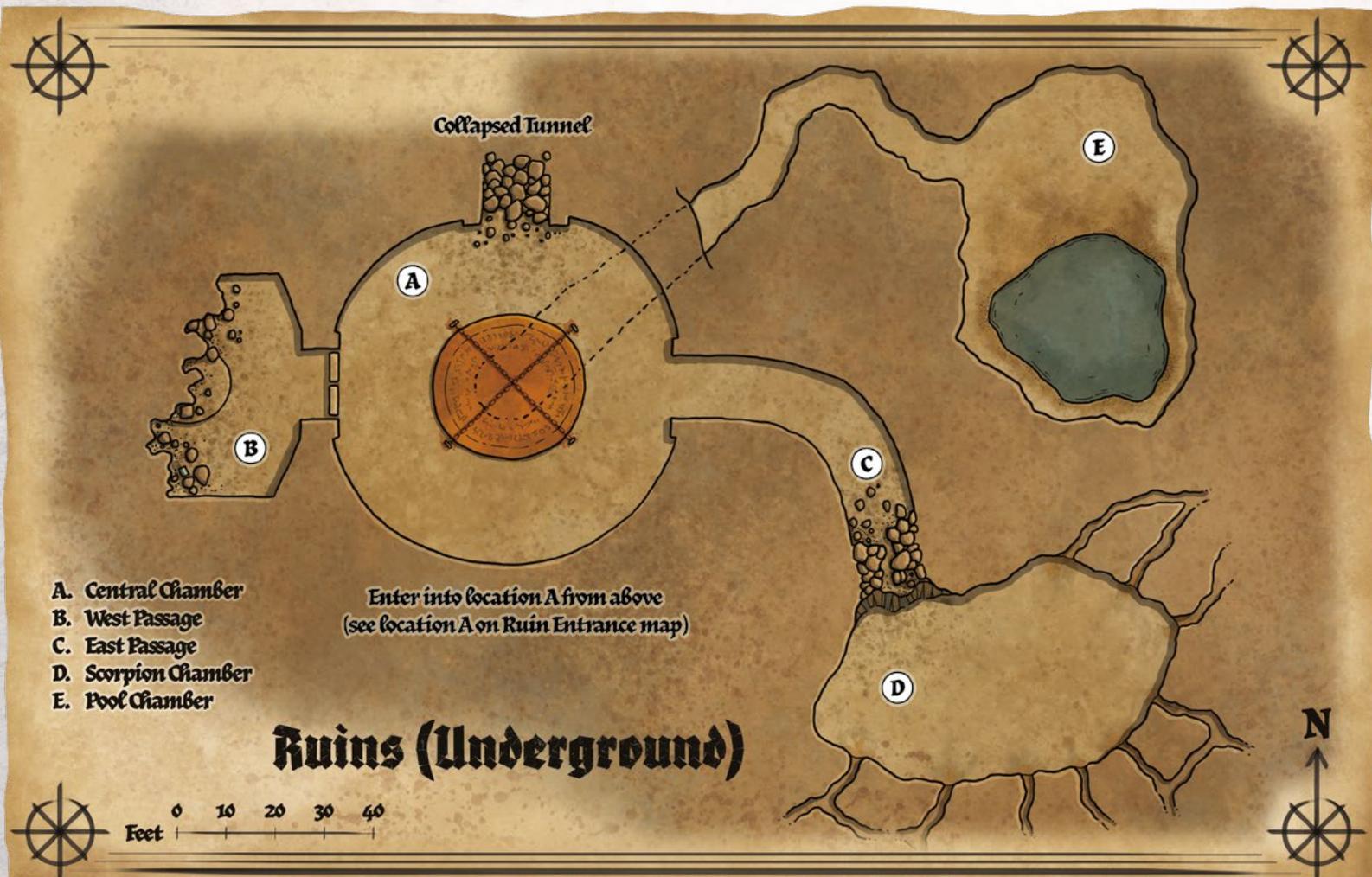
Your firelight illuminates only a portion of this circular, high-ceilinged chamber. The ground beneath your feet is a mix of cracked sandstone tiles and natural earth; the walls stretch up to form the dome overhead. At the center of the room, lining up directly below the aperture from which you entered, lies a large—perhaps thirty feet in diameter—portal lid, its surface etched with ominous figures and horrifying creatures, seemingly conjured from the

nightmares of an ancient civilization Heavy chains stretch across this, crisscrossed to form an X. It's as foreboding a warning as any you've seen.

A chamber that once led north has collapsed and remains impassable. A doorless arch on the eastern side of the room leads to a deeper passage. On the western side of the room stands a door of cold-hammered copper.

Any sorcerer among the group will be able to mark this site as a barrier against something otherworldly below. Additionally, any sorcerer may make a Wits Check (Difficulty 9). If they're successful, they may gain 1 Stamina Point to represent them siphoning off some of the sorcerous energy emanating from the seal.

Reminder: At some point after all PCs have entered this chamber to explore the depths, Radan will close and lock the aperture seal (**Radan the Deceiver**, pg. 38). Whether he announces himself or simply locks them in is up to the GM. Either way, the PCs will need to find another way out.



EASTERN PASSAGE

When one or more of the PCs approach the Eastern Passage, read or paraphrase the following.

Read Aloud

The Eastern Passage yawns open, leading to a long hall, perhaps ten feet wide, ten feet high. The walls have been carved from natural stone, mixed, in some portions, with orange sandstone brickwork. After approximately forty feet, the hallway ends at a cave-in. Whatever chambers might lie beyond are inaccessible, but a fissure riven into the wall is wide enough for a Character to squeeze through. Beyond this is a passage made from the natural cave system, sloping down.

If PCs follow this down, it will lead them to another large chamber, its original access point long buried. A series of holes and fissures leech fresh air but are far too small for any of the PCs to pass through. From here, there seems to be no viable way to access the outdoors or any other portions of the subterranean structure.

At some point when the PCs are in this natural-earth chamber, have them complete an Edge Check to see what they notice and hear.

Edge Check (Difficulty 6)

The PC notices a scratching or clicking sound. They can't tell where it's coming from.

Edge Check (Difficulty 9)

The PC notices the clicking and scratching sounds are coming from small fissures cut into the walls. They also detect a faint vibration coming from the earth under their feet.

After this, Giant Scorpions start streaming through the fissures in the walls. Roll Initiative and begin the encounter. If all PCs failed the Edge Check above, the Scorpions make a Surprise Attack. At some point during the encounter, on the Scorpions' Turn, the Scorpion Brood Mother erupts from the ground beneath the chamber. When this happens, have the PCs make an additional Edge Check. If one of the PCs passed a Difficulty 9 on their previous Edge Check and

alerted their allies about the vibrations underfoot, any PCs in the Brood Mother's Area only need pass an Edge Check (Difficulty 5) to stay on their feet. If they were unaware of the vibrations underfoot, they need to pass a Difficulty 9 Check or they're immediately knocked Prone.

Along with the Giant Scorpion Brood Mother, the combat should include two Giant Scorpions per PC. In addition, it should include one Giant Scorpion Brood Guard per player after the first (one for two players, two for three players, etc.).

GIANT SCORPION

Beast - Minion

MIGHT		EDGE		GRIT		WITS		
2	D8	3	D8	2	D6	1	D6	
PHYSICAL DEFENSE		5-7	SORCERY DEFENSE		4-6	THRESHOLD		7
MELEE DAMAGE		Stinger (Range: Touch)					1D4+2	
		Pincer (Range: Touch)					1D6+3	

A Giant Scorpion may take **2 Actions** per Turn, but only 1 may be an Attack.

Poison Sting: If a Giant Scorpion inflicts 2 or more Damage with a single Melee Attack with its Stinger, its target must pass a Grit Check (Difficulty 8) or become Poisoned (see pg. 23).

GIANT SCORPION

BROOD GUARD

Beast - Minion

MIGHT		EDGE		GRIT		WITS		
4	D10	5	D8	4	D8	1	D6	
PHYSICAL DEFENSE		8-10	SORCERY DEFENSE		4-6	THRESHOLD		12
MELEE DAMAGE		Stinger (Range: Touch)					1D4+4	
		Pincer (Range: Touch)					1D8+5	

A Giant Scorpion Brood Guard may take **3 Actions** per Turn, but only 1 may be an Attack.

Poison Sting: If a Giant Scorpion Brood Guard inflicts 2 or more Damage with a single Melee Attack with its Stinger, its target must pass a Grit Check (Difficulty 10) or become Poisoned (see pg. 23).

GIANT SCORPION BROOD MOTHER

Beast – Antagonist

MIGHT		EDGE		GRIT		WITS	
6	D10	5	D8	6	D10	2	D6
PHYSICAL DEFENSE		8–10		SORCERY DEFENSE		4–6	
MELEE DAMAGE		Barbed Stinger (Range: Close)		LIFE POINTS		35	
		Crushing Pincer (Range: Close)				1D6+6	
						1D12+6	

A Giant Scorpion Brood Mother may take **3 Actions** per Turn, but only 2 may be Attacks. Only 1 Attack may be made with its Barbed Stinger each Turn.

Potent Venom: If a Giant Scorpion Brood Mother inflicts 2 or more Damage with a single Melee Attack from its Barbed Stinger, its target must pass a Grit Check (Difficulty is equal to the number of Life Points lost from the Barbed Stinger Attack) or become Poisoned and suffer an additional 1D10 Damage, ignoring AR.

A Giant Scorpion Brood Mother has an AR of 4–6.

There is nothing of further significance in the Eastern Passage. The areas from where the Giant Scorpions came are inaccessible, as the fissures and holes that may lead to them are too narrow for a human to fit. Even the Brood Mother's pit cannot be entered, because it has been refilled with sand and stone. The Eastern Passage effectively leads to a dead end.



WESTERN PASSAGE

The copper door on the western wall is not locked, but it is trapped. If PCs inspect the door and make Checks before attempting to open it, they may avoid a crushing surprise.

**Edge or
Wits Check
(Difficulty 5)**

The PC determines the glyphs and symbols on the door seem to be a warning and/or that stonings hanging above are not germane to the surroundings. They can tell the door is trapped but can't disarm it.

**Edge or
Wits Check
(Difficulty 8)**

The PC spots the trap: an overhead slab of brickwork set to fall as soon as the door is opened. They also spot a wedge-shaped brick resting next to the door which seems to have been crafted to fit in beneath the slab of bricks to lock them in place. This effectively allows them to disarm the trap.

If a PC knows the door is trapped but doesn't know how to disarm it, they may set it off intentionally and avoid any Damage by completing an Edge Check (Difficulty 8). If a PC pushes open the door without disarming or safely setting off the trap, they, and any other Characters within Touch Range, must pass an Edge Check (Difficulty 10) or suffer 2D8 Damage. Roll the Damage separately for each Character, to simulate the amount of Damage the falling bricks might cause.

Read Aloud

The door opens to another large room where a heaving of the earth has left its mark. Much of the roof has collapsed, but a portion of the chamber remains free of rubble. A stone dais sits partially covered by rubble, half of it shattered and strewn across the floor. Within this heap is a silver chest, about as big as a loaf of bread.

The chest is not locked nor trapped. Inside is a dagger, ornately carved from an unknown metal. Its hilt has been deftly engraved and features jade, gold, and rubies. Its pommel is shaped into a toothy, devouring maw, as if a creature is eating the dagger from the bottom up.

Its guard and haft are shaped to resemble a secondary knife, plunging into the creature's mouth. It is as if the weapon is attacking itself.

GMs should note the weapon has been fashioned by dark and ancient sorcery to function as a Bane Weapon against Thuul the Formless, the Demon who slumbers beneath the seal. Anyone wielding this dagger in combat may use it as a weapon against Thuul, treating its Damage roll as 1D12+3 (+ Might as normal). Otherwise, the dagger functions as any other knife, albeit a valuable one. When the PCs encounter Thuul the Formless, they may recognize a resemblance between the creature depicted on the dagger's pommel and Thuul (see pg. 37).

Aside from this, the PCs are able to scrounge up trinkets of gold and silver as well as a few cups teeming with ancient coins. All said, the value of these items should be enough for a few nights' lodgings and food. There is nothing else of interest in the Western Passage and the only way to go is back to the Ritual Chamber.

BENEATH THE SEAL / POOL OF DREAMS

In the Ritual Chamber, it seems the only way is down. After the rotten and rusting chains have been severed, the seal can be easily opened via a series of bolts (no need for a Check). A staircase beneath the seal leads to a hallway containing the Pool of Dreams. Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene.

Read Aloud

The air beneath the seal is spiked with winter's breath. This break from the desert heat might be welcomed if not for its inexplicable nature. All is silent save for the soft hiss of sand scattering before this icy current. The darkness beyond your firelight is a suffocating pitch, but you can make out a single corridor stretching ahead of you, hinting at the abyssal depths beyond. There is only one path to take and it leads toward this uncanny chill.

As the PCs follow the corridor, they'll enter a network of natural-earth passages. The surfaces have been smoothed,

almost like beach stone—as if water once flowed through these tunnels. As they descend deeper, the air gets colder. Eventually, the PCs will discover a small chamber containing a pool of clear water, mirror smooth. The water is cool to the touch but not quite freezing. Any who look within the surface will witness the following visions.

Read Aloud

A line of women stand before a fuming pit. As each of them approach the aperture, a priest, clad in hideous, beastly regalia, blesses them—or perhaps performs some form of legerdemain before them. After this, one by one, they approach the billowing green smoke and leap into the depths.

One woman stops before it, her glazed eyes snapping wide. Suddenly lucid, she screams in horror, and a croaking voice answers from below. The priest shoves her with both arms, but she catches him by the wrist and the two tumble into the depths.

Their wails hiss into silence—

Then an explosion of stone and flame erupts from the pit. Myriad questing tendrils rise up, attaching themselves to the surrounding walls and heaving ground. A massive, shadowy form begins to take shape . . .

A city stretches before you, oasis-like, glittering in defiance of the surrounding desert wastes. Pools sparkle in the sunlight, rimmed by trees and verdant gardens. Towers stretch skyward, their purple minarets nearly kissing the clouds.

Soon a great shadow spreads over palaces and slums alike, blackening streets and alleyways, erasing everything of substance. A croak peels through the air; tendrils creep from the looming shade, caressing, then unmaking all they touch.

Some cataclysmic disaster has toppled the city. A blade-thin man, bedecked in ritual robes, stands atop a mound of freshly heaved earth, scanning the destruction. Sand and stones cascade into great fissures riven into the earth. All structures raised by the hands of humans have crumbled—save one.

A dome stretches above the rubble, unscathed by whatever sorcery leveled the city. Enslaved wretches smooth mortar, putting final touches on the brickwork while whips strike their backs. The sorcerer

chants a song, his words indiscernible. Then he walks over the air, as if crossing some invisible platform, until he reaches a seal at the peak of the dome. On top of this, he carves symbols and images like gramarye. He stares long at his work, fingers fluttering, brows knitting. Seemingly satisfied, he turns from the dome and gazes to the sinking sun in the west. Then he claps his hands together and the mound upon which he stood moments ago splits in half, sloughing to the earth, burying the dome and all who stood near it, including the sorcerer himself.

After this, the PCs will encounter Thuul the Formless, a creature inspired by both Thog and Thaug, from Robert E. Howard's "The Slithering Shadow" and "A Witch Shall be Born," respectively. It is a huge frog-like mass of shadow and tentacles. GMs are encouraged to offer only a vague description of the Demon, as its lack of tangible form is part of its horrific charm. That said, if the PCs have the Dagger, or have seen the Dagger from the Western Passage, they may notice a resemblance between the creature carved into its pommel and the horrific thing looming before them. Have any who've seen the Dagger and Thuul roll a Wits Check (Difficulty 9). If they pass, they determine this Dagger may have been fashioned specifically to harm Thuul.

The chamber in which the PCs must fight Thuul is tight and claustrophobic, with the entire room stretching not further than Medium Range, thus making it hard for archers to get any real distance from the creature.

The GMs should provide an escape route for the PCs, as battling this creature to the death may be unwise, especially if they didn't acquire the Dagger or deduce its function. Should they choose to run, have them come to what at first seems a dead end. However, they will notice a slash of light peeking through a fissure in the brickwork. A PC may sunder the soft, cracked wall with a successful Might Check (Difficulty 7). If successful, they may squeeze through the gap to the open desert, safe from the questing tendrils of Thuul.

Should they decide to fight and manage to defeat Thuul, this gap in the wall will still function as their way out later.

◀ ▶ **THUUL THE FORMLESS** ▶ ◀ ▶
Monstrosity – Antagonist

MIGHT		EDGE		GRIT		WITS	
8	D10	2	D6	8	D8	5	D8
PHYSICAL DEFENSE	6–8	SORCERY DEFENSE	9–11	LIFE POINTS		100	
MELEE DAMAGE		Horrific Strike (Range: Close)				1D12+8	

Thuul may take **4 Actions** per turn, but only 2 may be Attacks.

Frightful Presence: At the start of any combat with Thuul, before Initiative is calculated, Thuul targets all Player Characters with the following Sorcery Attack: (Range: Distant); any Character hit by the Sorcery Attack applies a -1 Modifier to all Checks and Attacks for the duration of the current combat.

Thuul has an AR of 3–5.

RADAN THE DECEIVER

The GM should decide the best moment to reveal Radan as the treacherous dog that he is. Perhaps this is shortly after the PCs enter the dome, or maybe it isn't until after they bypass or defeat Thuul and squeeze through the gap to freedom to find him camped, waiting for them to perish. In any case, the encounter with Radan should be fairly easy for the PCs, as Thuul was the true threat. Radan will have a handful of mercenaries at his disposal; GMs should scale the amount of them and their tiers according to how many PCs there are.

This conflict will involve Radan and one Veteran Bandit per PC. The GM is free to increase the number of Veteran Bandits if they want a more grueling battle.



▶ RADAN THE DECEIVER ◀

Human – Antagonist

MIGHT		EDGE		GRIT		WITS	
4	D8	6	D10	4	D6	5	D8
PHYSICAL DEFENSE	8–10	SORCERY DEFENSE	8–10	LIFE POINTS	40		
MELEE DAMAGE	Scimitar (Range: Touch)			1D8+4			
RANGED DAMAGE	Long Bow (Range: Distant)			1D8+1			

Radan may take **3 Actions** per Turn.

Feared Leader: Once per turn, Radan may use 1 Action to give his allies a +1 Modifier to Attacks for the rest of the Round.

Radan has an AR of 3–5.

VETERAN BANDIT

Human – Minion

MIGHT		EDGE		GRIT		WITS	
3	D8	3	D8	2	D6	2	D6
PHYSICAL DEFENSE	6–8	SORCERY DEFENSE	5–7	THRESHOLD	8		
MELEE DAMAGE	Hand Axe (Range: Touch)			1D6+3			
THROWN DAMAGE	Throwing Knife (Range: Medium)			1D4+3			

A Veteran Bandit may take **2 Actions** per Turn, but only 1 may be an Attack.

Skulkers: A Veteran Bandit applies a +1 Modifier to any Edge Checks related to hiding and stealth.

How the PCs deal with Radan is, of course, up to them. Perhaps they wait for him to return to the mercenary camp or follow him and his cohorts in secret. Perhaps they simply dispatch all his guards and then torture the scheming dog. They could even offer to pay off Radan's mercenaries, encouraging them to turn on him. The GM should keep an agile mind and react to any clever ideas the players might come up with.

CONCLUSION AND REWARDS

The PCs can make use of Radan's camp and supplies to get some rest and recover from any injuries they may have sustained. There is little of worth to be had, but some food and coin can be found for those who take the time to search. If the group made an example of Radan, this may contribute to the PCs' reputation and infamy, making their names ring out in the surrounding lands. If Radan was spared, he may just return in the future to seek bitter vengeance on the PCs.

Where will the PC's travels take them next?



CONAN

THE HYBORIAN AGE
CHARACTER SHEET

XP

NAME Hanzi

ORIGIN From the Streets

FLEX DIE	STAMINA POINTS
D10	4

MIGHT	
Value	Die
3	D6

EDGE	
Value	Die
5	D6

GRIT	
Value	Die
4	D6

WITS	
Value	Die
4	D6

DEFENSE	
Physical	Sorcery
7	6

LIFE POINTS	
Actual	Max.
	30

WEAPONS

WEAPON	TYPE
Dagger	Melee
RANGE	DAMAGE
Touch	1D4
RULES:	

WEAPON	TYPE
Throwing Knives	Thrown
RANGE	DAMAGE
Medium	1D4
RULES:	

WEAPON	TYPE
RANGE	DAMAGE
RULES:	

ARMOR

TYPE	AR
STIPULATIONS:	

TYPE	AR
STIPULATIONS:	

EQUIPMENT

Assortment of Throwing Daggers and Knives, Lock Pick Set, pouch of stolen gold coins.

SKILLS

SKILL	EFFECT
Fleet Footed	When making 2 Move Actions in the same Turn, take an additional bonus Move Action.
Assassin	When using a One-Handed Light or Medium Melee weapon, apply Edge to the Melee Attack instead of Might. Still add Might to the Damage roll.
Of the Shadows	+1 to all Edge Checks involving stealth (hiding, moving quietly, passing by unseen) or to detect others.

ORIGIN BONUSES

+1 to all Edge Checks and Attacks.

BACKGROUND

For a man who spends most of his time in the shadows, Hanzi rarely misses his mark. His earliest memories are of hunger and hurling sharp objects at fat merchants in order to feed himself. “Hanzi the Bullseye,” his friends might call him—that is, if he had any friends. His enemies might call him that, too, but they don’t often live long enough to speak his name.

On the streets of Shadizar, he learned much about violence and theft. As a result, his sticky fingers can easily snatch coins and jewels but hold no scruples when it comes to ending lives. He’s made his home in alleyways, rooftops, and on occasion—when Bel, god of thieves, has truly forsaken him—in the sewers. And because he lives most days like a rat, crawling, climbing, and squeezing through cracks, he shuns the bow and the sword. Such tools are too bulky and offer nothing a fine assortment of knives does not.

Since leaving Shadizar, Hanzi has learned most cities offer the same cycles of bloodshed and robbery, and life has become boring. Besides, monotony isn’t the only challenge posed by life in the streets. The longer he haunts the alleyways, the less the shadows hide. Even a man of his talents can’t kill all his foes. And so, he has begun to wonder if all the stories he’s heard from the lips of tomb raiders are true. After all, the dead tell no tales, and they surely don’t spend coins. Perhaps among the dust and decay of forgotten crypts, Hanzi might find his fortune.



CONAN

THE HYBORIAN AGE
CHARACTER SHEET

XP

NAME Aengus

ORIGIN From the Hills

FLEX DIE	STAMINA POINTS
D10	5

MIGHT	
Value	Die
5	D6

EDGE	
Value	Die
4	D6

GRIT	
Value	Die
5	D6

WITS	
Value	Die
2	D6

DEFENSE	
Physical	Sorcery
6	4

LIFE POINTS	
Actual	Max.
	40

WEAPONS

WEAPON	TYPE
Great Sword	Melee
RANGE	DAMAGE
Touch	1D12
RULES:	

WEAPON	TYPE
Dagger	Melee
RANGE	DAMAGE
Touch	1D4
RULES:	

WEAPON	TYPE
RANGE	DAMAGE
RULES:	

ARMOR

TYPE	AR
STIPULATIONS:	

TYPE	AR
STIPULATIONS:	

EQUIPMENT

Two-Handed Great Sword, Knife, a day's worth of trail rations.

skills

skill	EFFECT
Charge	Spend 1 Stamina Point: Make two Move Actions, followed by a Melee Attack Action. This only counts as 1 Action.
Brawler	Increase the Damage of all Melee Attacks by +1.

ORIGIN BONUSES

At the start of each Tale, choose Might, Edge, or Grit. For the duration of that Tale, apply +1 to all Checks and Attacks related to the chosen Stat.



BACKGROUND

Like all boys raised in the hills, Aengus became a hard man. So close to the realm of the gods, beneath the clouds where winds howl and hiss, he seized the strength of a storm. While his every muscle and sinew have been honed to deadly purpose, a man can only suffer the melancholy of mist and stone for so long.

He's had enough of tradition and the drudgery it brings. Tales of the southlands, of great cities rich with exotic food and women, have tempted him long enough. He shall find new faces not glimpsed a thousand times, shall caress soft flesh, seize coins, and sip the wine of kings. No more of milking goats or feuding with old men over hunting grounds and game trails. He will at last heed the call of the great expanse, descend from his perch, and take whatever riches he desires from the weaklings of the south.

CONAN

THE HYBORIAN AGE
CHARACTER SHEET

XP

--

NAME **Mhambi**

ORIGIN **From the Wilds**

FLEX
DIE

D10

STAMINA
POINTS

4

MIGHT

Value	Die
4	D6

EDGE

Value	Die
4	D6

GRIT

Value	Die
4	D6

WITS

Value	Die
4	D6

DEFENSE

Physical	Sorcery
6	6

LIFE POINTS

Actual	Max.
	38

WEAPONS

WEAPON	TYPE
Hunting Spear	Melee
RANGE	DAMAGE
Touch	1D8
RULES:	

WEAPON	TYPE
Hunting Spear	Thrown
RANGE	DAMAGE
Medium	1D6
RULES:	

WEAPON	TYPE
Short Bow	Ranged
RANGE	DAMAGE
Long	1D6+1
RULES:	

ARMOR

TYPE	AR
STIPULATIONS:	

TYPE	AR
STIPULATIONS:	

EQUIPMENT

Hunting Spear, Short Bow, a day's worth of trail rations, various trinkets and trapper's tools.

SKILLS

SKILL	EFFECT
Pantherish	Spend 1 Stamina Point: Reroll a failed Check or Attack roll.
Of the Shadows	+1 to all Edge Checks involving stealth (hiding, moving quietly, passing by unseen) or to detect others.

ORIGIN BONUSES

+1 to all Grit Checks. Spend 1 Stamina Point: Regain 2 Life Points.

BACKGROUND

Mhambi is a wanderer. Her quest is simple: find the next river, the next forest, or some new horizon—and never linger behind walls. The gleaming cities are not to be trusted. She has seen chains and oars and the wretches bent beneath them. She'll never again stand close enough for a second glimpse.

It has been a decade since she lived among people, having traded her tribe for the never-ending trail. Beasts are her kin now. Some she hunts with, others she just hunts, all by the light and grace of the giving earth. But most bounties of the wild are paid for in blood, a fact to which Mhambi's scarred flesh bears testimony. So, too, do the bones and pelts hanging from her frame: each of them is a token of violence and victory, prowess and pride.

Mhambi knows not where her trail ends; she knows only that she'll never go back.



CONAN

THE HYBORIAN AGE
CHARACTER SHEET

XP

NAME **Davor**

ORIGIN **From the Blood of Jhebbal Sag**

FLEX
DIE

D10

STAMINA
POINTS

5

MIGHT	
Value	Die
2	D6

EDGE	
Value	Die
3	D6

GRIT	
Value	Die
5	D6

WITS	
Value	Die
6	D6

DEFENSE	
Physical	Sorcery
4	8

LIFE POINTS	
Actual	Max.
	38

WEAPONS

WEAPON	TYPE
Staff	Melee
RANGE	DAMAGE
Touch	1D4
RULES:	

WEAPON	TYPE
Primitive Bow	Ranged
RANGE	DAMAGE
Long	1D4+1
RULES:	

WEAPON	TYPE
RANGE	DAMAGE
RULES:	

ARMOR

TYPE	AR
STIPULATIONS:	

TYPE	AR
STIPULATIONS:	

EQUIPMENT

Staff, Primitive Bow, various herbs and balms.

SORCERY SKILLS

SKILL	EFFECT
Healing	Spend 1 Stamina Point: Use 2 Actions to heal. The sorcerer or another target within Touch Range regains Life Points equal to the sorcerer's Wits die. A sorcerer must be able to lay their hand on the target's bare skin to use this spell on another Character.
Call Wolf	Spend 5 Life Points: Use 2 Actions to call a Wolf to within Medium Range, which acts as a Friendly Character until it is defeated or the current combat ends, at which point it will flee. The Wolf shares the same Initiative as the sorcerer. The Wolf may take a Turn immediately after the Sorcerer on the Turn it is summoned.

skills

SKILL	EFFECT

ORIGIN BONUSES

Whenever you regain Life Points, regain 2 additional Life Points.



BACKGROUND

When did Davor become an old man? Who is this graybeard peering back at him from the still water? Not Davor, surely. It couldn't be! How many years has it been since he's seen himself, since he's spoken his old tongue and not the language of beasts?

It is said that all Jhebbal Sag's children share a common energy. All living things are connected, and their chain is frequently rattled by storms. And for Davor, the wind's been howling and the rain pounding for years. Perhaps, then, the beasts around Davor take more than their share of his energies. Perhaps to speak the tongue of wild creatures, to control and command them, requires certain sacrifices of a man. Is this craggy visage proof of the payment?

In any case, Davor's fire has revealed troubling visions of late. A great storm is coming, thickening in the seas and the mountains, pulling its power from the iron guts of the earth. For Davor, it is time to leave the forest, time to invoke beasts from other horizons. Maybe they know the nature of the encroaching storm. Maybe Davor can seize some of its strength for himself.

WOLF

Beast - Minion

MIGHT		EDGE		GRIT		WITS		
3	D8	4	D8	3	D6	2	D4	
PHYSICAL DEFENSE		6-8	SORCERY DEFENSE		4-6	THRESHOLD		6
MELEE DAMAGE		Bite (Range: Touch)				1D6+3		

A Wolf may take **2 Actions** per Turn.

Pack Tactics: When there are at least three Wolves involved in a combat, each Wolf gains one additional Move Action.

Fire Aversion: A Wolf applies a -1 Modifier to Attacks against targets within Close Range of fire.



BACKGROUND

Gudrun, with her blood-red mane and blade-sharp cunning, has earned the nickname “Fox.” But she knows, and her enemies learn (often too late), that she’s more of a wolverine. If her axes aren’t already dripping in her hands, then they’re likely lodged in the guts of a foe, or sailing through the air toward an unsuspecting face. She’s fast, vengeful, and happy to demonstrate that what is small can also be mighty.

Like any true spawn of Ymir, she was born in the north with a storm in her blood. Ice and snow might slow the weak, but it forces the strong to make fire. Like an ember in a sheep’s horn, Gudrun’s a flame not easily snuffed—and woe to the man who tries.



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KICKSTARTER

We hope that this Quick Start whets your appetite for great adventures into the Hyborian Age. In addition to the content found in this booklet, the core book for *Conan: The Hyborian Age* also contains:

- ▲ Character creation covering ten different Origins.
- ▲ Rules for Surprise Attacks, Mounted Characters, Encumbrance, and Poison.
- ▲ Special “Area” rules, for use with the Conan Boardgame battle map tiles.
- ▲ A large range of Weapon and Armor options.
- ▲ Rules for the various Disciplines of Magic (Black, Demonic, Necromantic, etc.).
- ▲ An extensive bestiary of NPCs, from human threats to demons, undead, and monstrous foes.
- ▲ A chapter of guidance for GMs, explaining how to run and create their own games, how to handle wealth and possessions, and how to approach the various languages of the Thurian Continent.
- ▲ Character progression rules.
- ▲ A detailed history of Conan’s exploits and the Hyborian Age as a whole.
- ▲ An in-depth look at the geography of the Thurian Continent and those who inhabit it.
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THE HYBORIAN AGE

WHEN CONAN WALKED THE EARTH

NORDHEIM
ASGARD
HYPERBORN

CIMMERIA
BORDER KINGDOM
BRYTHUNIA
NEMEDIA
CORINTHIA
ZAMORA

PICTISH WILDERNESS
BOSSONIAN MARCHES
AQUILLONIA
OPHIR
ZINGARA
ARGOS
KOTHORAJA
RHOURAN
SHEM
STYGLIA

KUSH
DARFAR
BLACK KINGDOMS
KESHAN
ZEMBABWEI
PUNT

ISLE OF THE BLACK ONES

FIRES OF THE ULTIMATE SOUTH





URAN
SHANPUR
ILFARS R.
SULTANPUR
AGHRAPUR
VILAYET
XAPUR
FT. GHORI
KHANDARICA
KHORUSUN
SECUNDERAM
GHULISTAN
KOSALA
TOTA PONG
PAIKANG
SUMMER OF THE DEAD
EASTERN SEA
N
W
E
S
MILES
0 50 100 200 300 400 500 1000

KNOW, OH PRINCE,
THAT BETWEEN THE
YEARS WHEN THE
OCEANS DRANK
ATLANTIS AND THE
GLEAMING CITIES,
AND THE YEARS OF
THE RISE OF THE
SONS OF ARYAS,
THERE WAS AN AGE
UNDREAMED OF
WHEN SHINING
KINGDOMS LED
SPREAD ACROSS THE
WORLD LIKE BLUE
MANTLES BENEATH
THE STARS.

Conan: The Hyborian Age is a tabletop roleplaying game of swords and sorcery, set against a backdrop of Robert E. Howard's Conan stories. With King Conan perched upon the throne of Aquilonia, it is time for other brave warriors to take up the mantle of adventurer, to craft their own stories, and to face unknown horrors in the darkest corners of the world.

In temple and tomb, through desert and forest, threats lurk unseen, ready to slay and devour. Will you be steady of sword and steadfast of mind? Will you survive an age undreamed of? It is time to carve your own legend.

This Quick Start booklet contains everything a Game Master and up to five players need to explore adventures in Conan's world, providing a "lite" overview to the setting, all the required core rules, five pregenerated characters, and a ready-to-play Tale: "The Seal of Acheron."

- ▲ A Game Master-friendly approach, requiring minimal preparation for each adventure.
- ▲ Accessible and streamlined rules, with an intuitive dice system.
- ▲ Visceral, fast, and empowering combat mechanics that promote a feeling of forward momentum.
- ▲ A gritty, brutal setting, where only the mighty can thrive.