TALISMAN
ADVENTURES

QUICK START GUIDE

Tales of the Realm:
Curse of the Rat Queen

Pegasus Spiele

WELCOME TO THE REALM!

What You'll Find Inside

- An abbreviated rules set for the game to get you going. We'll introduce other rules when they are needed as you play.
- 4 player characters, all ready to use.
- The adventure *Curse of the Rat Queen*.

What is *Talisman Adventures*?

The *Talisman Adventures Fantasy Roleplaying Game* is set in the world of *Talisman: The Magical Quest Game*. With this roleplaying game you can explore the world of *Talisman* in new ways, creating your own characters and telling your own stories. The game board has been set aside and replaced by your imagination. You and your friends can now forge your destiny and discover the world on your terms. There is no longer one set goal; instead, there's an entire realm to travel and explore, strange monsters to battle, precious treasure to find, and ancient secrets to uncover.

What You'll Need to Play

First off, have some six-sided dice in two different colours or styles. Four dice per person, with one of them a different colour from the rest, is ideal (or you can share). You'll also need a pool of tokens for everyone to use. These represent Fate: Light Fate for players, Dark Fate for the Game Master (or GM, the person who will be running the game). Five or Six tokens per player and GM should be fine.

The Realm

Talisman Adventures takes place in the Realm, a setting of dark faery tales where wondrous magic and fell curses exist alongside deadly creatures and ancient dragons. Players are the heroes of these tales, doing battle with dangerous foes and aiding the imperiled for the betterment of the Realm… and perhaps for gold, or just for their own glory and benefit.

Ages ago, the Great Wizard cleaned the land of its many threats, and thus the Realm was born. His abrupt and mysterious departure, leaving behind the Crown of Command and talismans of great power, left its denizens distraught. Without his protection, vile monsters and other evil servants of Oblivion have risen in power across the Realm. It's a time for heroes like the ones in this adventure to carve out their own legends and make their own fate.

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The Basics of the game

Talisman Adventures uses dice rolls to determine the outcome of actions. We call these rolls a **test**. A test can represent anything from tracking a goblin through the forest, to picking a lock, to fighting a dragon. Not everything requires a test, and many actions are (or can be) accomplished simply by describing what your character is doing. However, any situation that depends on a degree of skill or chance—and more importantly, where failure has an impact on the story—requires a test to determine the outcome of the action.

Taking Action

In *Talisman Adventures,* the player characters (or PCs; we will also refer to them as heroes) are in charge of the action. As a group, in each round of play you get to act in whatever order you desire (as long as it makes sense). Some actions have reactions, as you'll see when we cover combat in a few pages.

The action proceeds hero to hero until everyone has taken an action. During a round, after each player character has taken a turn, any Enemies that were not involved in the fight (or that have remaining actions) can act. Then another round can begin.

Actions are described in two different ways: **full actions** and **free actions**. A character can take these actions in any order they wish during their turn, even if they want to take a free action, a full action, and another free action. The GM limit the number of free actions if they feel that it's more than a character could reasonably accomplish in a single combat round.

Full Actions

A full action is anything that requires a character's full attention, and you generally only get one full action per turn. This might be attacking an Enemy, casting a spell, disarming a trap, leaping across a gorge, or anything else requiring significant effort and focus.

Free Actions

A PC can quickly and easily accomplish a free action, usually without thinking. Examples of free actions include drinking an elixir or potion, drawing a sword, nocking an arrow, saying a quick phrase, or anything else that can be done quickly or with little effort. A hero can also move up to their Speed as a free action; running farther than that requires a full action instead.

Reaction Actions

A reaction is a type of action taken in response to another character's action. The most common ones are spells although some Special Abilities or other actions might be listed as reactions. Most reactions are also free actions.

Rolling Dice

Many actions your character takes in *Talisman Adventures* require you to roll six-sided dice, also known as a "d6." When you use multiple dice, the number of dice you roll is listed before the d6: one six-sided die is 1d6, two are 2d6, three are 3d6, and so on. When you see a listing for 1d3, that indicates that you roll 1d6, divide by 2, and round up, giving you a range of 1 to 3.

Tests

Talisman Adventures uses the 3D6 Adventures System to resolve tests. This means that when you attempt a test—whether you're attacking a monster, casting a spell, attempting to disarm a trap, identifying a strange potion, or leaping across a pit filled with spikes—you roll 3d6. The numbers on all the dice you roll are added together and compared against a number set by the Game Master. That number is the **Difficulty** of the test.

Tests are shown as **Skill (Aspect)** in the text (or when the GM asks for one). A test calling for the Melee skill and the associated Agility aspect would be worded as **Melee (Agility)**, for example.

If you have an appropriate skill for the action you're taking, you can add the related aspect to the total. In the example above, if in that test the character has the Melee skill, then they can add their Agility aspect value to their dice roll. Note in some cases a Strength or Craft test is called for. In these cases you use the listed attribute, Strength or Craft, instead of an aspect.

If the number equals or exceeds the Difficulty, the test is a success.

One of the three dice must be a different from the other two, such as a different colour or size. The different coloured die is called a **Kismet Die**. The number on the Kismet Die is added to the other dice, but if a 1 or 6 is rolled on this die, it may have an additional impact on the result.

Focus

A **focus** represents an area of a skill where a character has put extra effort into mastering a topic, such as with a particular weapon type or area of study. A character who has the relevant focus for a skill gets a +2 bonus to their die roll when attempting a task where that focus applies. **This is in addition to the bonus added from the character's aspect value relating to that skill.**

For example, if you're making a melee attack with an axe and you have the Melee skill with Axe as a focus, you would add +2 to your roll. As you have the Melee skill, you can also add the aspect value for your Brawn.

Bonuses and Penalties

Special or magical weapons can give a bonus to your roll in combat, and situations or environmental factors might impose a penalty. For example, shooting a bow in complete darkness or while wounded might cause you to have a penalty.

Bonus Die

A die roll can also be modified by adding a bonus die. If a Special Ability or equipment indicates that you get to add a bonus die, that means you can add another (non-Kismet) d6 to your roll. After you roll, you then take away one (non-Kismet) die of your choice. A bonus die not only gives you a better chance of rolling high but also increases your chance of rolling doubles… or even triples!

Degrees of Success

When your die roll for a test equals or exceeds the Difficulty, that test is at least a **Standard Success**. If doubles are rolled (two of the dice are the same number) on any of the three dice and the result equals or exceeds the Difficulty, the test is a **Great Success**. If triples are rolled (all three of the dice are the same number) and the result equals or exceeds the Difficulty, the test is an **Extraordinary Success**.

The degree of success is important as it determines how well a hero succeeds in their action and whether their Enemy gets to take an action.

Failure means exactly that: your action fails. In combat, this means your opponent inflicts full damage against you. It might also mean that you fail to climb the wall you were scaling or that your spell fails to take effect. The exact nature of the failure is up to the Game Master. If you were scaling a wall, a failure might mean that you fall, or you might drop a vital piece of gear, or you might otherwise be placed in peril.

A **Standard Success** (often just called "a success") means that you succeeded, but there's usually a complication. For example, when your character is attacking an Enemy, a Standard Success means you strike your Enemy, but they harm you as well (usually by inflicting half damage). If you're scaling a wall, maybe you make progress, but you slip and find yourself hanging by one hand.

A **Great Success** means that you are completely successful in your action with no side effects or repercussions. Huzzah!

An **Extraordinary Success** means that you don't just succeed: you succeed beyond expectations. The rules sometimes suggest possible results for an Extraordinary Success, but in other cases, the Game Master invents the resulting event. Perhaps you inflict additional damage, or maybe you climb faster than expected.

The Kismet Die

The Kismet Die can have a radical effect on any task you attempt. As mentioned earlier, the Kismet Die is a d6 that is different in colour or size from the other dice you use when you make a test. The Kismet Die is added to the other dice as normal, but if a 6 or 1 rolled, Light Fate or Dark Fate is generated.

Rolling a 6 on the Kismet Die (shown as 🟢) often can activate a PC's Special Ability; rolling a 1 on the Kismet Die (shown as 🔴) often activates Special Abilities for an Enemy in the same fashion.

FATE

Fate can change the turn of events in any encounter. You can use Light Fate to improve a die roll or to activate a Special Ability. The GM uses Dark Fate to make it harder to attack an Enemy, to activate Enemy Special Abilities, or to activate a special effect in an area. In the game, you can use coins, poker chips, or other objects (especially the tokens included with the *Talisman Adventures* core rulebook) to represent Fate points.

Both Light and Dark Fate are generated by the Kismet Die. **Any time the Kismet Die comes up a 6 (🟢), the player who rolled the die gains a point of Light Fate**, which they can spend immediately or save for later. **Any time a player rolls a 1 on the Kismet Die (🔴), the Game Master gains a point of Dark Fate** to use immediately or save for later.

The maximum amount of Light Fate you can have is equal to your character's level + 2 (meaning 3 for the pre-generated characters in this game); the GM can never have more Dark Fate than twice the number of player characters plus 1.

If you roll a 6 on the Kismet Die while you are at your maximum Light Fate, you can spend that earned Fate immediately, leaving your Light Fate at its maximum. The same holds true for the GM should you roll a 1 on the Kismet Die.

The **Can I Spend Fate on Special Abilities?** table below offers guidelines for when a player or the Game Master is permitted to spend Fate on Special Abilities.

Can I Spend Fate on Special Abilities?		
Test Result	PC Spend Allowed	GM Spend Allowed
Failure	No	Yes
Standard Success	Yes	Yes
Great Success	Yes	No
Extraordinary Success	Yes	No

Light Fate

If desired, a player can spend 1 Light Fate 🪙 to:

• Add a bonus die before rolling a test (for a total of 4d6). After the roll, they then choose which three dice to keep, though the Kismet Die must be one of them.

• Reroll one of the dice after rolling. (The player must keep the new result, and cannot choose this effect if they already spent Fate to add a bonus die to the roll.)

• Increase a Standard Success to a Great Success if the test was successful. (Cannot be chosen if the player already spent Fate to modify the die roll, and a Great Success can't be changed to an Extraordinary Success.)

• Activate a Special Ability or an item's Special Quality, if their character has one that is applicable.

• Cast a spell, should the spell require the user to spend Light Fate to use it.

• When you fail a death test (a test to avoid dying), you can spend to cheat death. Spending Fate in this way means that you pass the test for that round, but you must still make another test on the following round.
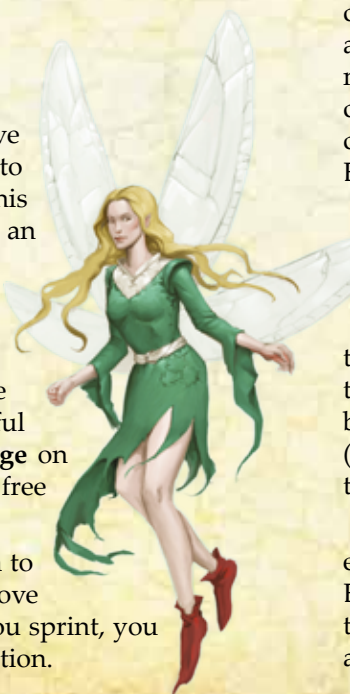
Dark Fate

The GM can spend 1 Dark Fate ⚫ to:

• Increase an Enemy's Threat rating by 1d6 for one round. This must be done at the beginning of the round and can't be done as a reaction to a character attacking that Enemy.

• Activate an Enemy's Special Ability. Unless a Special Ability specifically states otherwise, the use of a Special Ability replaces an Enemy's normal attack.

• Activate effects in special areas.

• Activate an item's curse effects (listed under Special Qualities).

MOVEMENT

Each round, you can move a number of metres equal to your Speed. You can use this movement before you take an action, after you take an action, or both. This is a free action; however, if you're engaged in combat, the Game Master may require you to make a successful disengage test (see **Disengage** on page 7) to safely break free from your opponent.

You can spend a full action to **sprint**; this allows you to move three times your Speed. If you sprint, you cannot also move as a free action.

COMBAT

When combat is about to begin, the Game Master works with the players to define its circumstances. Generally, the Game Master sets the scene by describing what the heroes see. The players then decide exactly what their characters are going to do. In some cases, such as if the PCs are surprised, the Game Master may have more say in exactly how the combat begins!

ORDER OF COMBAT

Step One	Engagement. Determine the circumstances of the combat. See if anyone is caught unawares.
Step Two	PC Action Phase. Determine the target and what the PC is attempting, along with what skill is being used. Decide if the attacking PC wants to spend Light Fate; ditto the GM for Dark Fate.
Step Three	Player rolls the test dice.
Step Four	Total all three dice. If the attacker has an appropriate skill, add the appropriate aspect and/or focus. Apply any other modifiers.
Step Five	Compare the result to the Difficulty (usually the target's Threat) to determine degree of success. Determine if there are any Kismet Die effects.
Step Six	The GM works with the players to describe the outcome.

POSITION

The next step is to determine the position of player characters relative to their Enemies. The GM works with the players to determine the initial positioning of the characters and their Enemies based on circumstances and terrain. Some groups like to use maps and miniatures or tokens to show locations as well. Player characters and allies who aren't currently engaged in combat can move freely up to their Speed to engage an Enemy or to move to another location.

DETERMINE ORDER OF ACTIONS

Since the players set the pace in *Talisman Adventures*, the players get to decide who acts and in what order. At the beginning of combat, one character (as determined by the group) takes an action followed by the next (again, determined by the group) until everyone has taken an action.

At that point, any Enemies the characters haven't engaged can make an attack or take an action; that Enemy can also choose to move. If an Enemy chooses to move when they're engaged, that opens them up to an additional attack from the character engaging them.

Character Actions

When it's your turn to act, you must decide what kind of action (or actions) your character takes. The actions described here are typically full actions. Each combat round is about 5 seconds long, so any action must fit within that time span. You usually only get to take one full action each round, although you can take multiple free actions (see **Free Actions** earlier on page 3).

The following is a list of the most common actions a character is likely to take during a combat round, although this list is far from exhaustive. We'll introduce others during the adventure when they become useful for characters. If a player wants their hero to attempt something that isn't included on this list, it's up to the Game Master to decide if it's a full action or a free action and whether a skill test is required.

Attack, Melee

This is used in face-to-face combat. Your roll during a melee attack not only determines if you damage your opponent but also whether they injure you.

Failure: You inflict no damage to your target, but your opponent hits you for full damage.

Standard Success: You hit your target for full damage, but your opponent hits you for half damage. Roll the damage and add the damage modifier, then halve the damage (rounding up).

Great Success: Your attack is a complete success. You inflict full damage on your target, and your opponent does not get an action.

Extraordinary Success: Your attack is a complete success. In addition to inflicting full damage and emerging unscathed, you cause your opponent additional harm. The exact nature of this additional injury is up to the Game Master, although the player can make suggestions. Additional injury may include (but is not limited to) the following effects:

- add 1d6 damage,
- stun your opponent (suffer –4 penalty on all tests next round; for Enemies add +4 bonus on tests against them),
- knock down your opponent, or
- inflict 1 Wound.

Attack, Psychic

Certain Enemies are only affected by psychic attacks. Usually a character must have the Psychic Assault Special Ability to make a psychic attack, but any character can always initiate a psychic attack against an Enemy with the Incorporeal benefit. Psychic attacks always ignore armour, and unless stated otherwise have a range of 10 metres.

Failure: You do not harm your target, and the Game Master can choose one of the following:

- an opponent inflicts psychic damage on you,
- an opponent with a ranged or melee attack strikes you for full damage, or
- an opponent with a ranged attack fires at one of your allies (and that character or GM-controlled character must make a defence test).

Either way, you suffer disorientation from the psychic effort, and all your psychic attacks have a −2 penalty until you take a short rest; disorientation penalties are cumulative.

Standard Success: You strike your target for full damage, but the Game Master can choose one of the following:

- an opponent inflicts psychic damage on you, but the damage is halved, or
- an opponent with a ranged or melee attack strikes you for half damage, or
- an opponent with a ranged attack fires at one of your allies (and that character or NPC must make a defence test).

Either way, you suffer disorientation from the psychic effort, and all your psychic attacks have a −1 penalty until you take a short rest; these penalties are cumulative.

Great Success: Your attack is a complete success. You inflict full damage on your target, and your opponent does not get an action.

Extraordinary Success: Your attack is a complete success. In addition to inflicting full damage and emerging unscathed, you cause your opponent additional harm. The exact nature of this additional harm is up to the Game Master and may include (but is not limited to) the following:

- add 1d6 damage,
- stun your opponent (suffer –4 penalty on all tests next round; for Enemies add +4 bonus on tests against them),
- prevent your opponent from using psychic attacks for 1d6 rounds, or
- inflict 1 Wound.

Attack, Ranged

Ranged attacks can include anything from shooting a missile weapon (such as a bow or crossbow) to throwing a weapon (such as a rock or knife).

Failure: You do not harm your target, and the Game Master can choose one of the following:

- an opponent with a ranged attack strikes you for full damage,
- an opponent with a ranged attack fires at one of your allies (and that character or NPC must make a defence test; see page 9),
- an opponent within melee range strikes you for maximum damage, or
- you lose 1d3 additional ammo.

Standard Success: You strike your target for full damage, but the Game Master can choose one of the following:

- an opponent with a ranged attack strikes you for half damage,
- an opponent with a ranged attack fires at one of your allies (and that character or NPC must make a defence test), or
- an opponent within melee range strikes you for full damage.

Great Success: Your attack is a complete success. You inflict full damage on your target, and your opponent does not get an action.

Extraordinary Success: Your attack is a complete success. In addition to inflicting full damage and emerging unscathed, you cause your opponent additional harm. The exact nature of this additional damage is up to the Game Master and may include (but is not limited to) the following:

- add 1d6 damage,
- knock down your opponent,
- stun your opponent (suffer –4 penalty on all tests next round; for Enemies add +4 bonus on tests against them),
- inflict 1 Wound, or
- you have an opportunity for a special effect, such as pinning your opponent.

Cast Spell

Casting a spell requires a Spellcasting test.

Failure: The spell does not take effect, but the caster must spend spell points(s) or lose memory of the spell (and cannot cast it again during the adventure).

Standard Success: The spell takes effect, but there's a complication determined by the Game Master. Possibilities include the following:

- You must spend one extra spell point; otherwise, you're "strained" by spellcasting, suffering a −2 penalty to all Spellcasting tests until you have a short rest. Penalties from strain effects are cumulative.
- You're placed in danger and suffer the full effects of an attack from an Enemy (either an Enemy with a missile weapon or a spellcaster).
- Your spell is only partially successful (e.g., target takes half damage, or the spell has half duration).

Great Success: Your spell takes full effect with no side effects.

Extraordinary Success: The spell takes full effect with no side effects. You also gain one of the following benefits (or another of the GM's choice):

- If you have become strained from spellcasting, you can remove the penalty for one strained effect.
- The spell point cost is decreased by 1.
- The spell effect increases in some way as determined by the GM (such as increased damage or effect area).

Defend

You can choose to just defend yourself for a round, attempting to avoid all damage. A character who makes a defend action receives a +4 bonus to all defence tests against melee or missile attacks for the duration of the round. A character using a defend action can do nothing else until their next action.

Disengage

When you're in melee combat with an Enemy, you can disengage from them. There is a risk of them harming you, though, even if that Enemy has already used all their attacks. To successfully disengage, you must make an **Athletics (Agility)** test against a Difficulty equal to the **Enemy's Threat**; this is known as a **disengage test**.

Failure: You do not disengage, and you take full damage from your opponent.

Standard Success: You can disengage and move up to half your Speed, but you cannot take another full action that turn. Your opponent strikes you for half damage.

Great Success or better: You disengage without harm; you can then take an action and/or move.

Protect

You can attempt to protect another character from taking damage from an incoming attack. Protecting another character takes an action and usually requires a **Melee (Agility)** test, although other (creative) alternatives are possible. If you're attempting to protect another character who is involved in melee, you must declare your protect action before that character is attacked. Its effects last until your next action. You can also use a protect action to protect a Follower or other NPC.

Failure: You fail to protect the other character.

Standard Success: You can halve the damage from one attack on the character you are protecting, or you can protect them from all damage and take the full amount of damage yourself.

Great Success: You block all the damage from one incoming attack on the person you are protecting.

Extraordinary Success: You block all damage from one incoming attack on the person you are protecting. The GM may allow an additional effect, such as causing the attacker to suffer half damage.

Enemy Actions

For the most part, you and the other players set the pace during a combat. Each round, each character takes an action in turn until everyone has had a chance to act. After that, any Enemies who have not acted, or who have remaining actions, may take actions.

Enemy Response

During the player character action phase of the round, an Enemy only gets to act or respond when a player character gets a Failure or a Standard Success. In these cases, the Game Master gets to decide how the Enemy reacts. Usually, the Enemy inflicts damage: either its full amount (in the case of a Failure) or half damage (with a Standard Success).

An Enemy can respond to as many attacks as are made against it. For example, if three characters attack a single Enemy, it is possible that the Enemy could harm all three of the characters if they get Failures or Standard Successes.

Some Enemies have multiple actions. If an Enemy with multiple actions is attacked fewer times than its number of actions, it can use any remaining actions during the Enemy action phase (as described in the following section).

Enemy Action Phase

After the PC action phase, if any of the Enemies involved in combat have not taken or used all their actions in that round, the Game Master gets to decide what they do. In most cases, any Enemies directly engaged with the heroes do not get to act at this point, since their action will have been resolved by a PC's action. Each Enemy has a number of actions, and each attack made against an Enemy uses one of its actions. If any Enemies have remaining actions after all the player characters have acted, the GM gets to decide what they do and the order in which they do it.

Possible Enemy actions include, but are not limited to:

• move to engage a player character in melee,
• use an item (magic item, scroll, etc.),
• move to a different position,
• make a missile/ranged attack,
• make a psychic attack, or
• disengage from a player character.

The Game Master does not roll dice for Enemy attacks; instead, when an Enemy chooses to attack a player character, the player gets to make a **defence test**, usually with the Enemy's Threat as the Difficulty.

An Enemy that is currently engaged in combat with a character can break away, but the character gets to inflict one attack of full damage on them (even if the PC has no actions remaining). A single PC can keep two Enemies engaged in combat.

Defence Tests

A defence test is different from a defend action. A PC attacked by an Enemy during this phase (usually) cannot harm an Enemy; instead, they make a defence test against the Enemy's Threat rating. The GM determines what skill is used for a defence test. The following are the skills most commonly used in defence tests.

- **Athletics (Agility):** Defence against missile weapons or "missile-like" spells.
- **Fortitude (Mettle** or **Resolve):** Resists the effects of crushing damage (falling rocks) and some spell effects (such as fire or ice).
- **Melee (Agility** or **Brawn):** Defence against melee attacks.
- **Psychic Combat (Resolve):** Defence against psychic and mind-affecting spells.

Failure: This result means that you do not resist any of the damage or effect. You take full damage.

Standard Success: You only suffer half of the damage or effect.

Great Success: You take no damage, completely resisting the spell or effect.

Extraordinary Success: You take no damage. The GM may allow you to inflict limited damage on the attacker, especially in melee or during psychic combat. You generally cannot use Light Fate to activate a Special Ability, but the GM can allow this in certain circumstances.

INFLICTING DAMAGE

When you make a successful attack, you get to inflict damage on your opponent. The amount of damage is determined by your damage modifier plus a die roll based on the weapon used.

Melee attacks, ranged attacks, and most spell attacks inflict physical damage, which adds your **physical damage modifier**. Base damage for these attacks is determined by your weapon's size and type or your spell's description. Armour almost always reduces the effect of physical damage.

Psychic attacks and some spell attacks inflict psychic damage, which adds your **psychic damage modifier**. Base damage for psychic attacks is 1d6 (unless specified otherwise or listed in a spell description). Psychic attacks ignore armour.

ARMOUR

Each type of armour provides a certain number of armour points, which are reduced as the character suffers damage. The effectiveness of armour in an encounter lessens as the fight continues, so it's possible that it may offer no protection if it has absorbed too many blows!

Whenever a PC takes damage in an encounter, for each point of damage suffered the player marks a slash mark ("/") on their character sheet to negate that damage but also remove an armour point. If this is the first damage suffered in the encounter, mark an "X" instead. When all of the armour point spaces for their armour are filled, they begin losing Life instead as they suffer damage. Sometimes a Special Ability states that the attack ignores armour. In this case, no armour points are lost and the damage reduces Life directly.

Refitting Armour

If your armour is damaged during combat, you can refit it during a short rest. No roll is required, and all armour points except those marked with an X are automatically restored. Removing an X takes proper equipment and much more time to undertake.

DAMAGE

Damage that PCs take after their armour's armour point spaces are filled reduces their Life by that amount. Should they be reduced to 0 Life (their Life cannot go below 0), they mark the Wounded box and now suffer the indicated penalty to all tests. These penalties are cumulative as more Wounds are taken.

When damage is applied to an Enemy, it is reduced by their Armour rating before applied to their Life. In general, when an Enemy is reduced to 0 Life it is considered dead or so badly injured it no longer participates in the encounter.

DEATH AND DYING

Even heroes die. Should a character suffer a number of Wounds equal to either their Mettle or Resolve (whichever is higher), they fall unconscious and on the verge of death until at least 1 Wound is healed.

Each round after this happens, you must make a **death test** to see if your character is still alive. This is a **Difficulty 8** test using **Mettle** or **Resolve** (whichever is higher); each additional round after the first, the Difficulty increases by 1. This test is unusual in that there is no skill attached; you simply roll and add whichever aspect is highest. If you roll a 6 on the Kismet Die on a successful death test, you stabilize and awaken on your own after 1 minute with 1 Life. If you fail this test, your character is dead. If neither condition is met, you're still dying.

Any kind of healing spell or magical effect immediately stabilises a dying character. You can instead stabilise a character with a successful **Heal (Insight)** test against **Difficulty 14**. A stable character regains consciousness with 1 Life; they're no longer dying, they no longer need to make death tests, and they can act the following round.

Characteristics and Skills

Characteristics and skills are, in many ways, the core features that define your character. Attributes and their aspects describe your character's mental and physical capabilities. Skills define what your character can do: can they pick a lock, craft armour, or read an ancient glyph? Together, attributes, aspects, and skills paint a picture of your character's overall abilities.

Attributes and Aspects

Your two main attributes are **Strength** and **Craft**. Strength is an overall representation of your physical capabilities, further defined by three aspects: **Brawn**, **Agility**, and **Mettle**. Craft is a measure of your mental capabilities, as defined by three aspects: **Insight**, **Wits**, and **Resolve**.

Aspects are used in conjunction with skills to increase your chance of accomplishing a particular task. If you have an appropriate skill for the task you're attempting (for example, Stealth is appropriate when you're attempting to sneak past a monster), you get to add an appropriate aspect's value to your test. For example, the appropriate aspect for sneaking past a monster would be Agility; if you have 5 in Agility, you can add +5 to this Stealth test.

Strength

Your Strength is an indication of your character's overall physical prowess. It's used (along with your weapon type) to determine how much damage you inflict in melee and ranged combat.

Brawn

Brawn represents your physical might and vigour. It defines your ability to lift things, break things, and inflict damage.

Agility

Your Agility rating indicates your nimbleness and dexterity. It's a measure of your ability to land on your feet, your proficiency at dodging, and your accuracy.

Mettle

Mettle is a measure of your overall health, endurance, and toughness. It's your ability to resist harm and disease, to keep moving when exhausted, and to cling to life.

Craft

Craft is an indication of your character's overall mental acuity. Characters who engage in a lot of social interaction, complex creative tasks, or intellectual activities often have a high Craft. It's also used for determining psychic damage inflicted.

Insight

Insight is an indication of your intuition. It reflects your ability to detect lies, your empathy, and your ability to understand others.

Wits

Wits is a sign of your mental agility, raw intelligence, and perception. It affects your ability to decipher ancient languages, notice hidden things, and react quickly.

Resolve

Resolve is your strength of will and mental fortitude. It represents your ability to resist persuasion, stand firm, and cling to life.

Skills

Skills describe a character's knowledge of "how to do things." In most cases, a character who does not have a skill is still able to attempt a task, but the test is significantly more difficult.

Skills don't have a value. **Having a skill allows you to add a number equal to your aspect when attempting a test.** Examples of which aspects are appropriate to use in different circumstances are listed in *italics*. The aspect you end up using can vary depending upon the nature of the test. For example, a character using Athletics to climb might use Brawn, but a character using Athletics to avoid being struck by a falling rock might use Agility.

Note: As mentioned on page 3, each skill allows for a wide range of possible focuses. Having an applicable focus when using a skill lets you add +2 to your roll as well as the value of the aspect being used with the skill.

Unskilled Tests

When you're attempting a task and don't have the proper skill, you do not get to add an aspect to the roll; you simply roll 3d6, and the total is your test result. Tasks using skills listed in italics (Artisan, Heal, Lore, Sleight of Hand, Spellcasting, and Tinker) simply cannot be attempted if you don't possess that skill.

Animal Handling (Insight, Wits)

Animal Handling represents your knowledge of beasts, as well as your ability to control and tame them. You can attempt anything from guiding a well-trained pack mule through a lightning storm to training a wild beast as a guardian or pet. Over time, a wild beast might even become a Follower.

Insight is used when attempting to calm or train an animal.

Wits is appropriate when determining your knowledge of a specific animal type or species.

Artisan (Brawn, Agility, Insight)

Artisan represents your training with a wide range of crafting techniques, allowing you to create an array of utilitarian and ornamental items. This skill allows you to craft ornate jewellery, build a house, or forge a sword.

To attempt any artistic endeavour, you must have the relevant focus.

Brawn might be used for blacksmithing or large woodworking projects.

Agility is appropriate for making delicate works, such as glassblowing, sewing, or gemcutting.

Insight might be used when attempting to understand the underlying meaning behind a work of art or to create something truly inspiring.

Athletics (Brawn, Agility, Mettle)

Athletics describes your overall athletic prowess and ability. It's used to determine how far you can leap or how fast you swim. Your Athletics skill also helps you avoid getting hit in combat.

Brawn might be used when you're making a climb that requires you to pull yourself over a ledge or when making a long jump.

Agility is appropriate when walking along a narrow ledge or dodging a missile attack.

Mettle makes sense if a character is swimming or running for a long distance.

Bargain (Wits, Resolve)

Bargain is your ability to negotiate for a better price or a better deal. You can sway others and convince them that something is worth more or less than its actual value.

Wits might make sense when you're trying to trick someone into making a trade.

Resolve is the most commonly used aspect when you're negotiating a price.

Deception (Wits, Insight)

Deception is your ability to lie and convince others that you are telling the truth, even when you aren't. You can use it to tell outright lies or to mislead or confuse.

Wits is appropriate when trying to fast-talk or confuse someone.

Insight is useful when you're telling complex lies or attempting to play on someone's emotions.

Decipher (Wits, Insight)

Decipher allows you to read ancient languages, unravel cyphers, and figure out a code. It can also be used to answer riddles.

Wits is the most common aspect used when attempting to resolve an encryption or solve a riddle.

Insight might be appropriate for more complex languages or esoteric riddles.

Entertain (Wits, Insight, Agility)

Entertain is your ability to captivate or enthral an audience. This might be playing a musical instrument, singing, reciting poetry, dancing, telling stories, acting in a play, or any other form of entertainment.

Wits can be used for performances like reciting an ancient poem from memory.

Insight makes sense for singing and musical performances.

Agility is useful when you're performing a dance or juggling balls.

Empathy (Insight)

Empathy grants you insight into the goals, emotional states, and motivations of other people. It allows you to pick up on body language and vocal cues to separate truth from lies.

Insight is almost always used in Empathy tests, although Wits may be appropriate for discerning and unravelling complex deceptions.

Evaluate (Wits)

Evaluate allows you to identify items of value. When searching through goods and valuables, you can separate items of monetary worth from dross. You can generally appraise the value of art, antiquities, gemstones, or any mercantile good or item of worth.

Wits is almost always used when evaluating goods.

FORTITUDE (Mettle, Resolve)

Fortitude describes your strength of body and mind, as well as your resistance to illness, poison, and harm from the elements.

Mettle is used when resisting physical ailments.

Resolve might be appropriate for when you're enduring long-term suffering.

HEAL (Insight)

Heal is your knowledge of tending to wounds, curing disease, treating poisons, and any other bodily ailments. It can also be used to determine the source of damage inflicted upon a character.

Insight is most commonly used for making a diagnosis and tending to injuries.

INTIMIDATE (Brawn, Resolve)

Intimidate is your ability to coerce or browbeat someone into doing your bidding. This might involve a threat of physical harm or some form of mental anguish, but ultimately, you are using fear to get what you want.

Brawn is used for physical intimidation. Resolve is used for psychological intimidation.

INVESTIGATION (Wits, Insight)

Investigation is used when investigating an area for clues, questioning someone, or even tailing a suspect. Other skills can sometimes overlap with Investigation, and in such cases, the GM should allow the player to use whichever skill makes the most sense; the GM might even require two tests. For example, when a character is tailing someone, Stealth might seem to make sense, but **Investigation (Insight)** can allow a character to predict where their target is going rather than defining how well they remain hidden. An additional **Stealth (Agility)** test might be required to follow a target undetected.

Wits is appropriate for searching an area.

Insight can be used when questioning someone and trying to learn the truth.

LORE (Wits)

Lore is your knowledge of the ancient people, places, and creatures of the Realm. Using the Lore skill might allow you to learn something about the ruins you're exploring, the history of your current location, or clues leading to an ancient weapon.

Wits the most commonly used aspect for Lore tests.

MELEE (Brawn, Agility)

Melee is your most commonly used ability in any form of hand-to-hand combat. When engaged in anything from bare-fisted fighting to swinging a massive two-handed sword, you use the Melee skill.

Brawn is generally used for medium and larger weapons, but Agility may apply to spears, small weapons, and some lighter medium weapons, such as rapiers.

MISSILE WEAPON (Agility)

Missile Weapons is used for any propelled weapons, such as a bow, crossbow, or even a sling.

Agility is used for most Missile Weapon attacks, although Brawn might apply when wielding a large crossbow.

NOTICE (Wits, Insight)

Notice is your general awareness of what is going on around you. It's used to determine whether you see a group of bandits lying in ambush or whether you find a secret door.

Wits is most commonly used in Notice tests, although Insight might make sense when it involves intuition more than physical senses.

PERSUASION (Insight)

Persuasion is your ability to get someone to comply with your wishes or see things from your point of view by appealing to their emotions or sense of reason.

Insight is most commonly used when you're attempting to persuade someone.

PSYCHIC (Wits, Insight)

This represents your ability to engage in psychic combat, as well as performing other acts of a psychic nature. You must have the Psychic Assault Special Ability to make a psychic attack, but anyone can make a psychic attack against an Enemy with the Incorporeal benefit.

Wits is used when making a Psychic Attack, but Resolve is used when making a defence action.

RIDE (Agility, Insight)

Ride is used when you try to do anything out of the ordinary while riding a beast, such as jumping a ravine, moving at high speeds for a long duration, or anything that puts stress or strain on the beast. Note that taming a beast for riding requires Animal Handling.

Insight is used for most riding tests, but Agility may apply when directing a riding beast to perform tricks.

Sleight of Hand (Agility)

Sleight of Hand is your ability to misdirect and perform small feats of legerdemain. It allows you to conceal small items with your hands and body, as well as placing objects on another person… or removing them undetected.

Agility is almost always used with Sleight of Hand.

Spellcasting
(Wits, Insight, Resolve)

Spellcasting is your knowledge of how to manipulate magical energies to cast a spell. Magic exists in many forms in the Realm. Some forms, such as potions and magic items, can be used by anyone, but you must have the Spellcasting skill if you hope to cast anything beyond the most basic spells.

The type of spell involved determines the aspect used in Spellcasting: **Wits** *for Arcane,* **Insight** *for Mystic, and* **Resolve** *for Nature.*

Stealth (Agility)

Stealth is your ability to move quietly and remain unseen. You must always have some degree of cover when attempting to remain hidden. For example, you can't use Stealth just to remain hidden in the open; you'd need some obscuring objects or terrain to hide behind.

Agility is almost always used for Stealth tests.

Survival (Insight, Mettle)

This reflects your ability to survive in the wilderness. It's useful when you want to gather berries, build a fire, find or create a safe place to sleep, or anything else related to basic survival. In some cases, it can even apply in the City when you're living on the streets.

Insight is used when you're seeking safety and shelter in the wilderness.

Mettle can be useful when you're attempting to survive extreme circumstances.

Throw (Agility, Brawn)

Throw defines your accuracy with thrown weapons. This might be a knife, a rock, or even a makeshift weapon such as a chair or goblet.

Agility is used when throwing something small like a stone or a knife, but **Brawn** *may be more appropriate for larger thrown weapons.*

Tinker (Brawn, Agility, Insight)

Tinker is your ability to put things together and take things apart, as well as your ability make small repairs to broken items. This is the skill you use to pick locks and manipulate mechanical items.

Agility is used for many Tinker tests, such as picking locks.

Insight might make sense for tinkering with a strange mechanical device or repairing a broken item.

Brawn is useful when you're trying to tear an item apart.

LET'S PLAY!

Now that everyone has reviewed the basic rules of *Talisman Adventures*, let's dive into the game. Decide who will be the Game Master—this player can skip to page 18 and get ready to run the adventure *Curse of the Rat Queen*. Everyone else selects one of the 4 pre-generated player characters on the following pages and should not read any further from there. If desired, the group can create characters of 1st or 2nd level to play with instead, but it's best to keep the group to no more than 6 characters. Don't worry if you don't feel ready now—we'll be explaining new rules during the game as they are needed.

Assemble a pool of d6 dice in two colours or shapes to use so that you can identify which of them is the Kismet Die in each test. You'll also want tokens or coins to use to track Fate points—those in front of the GM are Dark Fate, while those the PCs use are Light Fate.

Each player starts with one Light Fate, and the GM gets one Dark Fate for each other player in the game.
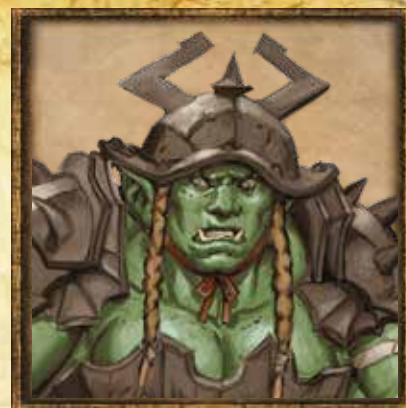
TALISMAN
ADVENTURES

CHARACTER NAME:
Gertitrude Harndrun

Ancestry: Troll   **Class:** Warrior
Background: World Walker
Alignment: Neutral

YOUR STORY:

Unlike some trolls, Gertitrude is comfortable around different peoples and easily interacts with others without frightening them (unless she wants to). She's mostly been working as a bodyguard of late. Finally tiring of it, though, she's struck out on her own as an adventurer and has made a nice reputation in the City. This latest job will surely spread her reputation farther across the Realm.

5 STRENGTH	**2** CRAFT
5 BRAWN	**1** INSIGHT
2 AGILITY	**1** WITS
4 METTLE	**2** RESOLVE

SKILLS *(Focus)*

Athletics *(Climbing)*   Ride
Fortitude *(Poison)*   Stealth
Intimidate   Survival
Melee *(Axe,Sword)*   Throw
Notice

SPELLS

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Healing Potion: This item has one use, and heals 1d6 Life or 1 Wound.

Mighty Blow: When you roll a Standard Success or better on an attack test, you can spend ⚪ to reduce the armour points of your Enemy's armour by 3 (one half your Strength, rounded down) before resolving damage.

Regeneration: When you roll a 🎲 during combat, you may immediately spend it to regenerate 1d6 Life or 1 Wound. Out of combat, you regenerate 1d6 Life or 1 Wound per hour.

Stonefist: Your fists deal 1d6 damage; if you roll a 🎲 when you attack with your fists, you roll 2d6 damage instead.

Two-Weapon Fighting: You can wield a weapon in each hand, so long as that weapon's damage is 1d3 or 1d6. You cannot make multiple attack rolls with your off-hand weapon; instead, your off-hand weapon adds 2 to your main weapon's damage when your attack gets a Standard Success. If you roll a Great Success or better while attacking with two weapons, you add your Brawn or Agility to your main weapon's damage instead. You also get a +1 to any melee defence tests.

SPELL POINTS: 0
CURRENT: _____

EQUIPMENT

Bedroll	Pitons (10)
Hammer	Rope (20 metres)
Haversack	Tinderbox
Healing Potion	Torches (10)
Mess Kit	Water Bottle

ARMOUR TYPE: Scale
ARMOUR POINTS: 12 ○○○○○○ ○○○○○○

GOLD: 1 _____

FOLLOWERS: _____
_____

COMBAT

PHYSICAL DAMAGE MODIFIER: +5

PSYCHIC DAMAGE MODIFIER: +2

SPEED: 12   LIFE: 19   CURRENT LIFE: _____

WEAPONS

WEAPONS	TEST BONUS	DAMAGE
Axes (2)	+7	1d6+5
Throwing axes (2)	+2	1d3+5

WOUNDS & TEST PENALTY
☐ -2 ☐ -4 ☐ -6 ☐ -8 ☐ -10

DEATH TEST DIFFICULTY
☐ *DIFF. 8* ☐ *DIFF. 9* ☐ *DIFF. 10* ☐ *DIFF. 11* ☐ *DIFF. 12, ETC.*

TALISMAN
ADVENTURES

CHARACTER NAME:
Goldbeard of the Light

Ancestry: Dwarf   **Class:** Priest
Background: Cragborn
Alignment: Good

YOUR STORY:

Goldbeard has served the powers of On High for over a century now as a devout priest. Rather than tending to a fixed congregation, he makes his way through the Realm aiding others. Word of his healing abilities (as well as his skills in dispatching vile spirits) seems to have reached far distances. He's ready to find what new darkness awaits him to be forever banished by the Light.

2	STRENGTH	
2	BRAWN	
1	AGILITY	
1	METTLE	
5	CRAFT	
4	INSIGHT	
3	WITS	
4	RESOLVE	

SKILLS *(Focus)*

Decipher
Empathy
Heal *(First Aid)*
Investigation
Lore
Persuasion
Psychic
Spellcasting
   (Mystic)
Tinker

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Banish Spirits: To banish a nearby spirit or undead Enemy you can see, spend ⬤ and 1 spell point and make a **Psychic (Insight)** test with a Difficulty equal to the Enemy's Threat. If you successfully banish an Enemy and roll a 🟩, you gain 1d3 spell points.

   Failure: The spirit isn't banished. If within range, the spirit you attempted to banish can damage your character as if you had made a failed attack.

   Standard Success: The targeted spirit is banished, but it can take one action before it departs this realm (usually attacking the priest if they are within range).

   Great Success or better: The targeted spirit is instantly banished.

Gentle Heart: When you take damage, you can spend ⬤ to reduce the damage you take by 1d3. If you have not made a physical attack within the past lunar month, this damage reduction is increased to 1d6.

Healing Potion: This item has one use, and heals 1d6 Life or 1 Wound.

Tunnel Sight: Dwarves can see underground as if they were outdoors at twilight or in a dimly lit area. Torches and other light sources don't affect this.

Unarmed: When you wield a weapon to make an attack, you lose all your current Light Fate. If you have no current Light Fate, the Game Master gains ⬤ per attack. However, creatures almost never choose to attack you during the Enemy response phase if there are other armed targets nearby that they are hostile towards. If an Enemy has another target within striking distance the GM must spend ⬤ to attack you.

SPELLS *(Cost = 1 spell point)*

Blessed: As a Full Action, choose yourself, or another character or ally you can touch. On a success, the target receives a blessing and may add +2 when attempting a single test. The blessing lasts until the following sunset. *Difficulty (11)*

Healing: As a Full Action, choose yourself or an injured target you can see. On a success, you heal your target for 1d6 Life or heal 1 Wound. If used on an unconscious character, it restores them to consciousness with 1d6 Life instead. *Difficulty (11)*

Marked for Glory: As a Free Action, if you or another character or ally you can see fails a test of any kind, you can cast this spell as a reaction. On a success, the target can replace any of the dice rolled (except the Kismet Die) with a 6. A character or other ally can only benefit from Marked for Glory once per day. *Difficulty (11)*

SPELL POINTS: 5
CURRENT: _____

EQUIPMENT

Bedroll
Tinderbox
Mess Kit
Water Bottle
Censer & Incense
Healing Potion
Holy Symbol
Haversack
Prayer Candles (5)
Prayer Book

ARMOUR TYPE: None
ARMOUR POINTS: 0

GOLD: 2 _____

FOLLOWERS: _____
_____

COMBAT

PHYSICAL DAMAGE MODIFIER: +2

PSYCHIC DAMAGE MODIFIER: +5

SPEED: 11   LIFE: 13 CURRENT LIFE: _____

WEAPONS

	TEST BONUS	DAMAGE
Fists	—	3

WOUNDS & TEST PENALTY

☐ -2 ☐ -4 ☐ -6 ☐ -8 ☐ -10

DEATH TEST DIFFICULTY

☐ *DIFF. 8* ☐ *DIFF. 9* ☐ *DIFF. 10* ☐ *DIFF. 11* ☐ *DIFF. 12, ETC.*

TALISMAN
ADVENTURES

3 STRENGTH	**4** CRAFT
3 BRAWN	**2** INSIGHT
3 AGILITY	**2** WITS
1 METTLE	**4** RESOLVE

SKILLS *(Focus)*

Animal Handling
Athletics
Heal
Lore
Melee

Missile Weapon
 (Bow)
Notice
Survival *(Forest)*
Stealth

CHARACTER NAME:
Alynne Oakenblood

Ancestry: Elf **Class:** Scout
Background: Forestguard
Alignment: Neutral

YOUR STORY:

Alynne has spent almost all of her considerable lifespan in forests, tending and defending each from anyone or anything that would harm them. She's recently decided to journey beyond her familiar woodlands to learn more of that which she's fought against for so long, and clearly others have noticed her actions. She's curious about the call for aid, but interested to see what new evils she might find.

SPELLS

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Forestguard: While you're in the woods or a forest, when you would make a Hunter test, you can choose to get a Standard Success instead of rolling. If you choose to roll for the test, you must accept the result of the roll.

Night Sight: When Elves are outdoors, they can see at night as if it were daytime. Torches and other light sources do not affect Night Sight; however, this special ability does not aid them when they are underground or in a building.

Movement of Leaves: Once per day when you're in the woods or a forest, you can reroll a d6 (that isn't a Kismet Die) in any test. You can use this special ability yourself or grant it to a party member you can see. You also have +1 Speed during combat in these locations.

Quarry: When you roll a 🟢 on an attack test, you can declare the target of that attack as your Quarry. When you deal damage to your Quarry, add your Craft to the damage that you deal. When you roll a test to find or track the target, you can add a bonus die and keep the three highest dice.

Pathfinder: You can spend ⚪ to add your Craft to any Exploration tests that other characters perform (but not to your own tests).

Watchful: Your eyes catch things that others miss. When you roll a Notice test, any non-Kismet Die you roll that comes up as a 1 or a 2 is treated as a 3 instead.

SPELL POINTS: 0
CURRENT: _____

EQUIPMENT

Bedroll
Haversack
Mess Kit
Tinderbox
Torches

Water Bottle
Raft Kit *(can build a raft when combined with wood)*

ARMOUR TYPE: LEATHER
ARMOUR POINTS: 3 ○○○

GOLD: 4 _____

FOLLOWERS: _____
_____

COMBAT

PHYSICAL DAMAGE MODIFIER: +3

PSYCHIC DAMAGE MODIFIER: +4

SPEED: 13 LIFE: 19 CURRENT LIFE: _____

WEAPONS	TEST BONUS	DAMAGE
Shortsword	+3	1d6+2
Bow	+5	1d6+3

WOUNDS & TEST PENALTY

☐ -2 ☐ -4 ☐ -6 ☐ -8 ☐ -10

DEATH TEST DIFFICULTY

☐ *DIFF. 8* ☐ *DIFF. 9* ☐ *DIFF. 10* ☐ *DIFF. 11* ☐ *DIFF. 12, ETC.*

TALISMAN
ADVENTURES

4 STRENGTH	**3** CRAFT
3 BRAWN	**2** INSIGHT
4 AGILITY	**2** WITS
2 METTLE	**2** RESOLVE

SKILLS *(Focus)*

Athletics
Deception
Melee *(Rapier)*
Notice
Persuasion
Psychic

Sleight of Hand
Stealth
 (Civilised Areas)
Throw
Tinker *(Pick Lock)*

CHARACTER NAME:
Karolis Gravestone

Ancestry: Ghoul   **Class:** Assassin
Background: Diaspora
Alignment: Neutral

YOUR STORY:

Like most ghouls, Karolis has a very pragmatic view towards the living and the dead. They've found that there is good gold in turning one into the other, so long as the job adheres to their own moral code. In their own way, Karolis seeks to make the Realm better for everyone else, one small cut at a time. Based on the call for assistance, it would seem others agree with their methods and goals.

SPELLS

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Diaspora Ghoul: When making a Stealth test in the City, a village, or a town, you gain a bonus die.

Path of Blood: When you reduce an Enemy to zero (0) Life, you can spend 🔘 to make an attack against another Enemy whose Threat is less than or equal to your initial target. You can't use this feature more than once per round.

Preparation: The first time you make an attack against a single Enemy that you've studied and prepared to kill, set aside and do not roll one die that is not a Kismet Die. After you've rolled the rest of the dice, you can set the die you set aside to any result. You must be able to either observe the target directly or gain information from someone who has.

Soul Drinker: After killing an opponent in psychic combat, you can make a **Craft** test against **Difficulty 19** to absorb its soul; on a success, you can heal 1d6 Life or 1 Wound. (Remember, you must have the Psychic Assault Special Ability in order to initiate a psychic attack against anything other than a spirit.)

Spirit Sense: You can always sense the presence of a spirit within 10 metres, even if the spirit is invisible.

Treachery: You get a bonus die when making Deception tests. Also, when you attack with a weapon that deals 1d3 or 1d6 base damage, you can spend 🔘 to deal 2 additional damage if your target is caught unawares, or if your target is immobile or unable to take actions.

SPELL POINTS: 0
CURRENT: _____

EQUIPMENT

Antitoxin Potion
Bedroll
Climbing Harness
Disguise Kit
Haversack

Mess Kit
Poisoner's Kit
Rope (20 metres)
Tinderbox
Water Bottle

ARMOUR TYPE: Leather
ARMOUR POINTS: 3 ○○○

GOLD: 5 _____

FOLLOWERS: _____

_____

COMBAT

PHYSICAL DAMAGE MODIFIER: +4

PSYCHIC DAMAGE MODIFIER: +3

SPEED: 14   LIFE: 14   CURRENT LIFE: _____

WEAPONS	TEST BONUS	DAMAGE
Rapier	+6	1d6+4
Throwing daggers (10)	+4	1d3+4

WOUNDS & TEST PENALTY

☐ -2 ☐ -4 ☐ -6 ☐ -8 ☐ -10

DEATH TEST DIFFICULTY

☐ *DIFF. 8* ☐ *DIFF. 9* ☐ *DIFF. 10* ☐ *DIFF. 11* ☐ *DIFF. 12, ETC.*

Curse of the Rat Queen

This adventure takes the PCs from a remote village filled with secrets to ancient ruins deep within a foreboding forest. Rats are in every shadow, but are they the true monsters of the tale?

Adventure Synopsis

In this adventure, the heroes must act quickly to unravel a plot within a plot which could devour an entire village unless stopped. Ravenous rats are seemingly everywhere, but it's their controller who is the true villain.

In **Act One: A Village Welcome**, the PCs gather at a tavern after all received requests to come to the aid of the village. They have a short encounter with some local toughs before learning the danger the village faces due to a rat removal contract having gone wrong.

Act Two: Woods that Whisper, Rats that Gnaw starts with the PCs heading out to track down the vermin remover and find out why the rats are returning. They face some dangers on the way, especially after entering a dark forest, before finally encountering a huge and powerful Rat Queen.

Act Three: Of Rats and Pipers sees the PCs learning the secrets of the village's rat infestation and facing the culprit behind it all. Should they succeed in stopping the villain's plot, not only is the village saved but possibly the Realm itself preserved from a terrible peril.

ACT ONE: A VILLAGE WELCOME

The game begins with the PCs sitting together at a tavern table. They are in the village of Jellico, one they've never been to before. They've all received messages calling for their aid, as each has made a good reputation for helping those in need (for reasonable rewards, of course).

Scene One: Tavern Brawls

Jellico is a large village located near the northern edge of the Whispering Wood, a dark forest with a darker reputation. The village is quite old and only known for its market of water-resistant cloaks crafted from the huge crimson eels that live along the bottom of a nearby lake.

Read the following aloud to the players:

The sun is setting, summer is ending, and colder winds beginning. The life of adventuring is still a bit new to you, but you've already made a bit of a name for yourself.

It was a busy year and you'd thought you'd be settling down for the season, but then you got a message from this village was asking for aid and promising a substantial reward for your efforts. One more adventure should see you through the coming winter quite well!

After a short journey, you arrived at the village of Jellico, along the northern edge of the Whispering Wood. As per the invitation, you've ventured to a large tavern with sign showing a toad and a unicorn, known unsurprisingly as "The Toad and the Unicorn." It's somewhat crowded inside, but you found the others who got the same message.

The last of your gathering just arrived at your table. But when will whoever called for your aid show up?

As per the tavern's rules, all weapons are stacked in a closet by the door—they don't want any trouble here, or at least any trouble with serious injuries. A cheerful dwarf brings the heroes a round of drinks in heavy wooden steins and loaf of thick, dark bread for the table.

This is a good time to encourage the players to introduce their characters to each other.

Making Tests

Once all the players know their fellow characters' stories, it's time to roll some dice. Ask the players if they want their characters to examine their surroundings to learn more of the tavern.

Each player should have three dice, one of which is the Kismet die. This test calls on the Notice skill and the Wits aspect—as mentioned earlier, you'll see this in the text as **Notice (Wits)** and you can use this format when asking players to make tests. This means that characters with the Notice skill can add the value of their Wits aspect score to their roll. Should a PC have a focus in Wits for Hearing, Sight, or Smell, they can also add +2 for having a relevant focus. A PC lacking the Notice skill still rolls three dice but cannot add their Wits aspect or the +2 for a focus to the roll.

If their PC has a Special Ability that allows it, they can roll a bonus die; they then select one die to remove from the test (not the Kismet die though!).

The **Difficulty** of this test is **10** (making it rather easy), meaning after they roll and add things up, they need at least a 10 to achieve a Standard Success. As mentioned under degrees of success on page 4, if they score a double on the dice then it's a Great Success; with three dice the same (a triple) they get an Extraordinary Success. Players might also spend Light Fate (see page 5) to improve their rolls.

Depending on how each does on their roll, here is what they learn (adjust as needed if a focus is used):

- **Failure:** The hero doesn't notice anything amiss, which means they will be caught off guard when the toughs attack. In the first round of combat, the only action the PC can make is a defence test, and they suffer a –2 penalty on the roll.
- **Standard Success:** Distracted by some rats in the shadows, the hero only notices the approaching toughs at the last minute. They still can only make defence tests in the first round, but don't suffer any penalty on them.
- **Great Success:** The hero notices some rough-looking humans on the far side of the room, grumbling and angrily approaching the heroes. The PC can perform any desired action without penalty.
- **Extraordinary Success:** The eagle-eyed hero notices the toughs as they rise, meaning the PC is prepared for the fight. This hero can act normally and gains a +2 bonus on their test in the first round.

After resolving these tests, the toughs rise and make their way to the PCs; there are 2 more toughs than there are heroes. As they approach the PCs, feel free to add some ominous dialogue for the toughs, such as *"who do they think they are?"* and *"we'll show 'em a thing!"* It's obvious these ruffians want a fight, and they get one. They're upset that the village elders sought out the PCs for the problem and didn't hire them instead.

In *Talisman Adventures*, the heroes make the first moves, so, after resolving these tests, ask the players what they want to do. Remember that if a hero failed the test or only rolled a Standard Success, they will be attacked by a tough before the hero can act (except to make defend action). After being attacked, a hero doesn't have to attack and can still perform some other action if desired (but most will likely fight back).

Below are some options with the skill and aspect listed in bold. Remember, if a PC has a focus for the employed skill that seems appropriate, they add +2 to their roll.

- Hide behind tables and other people: **Stealth (Agility)**
- Fight with a stein or use fists: **Melee (Agility)**
- Fight with a chair or stool: **Melee (Brawn)**
- Throw a stein: **Throw (Agility)**
- Cast a spell: **Spellcasting (Wits**, **Insight**, or **Resolve)** depending on the spell
- Climb into rafters: **Athletics (Agility)**
- Try to calm a tough down through talking: **Empathy (Insight)**
- Sing a song or dance a bit to calm or distract a tough: **Entertain (Insight** or **Agility)**
- Steal something from a tough as they approach: **Sleight of Hand (Agility)**
- Convince a tough to desist: **Persuasion (Insight)**
- Coerce a tough to go away: **Intimidate (Brawn)**

All tests are **Difficulty 11** unless a PC wants to do something complex, in which case you should raise it to 12 or even 13.

Tavern Tough

These ruffians have been drinking and gambling (badly) most of the day, angry that the elders didn't think they could deal with Jellico's vermin problem. They're now broke but looking forward to thrashing the PCs and showing they are better than these outsiders.

Tavern Tough

Neutral
Threat: 10
Strength: 4   **Craft:** 2
Armour: 3 (leather tunic)   **Life:** 12
Attacks: 1   **Damage:** 1d3+4 (beer stein)
Speed: 12

Special Abilities

- **Barroom Brawlers:** If a 1 is rolled on the Kismet Die when a PC is making a test, the tough grabs a heavy chair as a weapon. This increases the damage they inflict to 1d6+4 for the duration of the fight.

The PCs aren't using their regular weapons. This means they deal 1 plus the PC's physical damage modifier (their Strength attribute) in damage if using their fists. If using improvised weapons, those deal 1d3 (small items) or 1d6 (chair or stool), plus their physical damage modifier. Spells or Special Abilities, of course, might deal more damage.

Tavern Tussle

As there are more toughs than heroes, at least one tough will attack back even if the heroes each target a tough with an attack or spell and roll Great or Extraordinary successes. This allows the PCs to make their first defence tests. The toughs are only interested in fighting and target whichever PC has suffered the least damage.

See page 6 for the various actions the PCs might take, plus the degrees of success results for both PC actions and PC defence tests for when any toughs attack them. Narratively describe what happens for PCs who attempt non-combat skill tests, with successively greater achievement of their action with higher degrees of success. Failure on any of them means the tough (or gravity) hits them and deals 1d3+4 damage.

Let the fight go on for two or three rounds, long enough for each character to do something interesting and the players to get familiar with making tests. Just as things might get a little too serious, the Village Watch arrives. They are fully armed and armoured, and completely outnumber the weaponless PCs.

With a sigh, the troops easily pull the toughs away from the fight (assuming any toughs are still standing), give them a few thumps with heavy clubs, and haul them away. As they depart, a woman is revealed in the doorway. Read the following aloud to the players:

As the troops of the Watch carry your erstwhile foes out of the tavern (and probably off to the local gaol for the night), a robust human woman in a finely embroidered red eelskin cloak stands revealed in the doorway. "Couldn't wait for me to arrive, I see" she says with a slight smile. "I'm Elder Re'saan. Let's discuss things elsewhere." With that, she points towards the weapons closet. Once you've retrieved your gear, she leads you outside and off to an impressive building down the street.

SCENE TWO: THE ELDERS' HALL

Elder Re'saan guides the PCs towards Jellico's largest building: The Elders' Hall. Read the following aloud to the players:

You enter a large, surprisingly well-maintained wood and stone edifice, large enough to perhaps contain the entire village population. Across all the walls are large murals of the Great Wizard's mighty deeds, such as banishing dragons and trapping the Lord of Darkness within a massive dungeon.

It's quite empty now, and you pass though it to a smaller side room. Inside are five other people, only four of whom seem elderly. The fifth is just out of youth and looks a bit embarrassed. All are wearing red cloaks like the one Re'saan has on, though none are as lavish.

Re'saan points to several wooden chairs and hangs her red cloak on a peg. She's middle aged, powerfully built, and could probably have taken down the toughs all by herself.

Once everyone is seated, Re'saan offers a bemused apology for the ruckus at the tavern. If the PCs haven't figured it out yet, she explains that the toughs were upset that the elders reached out to the PCs and didn't hire them for this task. And about that…

The Rats of Jellico

Re'saan relates the tale of Jellico's recent woes, with other elders occasionally piping in to offer details. The youngest "elder" stays quite quiet during it all.

Roughly a month ago, Jellico became plagued by thousands of rats, almost overnight. No matter how many were killed, there always seemed to be more the next day. Then a piper arrived and offered to lure the rats away forever. For rather hefty fee, of course.

The elders had heard tales of the piper and paid in full for the service. They had heard tales about villages that argued with musical vermin removers, or worse didn't pay! They had no idea if this is the same piper—the tales didn't mention the piper being a sprite—but better safe than sorry. After payment was made, the piper played a discordant tune as they flew through the streets and rats by the thousands swarmed out and away toward the Whispering Wood.

That was just over a week ago now, and the rats are slowly returning. No one knows how to contact the piper, but word of the PCs' exploits had reached the elders and the decision was made to see if they could aid Jellico. The elders want the PCs to find the piper and get their payment back. If possible, they should ideally eliminate the rat menace for good as well.

They offer the PCs a reward of 3 gold per hero (a bit low from their normal rates), plus of course they can keep any other riches they find along the way. The PCs can do some tests to negotiate a better fee or see if the elders are sincere in this offer.

Negotiating is a **Bargain (Resolve)** test against **Difficulty 11**, or a **Persuasion (Insight)** test against **Difficulty 12**. A Standard Success means the heroes convince the elders to add 1 gold per PC, a Great Success adds 2, and an Extraordinary Success doubles their fee to 6 gold per PC.

An **Empathy (Insight)** test against **Difficulty 10** can be used to see if the elders are lying or have hidden motivations. Any successful test only reveals that they are indeed sincere but also very frightened about the rat situation. They've already paid a large amount to the piper (200 gold); if all of the rats return, they may be forced to abandon their homes as they won't be able to afford another exterminator.

Let the PCs question the group further if desired, but there's not much else they can say. Re'saan has rooms set up at Jellico's single inn, the *Bloody Eel*. As this offers the PCs time to rest for eight hours, they restore all lost Life and spell points. This also counts as a short rest, so their armour is refitted (see earlier on page 9).

The young elder greets the PCs at dawn to escort them on their way, still looking awkward about the situation. His name is Jaspar and he says he's only been an elder for a few months, after his mother passed unexpectedly. The strapping fellow takes the heroes along the main street towards the edge of the village, along the path the rats took when lured from Jellico. Even days later, the signs of the mass exodus of vermin are clearly visible in the trampled dirt and torn cobblestones. As they travel, they also see several rats scurrying about, all looking rather fearless in the growing sunlight.

SCENE ONE: TRAVELLING TO THE WOOD

As the group reaches the edge of the village, where the road's cobblestones grow scarce until only dirt remains, Jaspar points out a bundle resting on a flat rock. Inside are some dried meat strips and apples for breakfast, along with eelskin cloaks (dark red on the outside, dark grey on the inside) for everyone.

Jaspar looks a bit embarrassed. *"I wish we could offer more, but we do make quality eelskin wear and these should protect from the elements,"* he says. *"Several of us saw the piper fly off with the rats in that direction,"* he adds, pointing south. Across a trampled-down grassland, you can see a large forest—the infamous Whispering Wood—in the distance, about a half day's journey. Jaspar looks to the PCs, wringing his hands a bit and clearly uncomfortable.

If asked about the Whispering Wood, Jaspar only says *"Well, everyone knows it's cursed and filled with monsters. Or haunted? Probably all three. We just avoid it; safer that way."*

A successful **Lore (Wits)** against **Difficulty 10** reveals more about the Whispering Wood. Legends speak of a prosperous city that existed long ago in the heart of the woods, but its rulers allegedly dabbled in dark powers. They might even have been servants of Oblivion, the great darkness that some claim is the source of all evil. They were so wicked that they were forsaken by the powers of Light, and Oblivion—some say—still rules in the darkest corners of the Wood.

A Great Success or better also discloses that this forest is the only place in the Realm where harmony oaks are found. The wood of these trees resonates with sound and music in a way like no other, and instruments fashioned from them are cherished by bards and minstrels throughout the Realm.

PCs may want to see if they can learn more about Jaspar himself, and questioning him with a successful **Empathy (Insight)** test against **Difficulty 11** shows that he's unhappy and wants anything other than to the spend rest of his life as an "elder" in Jellico. He has no family left, and every day he looks at a filled backpack and has to think of five good reasons to stay. To make matters worse, it was his idea to hire the piper. No one seems to hold him responsible (at least to his face), but it feels like yet another reason he should do something else with his life.

The PCs can gather their cloaks and provisions and leave. Jaspar offers sincere wishes of luck and slowly makes his way back into the village. There is no actual path towards the Wood, but the thousands of rats have left a distinct impression on the grasslands that is hard to miss, at least for the first several kilometres.

After a few hours, the grass grows taller, and the rat-made path fades away as the vermin spread out. One or more PCs can make a **Survival (Insight)** test against **Difficulty 11** to follow rat tracks across grasslands, and others can assist this action. A failure here means the PCs take an extra hour to stay on course and enter the Wood where the rats (and piper) did. If successful, the PCs shave an hour off their time. See the **Time Passes...** sidebar on page 24 concerning tracking time as a wrinkle to the adventure's climax.

New Rule: *Assist Action*

To **assist** another hero, a PC must have a skill that fits the action in some meaningful way. This might mean the same skill, or a skill that aids that PC making the test (such as using Spellcasting to distract an enemy the PC is attacking or stealing from). An assisting hero rolls 1d6; if the result is equal to or lower than the aspect value for the skill they are using to assist, then that rolled number is added to the test result. Otherwise, there is no bonus to the test.

Multiple PCs can assist if the GM feels it makes sense, but only the highest assist bonus is used. PCs who assist are also possible targets for reactions in combat situations.

If desired, the heroes find some interesting places along the way. If so, see the **Optional Locations** sidebar on this page for some places the PCs can pass through. After exploring one or more of these locations, the heroes arrive where the rats entered the Whispering Wood. There are a few rats here still, and they are hungry…

Optional Locations

The PCs can stumble (perhaps literally) on one or more locations on their way, if the group wants to add some excitement in the journey to the Wood. If so, roll 1d6 to see what they find (or select one that best fits the group). These can also be used as part of **Exploration** tests (see later on page 23) as interesting locations for the PCs to find.

Grassland Locations

Roll 1d6	
1	**Ancient shrine:** This was mostly buried but rampaging rats have recently uncovered it. It's still covered with dirt and rat droppings; if cleaned up a bit it instills the heroes with a stronger sense of direction and cuts 1 hour off their travel time. Later, should it be cleaned (physically and spiritually), it could offer wondrous rewards.
2	**Small cave:** A hole in the ground leads to an underground cavern, possibly part of a wider series of tunnels. A **Notice (Wits) test** against **Difficulty 11** uncovers 1d6 gold coins near the entrance and a small marble carving of a skull. An **Evaluate (Wits)** test against **Difficulty 11** shows the skull is worth at least 20 gold. What the test doesn't detect is that it secretly steals life! Note whenever someone carrying the idol would recover Life and tell that player that their hero instead recovers 1 less Life.
3	**Peaceful glade**: The grass turns greener and idyllic, perfect for a nap. There are even dozens of sleeping rats here. PCs must make a **Fortitude (Mettle)** test against **Difficulty 11** to avoid collapsing in a slumber that may never end. Any PC who is successful may rouse those who succumb. Should they all succumb, each loses 1 Life and awakens 2 hours later.
4	**Dense marsh:** The area abruptly becomes a thick morass. PCs become stuck here unless they make a successful **Athletics (Brawn)** test against **Difficulty 12**; failure means they lose 1 hour digging themselves out. Assistance is very useful here, as are lots of ropes!
5	**Tattered corpse:** A region of torn grass holds the remains of an unfortunate who happened to be in the path of the rats. There isn't much left, but the heroes may wish to perform a burial or make note of the location for later attention. A PC examining the remains who makes a **Notice (Wits)** test against **Difficulty 12** finds belongings indicating their home; should the group inform their relatives of their loved one's fate, they will be richly rewarded.
6	**Hidden treasure:** The PCs come across a pile of heavy rocks. If the PCs make an **Athletics (Brawn)** test against **Difficulty 14**, they uncover a pouch of glittering crystals worth 60 gold.

Each PC makes a **Notice (Wits)** test against **Difficulty 13** to spot the giant rats lurking just inside the edge of the woods. Heroes who fail this test can only make a defence test against an attacking rat in the initial round of combat. A PC who has an Extraordinary Success may alert one other PC and allow them to act as normal, even if that PC failed their Notice test.

The profile for a giant rat is on page 28. This should be a fast skirmish to give the players a taste of real combat. There are as many of these large rodents as there are PCs; should the combat last more than four rounds the rats can flee deeper into the forest in search of easier prey.

After this fight, the PCs can take a short rest before pressing on into Whispering Wood. This allows them to refit their armour (see page 9), recover Life, and attempt first aid. They also recover 1d6 spell points.

New Rule: *Recover Life*

During a short rest, a PC can make one **recover action** to restore lost Life. A recover action can also be done in other times, such as during combat, but the PC cannot take other actions that round (though they can still make a defence test if they are attacked).

You can take a number of recover actions each day equal to your Resolve; this resets when you take a long rest. If you have taken any Wounds, you cannot take a recover action. To take a recover action during combat, you must make a **Fortitude (Mettle)** test against **Difficulty 14**. A recover action taken during a short rest, as in this situation, requires no roll and is automatically a Great Success.

Failure: You do not recover any Life.

Standard Success: Recover 1d3 Life.

Great Success: Recover 1d6 Life.

Extraordinary Success: Recover 1d6+3 Life.

New Rule: *First Aid*

During a short rest, a PC possessing the Heal skill can offer first aid on another character by making a **Heal (Insight)** test against **Difficulty 14**. A single PC cannot receive more than one first aid attempt after each combat.

Failure: No Life is restored.

Standard Success: The target heals 1d6 Life.

Great Success: The target heals 2d6 Life, or the target heals 1d6 Life and 1 Wound.

Extraordinary Success: The target heals 2d6 Life and 1 Wound.

First aid is still possible even when a character has already made their full allotment of recover actions.

Scene Two: Into the Wood

The PCs venture into the forest. It grows dark after a few minutes of travel, and the path of the rats isn't as easy to follow as the earlier grassland. It's silent as well, aside from the soft melodies of wind through distant harmony oaks. There are tooth marks on many tree trunks, some up to a metre high, showing where the mass of rats swarmed through.

New Rule: *Exploration*

These rules are normally used for longer journeys across wilderness areas. This forest is dense and unfamiliar to the PCs, so GMs are encouraged to use them in this situation too. One character should be selected to act as the Guide, and at least one other character should serve as the Watcher. Hunters are optional, depending upon how much food the characters bring with them (they have 1 Ration each from the food Jaspar provided, unless the players say they have already eaten them).

Guides make Guide tests, Watchers make Watcher tests, and Hunters make Hunter tests. Collectively these are known as Exploration tests.

The Guide

The Guide makes decisions about where to go, which trail to follow, and sets the pace for travel. When the players have decided on which character is the Guide, have that player make a **Lore (Wits)** or **Survival (Insight)** test against **Difficulty 14**. A second character can use an Assist action to help the Guide.

Failure: The group is lost for 1 hour.

Standard Success: The heroes travel without delay, although they might encounter local wildlife if the GM wants to add some additional flavour and excitement.

Great Success or better: They travel with increased speed (saving 1 hour) or find an interesting location (perhaps one of the ones described on page 22).

The Watcher

The Watcher keeps a lookout for potential enemies. They look for tracks and generally stay alert for the presence of others. The character acting as the Watcher makes a **Notice (Wits)** test against **Difficulty 14**. A second character can assist.

Failure: Encounter an Enemy (see the **Woodland Encounters** table on page 24)

Standard Success: The party can choose to encounter an Enemy or avoid it. If the party chooses to have an encounter, the Watcher can attempt a **Survival (Wits)** test of **Difficulty 14** to determine the type of creature; on a failed roll, the GM chooses the creature.

Great Success or better: The party can choose to have an encounter with an Enemy of their choosing; otherwise, they sense danger and avoid it.

HUNTERS

Any number of characters can hunt and forage for food as they travel by making a **Survival (Insight)** or **Missile Weapon (Agility)** test against **Difficulty 14**.

Failure: No game or foraging. Use 1 Ration for that day's sustenance.

Standard Success: The Hunter doesn't need to use a Ration that day.

Great Success or better: The Hunter doesn't need to use a Ration; the party gains 1 additional Ration.

The following are some sample Enemies that the PCs might encounter; roll or select as desired to best fit how the adventure is going. For example, if the priest hasn't done much so far then this is a great time for an apparition to appear so they can use their banish spirit ability. See **Enemies** on page 28 for the profiles for each. Consider including a giant rat or two with any of these to add extra danger!

WOODLAND ENCOUNTERS	
Roll 1d6	
1	1 Apparition
2	2 Goblins
3	1 Rat Horde
4	2 Serpents
5	2 Vampire Bats
6	1 Wild Boar

RUINS AND RATS

After the heroes have accomplished their Exploration tests and dealt with any creatures, they may want to make a short rest. Once they are ready to press on, read the following aloud to the players:

As you you travel further into the Wood, your path takes you through signs that this was not always just a forest. A fallen watchtower consumed by saplings, mosaic street tiles cracked and filled with dirt, and more show there were dwellings here long ago.

The area clears a bit ahead, and you can see the ruins of what looks like a keep or tower base in the shadows of huge trees. The collapsed stonework is almost completely covered with vines and moss, and a creek trickles into a large pond along one side. There are shadows everywhere, but after a few moments you see speckles of tiny lights in the darkness. What you had thought were shadows are in fact untold hundreds of silent rats, all motionless and staring at you.

None of the rats make any motion to attack, which is perhaps even more unnerving. Let the heroes take a moment to discuss the situation, then read the following aloud to the players (do this immediately should the heroes try to attack the rats):

A large shape moves out of the massed rats—a singular gigantic rat the size of a pony, carried on the backs of hundreds of its subjects. Its red eyes are angry, and its fanged mouth lets out a snarling cry. Then it shakes its head, and its eyes lose some of their fierce appearance. "You," the enormous rat says in a surprisingly clear voice. "Who are you?" It raises up on its hind legs. "I am Karinna, sadly the current Queen of the Rats. Did Lovis send you?"

Act Three: Of Rats and Pipers

The final act begins with Karinna revealing what really happened in Jellico, her current predicament, and how the heroes can save her (and the village too).

Scene 1: The Rat Queen's Lair

It's possible that the heroes might not know exactly how to respond to Karinna's question. If they do respond with questions of their own, feel free to adapt her words below to answer some of them, or even transition directly to her speech. If they pause, she continues that she is suffering under a curse and asks them to hear her out. She gives a long hiss, and all the rats scamper roughly ten metres away but keep careful eyes on the PCs.

The Rats of Jellico (The Other Side of the Story)

Karinna bids the PCs to spread out their cloaks on some stonework fragments and sit to hear her tale. Read the following aloud to the players:

"I am quite human, when not under this normally useful curse. Lovis and I had a swindle we'd run when we came across an isolated village. He would play a very long, very complex, and very awful sounding song on his magic pipe that would curse me to become the Rat Queen, which gave me dominance over all vermin. I'd then gather all the rats in the area and have them infest the village.

"Lovis would enter and offer to deal with the rat problem, and once he was paid I would command the rats follow him out as he flew away. Once clear of the village and away from the rats, he'd undo the curse and we'd split the gold. Then it's off to a new village.

"But it's been days now and Lovis hasn't returned! All the rats are here, but what happened to him? Without that pipe, the curse can't be lifted!"

The PCs should deduce from Karinna's mention of Lovis flying away likely means that Lovis and the sprite piper are one and the same (if not, she can confirm this). The heroes followed the rats to her, but there was no sign of Lovis, dead or alive. Or, for that matter, all the gold he was paid.

To Catch a Swindler

When informed of this, Karinna immediately suspects that he's abandoned her and grows quite upset. *"It's one thing to be cursed,"* she growls, *"and another to be cheated!"* Then Karinna grows more serious.

She's barely maintaining self-control (and control over the rats) and can feel her humanity slipping to rathood. More and more rats are still flocking to her each day, and they are growing ravenous. Their numbers would devour Jellico, and soon she'll happily lead the feast. This must be Lovis's plan, for once the village is destroyed he can loot it for more riches. What she and the PCs's aren't yet aware of, though, is that he's been practicing his pipe and can now command rats on his own.

An **Empathy (Insight)** test against **Difficulty 12** indicates she's a good (or at least non-evil) person at heart and doesn't want that to happen to the villagers.

Assuming the PCs agree to help her, she offers some of her most loyal rats to aid them in tracking Lovis down, either to find him or the pipe (she relates that she can undo the curse herself so long as the pipe is in her possession). She's growing more and more convinced, though, that he's alive and laughing at her nearby. In return, she will do her best to keep holding off her rats from dispersing and invading the village en masse.

It's essential that the heroes make haste, as she can't hold out much longer. She gets very concerned about this part. Should the PCs tell her that rats are already returning to Jellico, she replies that she's confident that she can prevent more from appearing there. Jellico will still have some rats, but no more than any other village.

Karinna gives each PC one of her bonded rats, which are larger than the norm but still much smaller than her royal form. These are Followers who can aid the heroes in the next step of their quest, especially in finding and stopping Lovis.

New Rule: *Followers*

A Follower is a non-player character that a single PC controls (or in some cases is jointly controlled by the party). All have a Max Loyalty value, and starts with Loyalty equal to that number. Each also has one or more Special Abilities that can be used by the hero who controls them, at the cost of spending a Loyalty Point per ability use. Should a Follower's Loyalty be reduced to 0, though, they depart within a day. To keep that from happening, PCs must restore Loyalty in whichever manner the Follower requires.

Inventive players or GMs may find other uses for them: this may be allowed as far as the GM judges reasonable, but be careful of such creativity being too powerful in effect or dominating play. Troublesome Followers always risk being snatched and carried off by a passing eagle, falling into a bottomless chasm, or some similar sudden end…

Followers are more like background players in an adventure; they bolster the heroes but don't operate on their own. They can be targeted in combat, especially in situations where an attack might otherwise kill a PC too early for the GM's plans!

Bonded Rat (Follower)

These rats are close to the Queen, having been among the first to join her in the Wood. One of them might even replace her as the new Queen.

Benefits

For the Rat Queen!: Spend 1 Loyalty. The rat adds +1 to its PC's defence test.

Tracker Rat: Spend 1 Loyalty. The rat adds a bonus die to a test its PC makes to track someone or something that the rat has smelled before.

Strength: 2   **Craft:** 1
Life: 6
Max Loyalty: 3
Restore Loyalty: Once per day, restore 1 Loyalty when you feed it a treat equal to 1 Ration.

SCENE TWO: THE PIPER'S PIT

The heroes now need to find Lovis. They can rightly assume that he did lead the rats here, and Karinna believes he must be nearby to confirm Jellico is overrun.

Should they ask, Karinna says that Lovis's travelling pack is still here—he must have left it behind so as to not arouse suspicions. There are scarves inside, which the bonded rats can use to gain the sprite's scent. The pack also contains mundane gear and sundries like dried fruits and wing cleansing cloths. If desired (especially so if there is no priest playing), there can also be one or two small vials of a healing potion. Each of these are one use only, and can restore either 1d6 Life or 1 Wound.

Karinna also mentions that Lovis hated camping in the rough. He'd want a "civilised" place to wait for Jellico to fall, she says, so the PCs might look for areas where more of the castle ruins could be intact.

There are several approaches the PCs might take, all of which are against **Difficulty 11**:

- **Survival (Insight)** or **Notice (Wits)** to detect signs of Lovis's departing trail.
- **Lore (Wits)** to recall where larger areas of a castle might be, and thus where Lovis might be hiding.
- **Investigation (Wits)** to search this area for clues indicating Lovis's destination.
- **Investigation (Insight)** to get a sense for where Lovis might go based on his belongings.

Failure: The PC doesn't learn anything new, but may try again after an hour if no hero has achieved a Standard Success.

Standard Success: The PC gains solid information pointing the direction Lovis went like torn leaves, the remains of a cobblestone path, or even a scent in the air.

Great Success: The PC also knows the distance to Lovis's hideout, about 3 hours away. If desired for a longer adventure, this could be a day or so away so that the heroes can have more encounters in the Wood before reaching the sprite's lair.

Extraordinary Success: Not only does the PC know where Lovis is hiding, but also how to catch him unawares! This gives a bonus when they reach the sprite.

Once the PCs have at least a Standard Success, they should be ready to find Lovis.

At this point, some if not all of the PCs might have all their armour points filled with X marks, meaning their armour offers no protection until it is repaired. If desired (or needed), Karinna can remedy this through her rats; read the following aloud to the players if so:

Karinna notices the poor shape of your armour and chuckles. "All of you, stay perfectly still and trust me, ok?" she says. The Rat Queen gives a long, warbling squeak to the rats, who scurry forward. Before you can react, they completely cover your body, pulling torn leather and metal back together with their teeth and claws. After a few unnerving moments, they swarm away back into the shadows. With a relieved gasp, you can see your armour is restored—a bit rough looking, but ready for combat once again.

When the rats crawl away, the heroes find their armour repaired, though there may be some tooth marks and saliva residue. Each player can completely clear all marks (both X and /) from their armour. This is also an excellent opportunity for the PCs to recover Life, use first aid, or make Heal tests.

A Piper and his rats

Once the PCs are on their way, each can make an additional test as was done earlier to achieve greater accuracy towards the sprite. The goal is to accelerate the action—the big finale is coming up, and the pace shouldn't falter. Read the following aloud to the players:

It wasn't easy, but after some hours of tracking you can hear the chittering of rats ahead as the trees thin. A largely intact castle turret lies on its side, overgrown with vegetation. Yet a light burns through darkened arrow slits. There are large, disgusting looking rats here along with a nattily dressed, rather handsome sprite—Lovis!

The number of plague rats here equals to the number of PCs plus 2, and they (and Lovis) are around 20 metres away. If the PCs have saved more than 3 hours traveling, then replace one of the plague rats with either a giant rat or a rat horde. However, if the PCs have lost more than 3 hours reaching Lovis, the GM gains ⚫.

If the PCs are able to catch him unawares, they find Lovis hovering in the air playing a jarring tune on a wood pipe. His eyes are closed in concentration while plague rats are below him and completely enthralled. Otherwise, Lovis is sitting on a tall stone near his plague rats, counting gold coins but on guard. His rats prowl the area in a protective circle.

A Spirited Fight

If desired, the final clash can be larger. Lovis might be summoning the spirits of the dead city, for example, allowing apparitions (see page 28) to also be under his command. This could be a nice addition to the battle, especially if the PCs are dominating things. In this case, allow Lovis to spend ⚫ ⚫ to summon 1d3 apparitions to the battle; these spirits arrive in the next round.

It's time for the final clash! Should the heroes catch Lovis unprepared (as a result of rolling an Extraordinary Success earlier to pick up the sprite's trail), they each gain a +2 bonus to the first test they make and can turn a Standard Success into a Great Success on it.

Should the heroes arrive as a result of any other test result, a single approaching PC may make a **Stealth (Agility)** test against **Difficulty 15** to gain the same benefit for the group. Other PCs may assist on this test. If all the heroes are wearing their crimson eel cloaks inside out, add +1 to the roll.

Lovis won't be interested in talking or handing back any gold; he stole it "fairly" and wants each and every coin. As the PCs can see, he can now command rats himself without Karinna's aid. After days of practice, he's now ready to lead his verminous hordes beyond the soon-to-be ruins of Jellico and across the Realm.

With a blaring arpeggio, the sprite directs his creatures to attack and fight to the death. Should Lovis be reduced to 0 Life or become unconscious, though, he drops his pipe. This frees any creatures under his command, who slowly turn on him in a mix of anger and hunger. Lovis quickly flies off into the surrounding trees, screaming all the way as his former minions chase him. The screams rise in volume, then end very suddenly.

Scene Three: A Curse Reversed

If the heroes look around the area, the 200 gold coins Jellico paid the sprite are in a large satchel (enchanted to weigh almost nothing). Within are also some treasures that Lovis found nearby, such as ancient crystal daggers, a bag filled with gemstones, and a blowgun covered with glowing runes. More importantly, they now have the pipe to undo the curse.

When the heroes return to the rat-infested ruins, read the following aloud to the players:

On seeing you arrive, Karinna gives a long sigh of relief and quickly takes the pipe. She calls out to her subjects, and one of the larger rats comes forward. There is a long, squeak-filled conversation, and then the rat turns to the assembled hordes and begins to slowly grow larger.

Karinna strides quickly on all fours past you. With a toothsome smile she turns and says, "Time to go! You really don't want to be here after I leave."

Once beyond the edge of the Wood, the former Rat Queen smashes the pipe and with a swirl of emerald lights transforms back to human. She looks quite normal, aside from slightly furred ears. Her clothes are in bad shape, though, and she welcomes a red eel cloak should any hero offer theirs.

If asked, Karinna mentions she told her replacement that it's safer for the horde to stay in the Whispering Wood than raid villages. There's still plenty of treasure in the ruins, so plenty of food will come to them. She gives a nasty laugh at that—she may not be evil, but she's certainly not all good.

Endings and Beginnings

Once at Jellico, the elders are delighted to see the PCs (and the gold they paid the piper). Jaspar is here and very happy things seem to have ended well. The PCs are paid the agreed upon amount, and, if they are feeling generous, may warn the elders to stay away from the Wood unless they want more rat problems. Read the following aloud to the players:

Jaspar is also present and wearing a heavy backpack. "Time to move on," he says with a determined but positive tone. "Word is getting out that I pushed to hire the piper, and even though things seem sorted out I'm not that popular here."

Karinna, who has been staying mostly hidden behind you, steps forward. "Well now," she slowly says. "I am suddenly in need of a new partner, and also a need to not be here. Fancy some travel?" Their eyes meet, and the two head off in a direction completely away from the Whispering Wood.

The elders look bemused, and then one says "Ah, by the way. We have a visitor looking for aid. Something about gigantic wolves harassing the peoples of Innsview, calling on storms of hail and fire to destroy houses and devouring everyone inside. Interested?"

What's Next?

We hope you enjoyed playing! If you'd like to continue your travels through the Realm, you can find other free adventures and support materials at our website.

The *Talisman Adventures* core rulebook has all you need to know for advancing the player characters used in *Curse of the Rat Queen*, as well as rules for creating new characters. It also includes many more monsters for heroes to face, as well as more expansive rules covering spells, magic items, hazards and traps, and everything else you could want for adventuring in the world of *Talisman!*

ENEMIES

These are but a few of the dangers the heroes might find in the Whispering Wood during their quest. Who knows what they might encounter should they return?

APPARITION

Apparitions are spirits forever locked in a remembered moment of emotional trauma. They react with psychic fury when disturbed.

APPARITION

Neutral
Threat: 11
Strength: 1   **Craft:** 2
Armour: 0   **Life:** 10
Attacks: 1   **Damage:** 1d6+2 (psychic)
Speed: 10 (hover)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

None

BENEFITS & BANES

Incorporeal: Nonmagical weapons cannot inflict their normal damage on an incorporeal creature; however, a character using a nonmagical weapon can still inflict an amount of damage equal to their psychic damage modifier. Magical weapons, spells, and psychic attacks affect an apparition normally.

Ignore Armour: An apparition's attacks always ignore armour.

GIANT RAT

Twice as big as any alley cat, these clever scroungers rarely stand and fight toe-to-toe. They use their greater numbers to overwhelm a foe, bring it down, and gnaw it to death with sharp, powerful teeth.

GIANT RAT

Neutral
Threat: 12
Strength: 2   **Craft:** 1
Armour: 0   **Life:** 8
Attacks: 1   **Damage:** 1d3+2 (bite)
Speed: 13

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Summon Rat Swarm: Wherever one rat is found, you can be certain more will be on the way. After this ability is triggered, an additional 1d3+1 rats arrive in the area at the start of the next round. A summoned rat cannot summon more rats.

BENEFITS & BANES

Swarm: Creatures with this benefit are skilled at working together to take down larger opponents. When a creature in the swarm attacks, it inflicts +1 damage per additional swarm creature within melee range.

GOBLIN

These cunning, conniving creatures take malicious delight in inflicting pain on their enemies.

GOBLIN

Evil
Threat: 12
Strength: 3   **Craft:** 2
Armour: 3 (leather)   **Life:** 12
Attacks: 1   **Damage:** 1d3+3 (daggers)
Speed: 12

SPECIAL ABILITIES

⚫ **Small and Sneaky:** Goblins are weak, but they're also swift and deadly. When a character gets a Standard Success on their attack against a goblin, that goblin can inflict their normal damage; however, a Great Success (or better) still results in the goblin being unable to attack.

🔴 **Subtle Fingers:** Filching and purloining things that don't belong to them is essential to a goblin. A goblin in melee combat with a character can steal one item from them, so long as the character is not holding the item in their hand.

BENEFITS & BANES
None

LOVIS, THE SPRITE PIPER

Lovis has been running the rat swindle with Karinna for many months but has gotten tired of splitting the payout. He left the rats from Jellico with Karinna, knowing that with the curse unbroken she and the rats would soon raze the village. He's spent the last several days practicing on his magic pipe so that he can duplicate the Cry of the Rat Queen. Lovis can now command rats himself to a degree, especially the plague rats that he's forced to become his protectors. Once he's perfected his skills, another village awaits his attentions and a vermin-filled fate.

LOVIS, THE SPRITE PIPER

Evil
Threat: 15
Strength: 3   **Craft:** 4
Armour: 3 (thin leathers)   **Life:** 12
Attacks: 1   **Damage:** 1d6+3 (rapier)
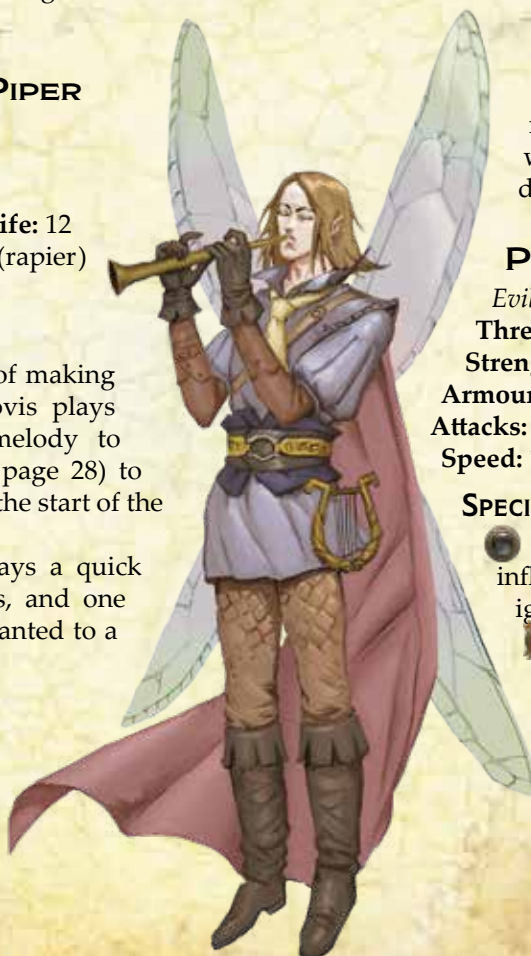**Speed:** 13 (fly)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

⚫ **Summon Rats:** Instead of making an action or reaction, Lovis plays a short, inharmonious melody to summon a giant rat (see page 28) to aid him. The rat arrives at the start of the next round.

🔴 **Break Bonds:** Lovis plays a quick series of fluctuating notes, and one of the rats that Karinna granted to a hero scampers away.

BENEFITS & BANES
Flight: As a sprite, Lovis can fly and ignore terrain penalties.

PLAGUE RAT

The size of large dogs, these foul-smelling rats use their sharp, disease-ridden teeth to slay anything in their way. Even in small numbers they can be deadly opponents.

PLAGUE RAT

Evil
Threat: 14
Strength: 4   **Craft:** 1
Armour: 1 (hide)   **Life:** 12
Attacks: 1   **Damage:** 1d6+4 (bite)
Speed: 11

SPECIAL ABILITIES

⚫ **Foul Infection:** The plague rat's bite inflicts an additional 1d3 damage which ignores armour.

🔴 **Overwhelming Diseases:** If desired, the plague rat may lose 1 Life. If so, each hero engaged with the creature also loses 1 Life.

BENEFITS & BANES
None

Rat Horde

This huge mass of small rats is like a wave teeth and fur, overwhelming all in its path.

Rat Horde

Neutral
Threat: 12
Strength: 1   **Craft:** 1
Armour: 0   **Life:** 9
Attacks: 1   **Damage:** 1d3+1 (bite)
Speed: 12

Special Abilities

🔘 **Bites Everywhere:** The ferocious rats double the damage they inflict.

Benefits & Banes

Massed Flesh: These rats suffer +1d6 additional damage from fire-based attacks.

Serpent

These limbless reptiles are found throughout the Realm in all but the coldest environments, appearing in many shapes, colours, and sizes.

Serpent

Neutral
Threat: 14
Strength: 2   **Craft:** 1
Armour: 6   **Life:** 14
Attacks: 1   **Damage:** 1d3+4 (bite)
Speed: 13

Special Abilities

🔘 **Venomous Bite:** The serpent attempts to envenom a foe with its fangs. The target makes a **Fortitude (Mettle)** test against **Difficulty 14** to resist.
Failure: The target succumbs to the venom. They take 1 point of damage each round (this ignores armour) until they receive an antidote or magical healing.
Standard Success: The target is bitten but does not suffer effects from the venom. They take 1d3+4 points of damage from the bite (armour applies).
Great Success or better: No effect.

Benefits & Banes

Slither: The serpent can move without penalty through water and over rough terrain, even while climbing.

Vampire Bat

Vampire bats are bloodsucking menaces that plague the Realm. While many different animals have inspired villagers to repeat questionable folklore, the stories villagers tell about these winged terrors are often true.

Vampire Bat

Evil
Threat: 11
Strength: 2   **Craft:** 1
Armour: 0   **Life:** 7
Attacks: 1   **Damage:** 1d3+2 (bite)
Speed: 13 (fly)

Special Abilities

🔴 **Drain Blood:** The creature latches onto a character and begins draining blood. Each time the target takes an action, the creature first causes bite damage (which ignores armour); the bite automatically succeeds. Pulling a vampire bat free while it's still alive causes maximum bite damage (5 points, which ignores armour).

Benefits & Banes

Swarm: Creatures with this benefit are skilled at working together to take down larger opponents. When a creature in the swarm attacks, it inflicts +1 damage per additional swarm creature within melee range.

Wild Boar

Larger than a domesticated swine and much deadlier, these porcine terrors are stubborn and relentless, even in the throes of death.

Wild Boar

Neutral
Threat: 12
Strength: 5   **Craft:** 1
Armour: 3   **Life:** 14
Attacks: 1   **Damage:** 1d6+5 (tusks)
Speed: 12

Special Abilities

Death Throes: Unless a character is using a boar-spear or attacking from range, the boar lashes out as it dies. One character within striking range makes an **Athletics** or **Melee (Brawn)** defence test against **Difficulty 16** to resist the boar's last attack. The boar then dies.
Failure: The target takes 1d6+5 physical damage.
Standard Success: The target takes 1d3+3 physical damage.
Great Success or better: No effect.

Benefits & Banes

None

Continue your Adventures!

Talisman Adventures Core Rulebook

This 300-page tome contains the full rules for adventuring in the *Talisman* setting! The *Player's Guide* portion includes the history of the Realm, how to create and advance characters, as well as the complete spell list and magic system. The second half of the book, the *Game Master's Guide*, covers running and crafting adventures; creating hazards; using Strangers, Followers, and Enemies; magic items and rewards; and more. You'll also find six ready-to-use player characters and an adventure that takes the heroes on a quest to recover a stolen talisman. To cap things off, the book also contains a sheet of Fate tokens and a foldout map of the Realm.

Talisman Adventures Tales of the Dungeon

Do you dare to enter the Dungeon? This 144-page supplement provides everything you need to venture underground, with new character creation options like Vampire, Minotaur, Tomb Robber, and Necromancer, specialised equipment, and powerful magic items. There's also a host of new monsters, guidance on creating unique subterranean settings, and a full adventure set in the Realm's most infamous dungeon!

Talisman Adventures Game Master's Kit

The *Game Master's Kit* is an indispensable resource containing 24 pages of useful GM guidance and expanded rules plus new locations, encounters, and adversaries. It also includes a stunning 4-panel screen for quick reference on commonly used rules, a sheet of Fate tokens, and blank PC sheets.

Talisman Adventures Accessory Pack

Quest in style with this set of 6 custom Kismet dice and 7 deluxe, double-sided Fate tokens (one side Light, the other Dark). Don't go adventuring without it!

Prepare for daring quests and mighty deeds in *Curse of the Rat Queen*, the 2021 Free RPG Day Adventure for the *Talisman Adventures Fantasy Roleplaying Game*!

This tale of betrayal and greed takes the heroes from a remote village filled with secrets to ancient ruins deep within a foreboding forest. Rats are in every shadow, but are they the true monsters of the tale?

This booklet has everything you need to start playing, including a condensed rules set and four pre-generated player characters. The adventure itself teaches additional rules as needed while the tale unfolds, making it ideal for both novice and veteran players to learn the *Talisman Adventures* game system.

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