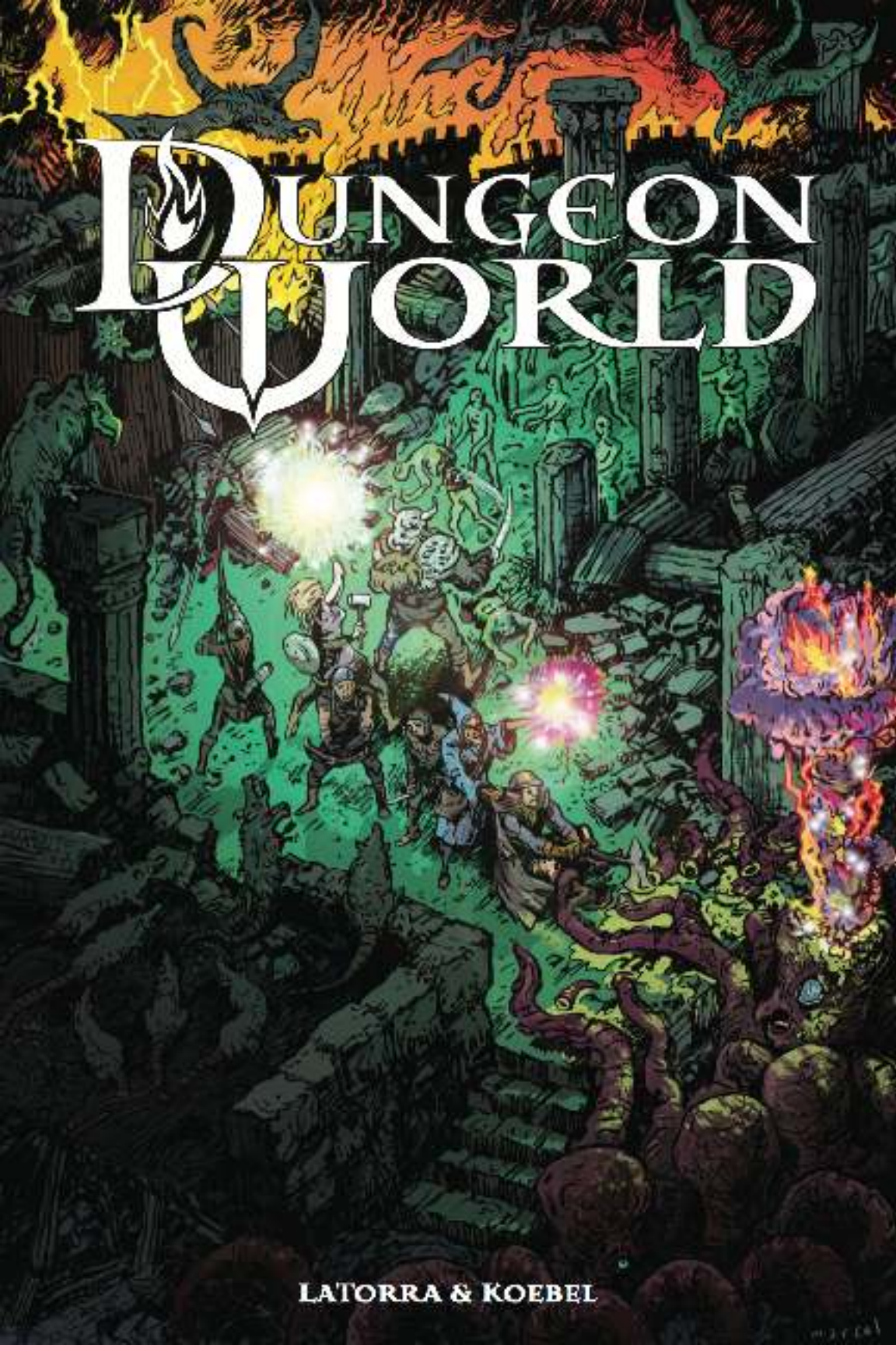


DUNGEON WORLD



LATORRA & KOEBEL

DUNGEON WORLD



Dungeon World
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	— 6
PLAYING THE GAME	— 17
CHARACTER CREATION	— 49
BASIC MOVES	— 57
THE BARD <i>♫</i>	83
THE CLERIC <i>⚔</i>	91
THE DRUID <i>♁</i>	105
THE FIGHTER <i>⚔</i>	113
THE PALADIN <i>♁</i>	121
THE RANGER <i>♁</i>	129
THE THIEF <i>♁</i>	137
THE WIZARD <i>♁</i>	145
THE GM	— 159
FIRST SESSION	— 177
FRONTS	— 185
THE WORLD	— 205
MONSTERS	— 221
CAVERN DWELLERS	— 235
SWAMP DENIZENS	— 245
UNDEAD LEGIONS	— 257
DARK WOODS	— 267
RAVENOUS HORDES	— 277
TWISTED EXPERIMENTS	— 289
LOWER DEPTHS	— 299
PLANAR POWERS	— 307
FOLK OF THE REALM	— 315
EQUIPMENT	— 323
ADVANCED DELVING	— 345

APPENDICES

THANKS	— 363
TEACHING THE GAME	— 381
ADVENTURE CONVERSION	— 385
INSTANT NPCs	— 393
TAG REFERENCE	— 396
INDEX	— 400



CHAPTER 1

DUNGEON WORLD

Dungeon World is a world of fantastic adventure. A world of magic, gods and demons, of good and evil, law and chaos. Brave heroes venture into the most dangerous corners of the land in search of gold and glory.

Adventurers take many shapes in Dungeon World. The races of elves, men, dwarves, and halflings all have their heroes. Some are near-invincible beasts of battle encased in iron armor. Others are more mysterious, conjuring up and wielding the mighty forces of magic. Treasure and glory are sought by a holy cleric, a tricky thief, a mighty paladin, and more.

It isn't all easy heroics and noble bravery, though. Every time the ranger guides his friends through the ancient woods there are a hundred things waiting to bite his head off. Slavering hordes of goblin troops, maybe. Or is this the Cursed Wood, where dwells the Gray Witch? Or the throngs of hateful dead, looking to drag a meaty corpse back to their lair? Scary, sure, but there's treasure, too. More gold and jewels and magic lost to man have fallen between the cracks in the world than you can imagine. Who better to retrieve it than a band of stalwart heroes?

You and your friends *are* those heroes. You go where others can't or won't. There are monstrous things lurking in the world. Are you ready to face them?

INTRODUCTION



THE BARD

The poems say an adventurer's life is all open roads and the glory of coin and combat. The tales told in every farmhand-filled inn have to have some ring of truth to them, don't they? The songs to inspire peasantry and royals alike—to soothe the savage beast or drive men to a frenzy—have to come from somewhere.

Enter the bard. You, with your smooth tongue and quick wit. You teller-of-tales and singer-of-songs. A mere minstrel can retell a thing, but it takes a true bard to live it. Strap on your boots, noble orator. Sharpen that hidden dagger and take up the call. Someone's got to be there, fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with the goons and the thugs and the soon-to-be-heroes. Who better than you to write the tale of your own heroism?

Nobody. Get going.



THE CLERIC

The lands of Dungeon World are a gods-forsaken mess. They're lousy with the walking dead, beasts of all sorts, and the vast unnatural spaces between safe and temple-blessed civilizations. It is a godless world out there. That's why it needs you.

Bringing the glory of your god to the heathens isn't just in your nature—it's your calling. It falls to you to proselytize with sword and mace and spell, to cleave deep into the witless heart of the wilds and plant the seed of divinity there. Some say that it's best to keep the gods close to your heart. You know that's rubbish. God lives at the edge of a blade.

Show the world who is lord.

THE DRUID

Cast your eyes around the fire. What has brought you to these people, stinking of the dust and sweat of the city? Perhaps it is a kindness—do you protect them as the mother bear watches over her cubs? Are they your pack, now? Strange brothers and sisters you have. Whatever your inspiration, they would certainly fail without your sharp senses and sharper claws.

You are of the sacred spaces; you are born of soil and wear the marks of her spirits on your skin. You may have had a life before, maybe you were a city dweller like them, but not now. You've given up that static shape. Listen to your allies pray to their carved stone gods and polish their silver shells. They speak of the glory they'll find back in that festering town you left behind.

Their gods are children, their steel is false protection. You walk the old ways, you wear the pelts of the earth itself. You'll take your share of the treasure, but will you ever walk as one of them? Only time will tell.



THE FIGHTER

It's a thankless job—living day to day by your armor and the skill of your arm, diving heedlessly into danger. They won't be playing golden horns for the time you took that knife to the ribs for them in the bar in Bucksberg. No flock of angels will sing of the time you dragged them, still screaming, from the edge of the Pits of Madness, no.

Forget them.

You do this for the guts and the glory, for the scream of battle and the hot, hot blood of it. You are a beast of iron. Your friends may carry blades of forged steel but, fighter, you are steel. While your traveling companions might moan about their wounds around a campfire in the wilderness, you bear your scars with pride.

You are the wall—let every danger smash itself to dust on you. In the end, you'll be the last one standing.





THE PALADIN

Hell awaits. An eternity of torment in fire or ice or whatever best suits the sins of the damned throngs of Dungeon World. All that stands between the pits of that grim torture and salvation is you. Holy man, armored war machine, templar of the Good and the Light, right? The cleric may say his prayers at night to the gods, dwelling in their heavens. The fighter may wield his sharp sword in the name of “good” but you know. Only you.

Eyes, hands, and sweet killing blow of the gods, you are. Yours is the gift of righteousness and virtue—of justice, of Vision, too. A purity of intent that your companions do not have.

So guide these fools, paladin. Take up your holy cause and bring salvation to the wastrel world.

Vae victis, right?

THE RANGER



These city-born folk you travel with. Have they heard the call of the wolf? Felt the winds howl in the bleak deserts of the East? Have they hunted their prey with the bow and the knife like you? Hell no. That’s why they need you.

Guide. Hunter. Creature of the wilds. You are these things and more. Your time in the wilderness may have been solitary until now, but the call of some greater thing—call it fate if you like—has cast your lot with these folk. Brave, they may be. Powerful and strong, too. But only you know the secrets of the spaces between.

Without you, they’d be lost. Blaze a trail through the blood and dark, strider.

THE THIEF

You've heard them, sitting around the campfire. Bragging about this battle or that, or about how their gods are smiling on your merry band. You count your coins and smile to yourself—this is the thrill above all. You alone know the secret of Dungeon World: filthy, filthy lucre.

Sure, they give you lip for all the times you've snuck off alone, but without you, every one of them would have been dissected by a flying guillotine or poisoned straight to death by some ancient needle trap. So let them complain. When you're done with all this delving you'll toast their heroes' graves.

From your castle. Full of gold. You rogue.



THE WIZARD

Dungeon World has rules. Not the laws of men or the rule of some petty tyrant. Bigger, better rules. You drop something—it falls. You can't make something out of nothing. The dead stay dead, right?

Oh, the things we tell ourselves to feel better about the long, dark nights.

You've spent so very long poring over those tomes of yours. Conducting experiments that nearly drove you mad and casting summonings that endangered your very soul. For what? For power. What else is there? Not just the power of King or Country but the power to boil a man's blood in his veins. To call on the thunder of the sky and the churn of the roiling earth. To shrug off the rules the world holds so dear.

Let them cast their sidelong glances. Let them call you "warlock" or "diabolist." Who among them can hurl fireballs from their eyes?

Yeah. Didn't think so.



WHY?

Why play Dungeon World?

First, to see the characters do **amazing things**. To see them explore the unexplored, slay the undying, and go from the deepest bowels of the world to the highest peaks of the heavens. To see them caught up in momentous events and grand tragedies.

Second, to see them **struggle together**. To gather as a party despite their differences and stand united against their foes, or to argue over treasure, debate battle plans, and join in righteous celebration over a victory hard-won.

Third, because **the world still has so many places to explore**. There are unlooted tombs and dragon hoards dotting the countryside just waiting for quick-fingered and strong-armed adventurers to discover them. That unexplored world has plans of its own. Play to see what they are and how they'll change the lives of our characters.

"They were adventurers... a few performed useful services, research cartography and the like. Most were nothing but tomb raiders. They were scum who died violent deaths, hanging on to a certain cachet among the impressionable through their undeniable bravery and their occasionally impressive exploits."

—Perdido Street Station

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is going to teach you how to play Dungeon World. If you're going to be the GM, you're going to need to read the whole thing, though you can skim through the monster stats for now and save the Advanced Delving chapter for later. Try printing the play aids too, they'll help you see what's most important. If you're a player, you might not need to read more than Playing the Game—a lot of the rules in Dungeon World will be contained in the character sheets you use during the game itself. You'll come back to the text a few times throughout your game to refer to certain rules, but it should be a rare occasion.

SETTING UP

To play Dungeon World, you'll need to gather yourself and 2–5 friends. A group of 4 to 6, including you, is best. Choose one person to be the Game Master (GM). Everyone else will be players, taking the role of the characters in the game (we call these the player characters or PCs). As you play, the players say what their characters say, think, and do. The GM describes everything else in the world.

You can play a single session or string together multiple sessions into a campaign. Plan accordingly if you plan on playing a campaign, maybe setting aside a night of the week to play. Each session will usually be a few hours and you'll be able to start playing right away within the first session.

You'll need to print some materials. Before you start a new game, find or print off at least:

- A few copies of the basic and special moves
- One copy of each class sheet
- One copy each of the cleric and wizard spell sheets
- One copy of the adventure sheet and GM moves
- Miscellanea such as: pens and pencils, scrap paper for maps and notes, maybe some index cards

Everyone at the table will need something to write with and some six-sided dice. Two dice is the minimum but two dice per player is a good idea.

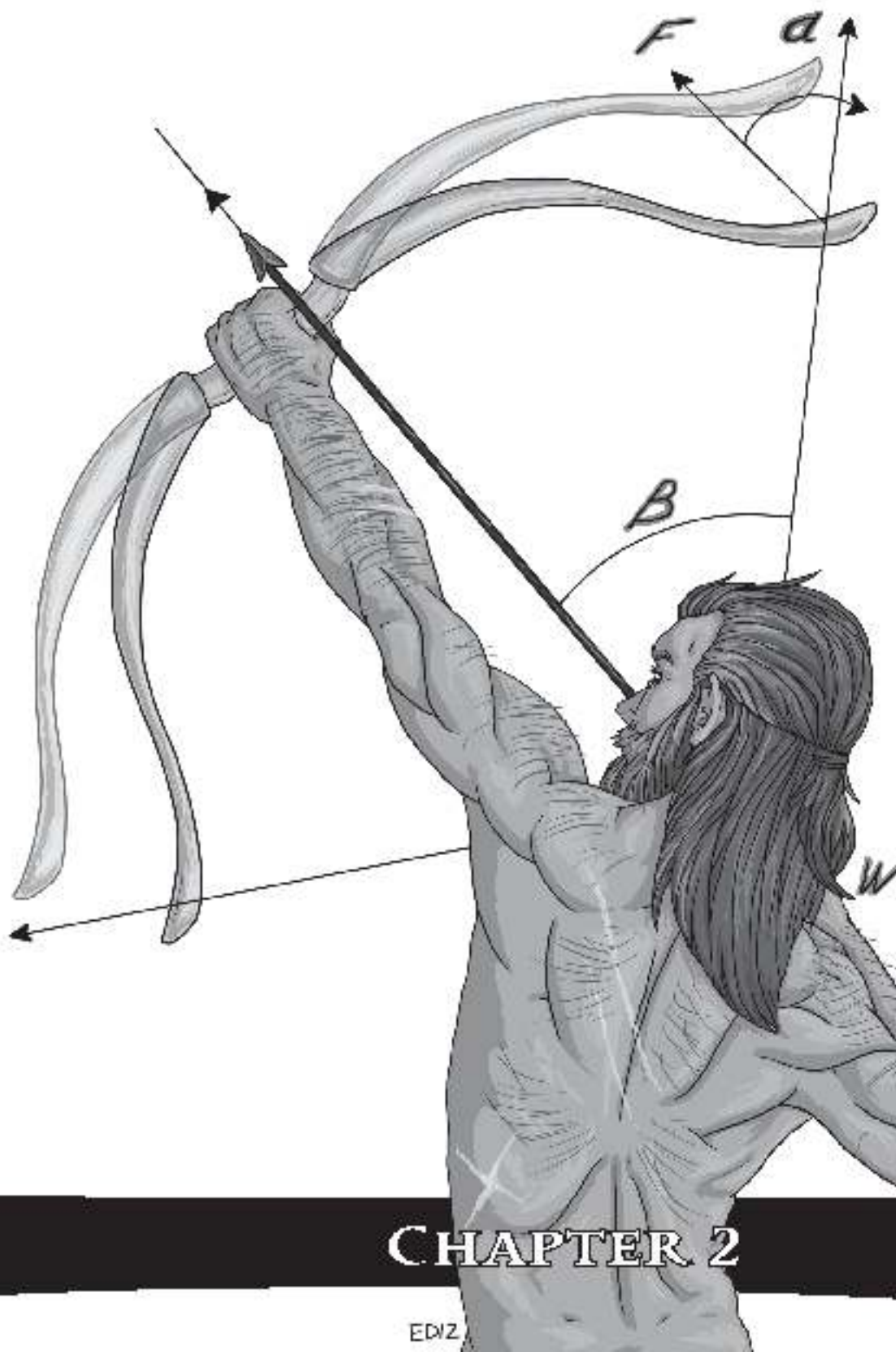
You'll also need some specialized dice: four-sided, eight-sided, ten-sided and twelve-sided. One of each is enough but more is better: you won't have to pass them around so much.

WHAT'S DUNGEON WORLD LIKE TO PLAY?

Playing Dungeon World is all about finding out what happens when your characters encounter dangerous and exciting monsters, strange ruins, and unusual people on their quest for gold and glory. It's a conversation between the players and the GM—the GM tells the players what they see and hear in the world around them and the players say what their characters are thinking, feeling, and doing. Sometimes those descriptions will trigger a move—something that'll cause everyone to stop and say “time to roll the dice to see what happens.” For a moment everyone hangs on the edges of their seats as the dice clatter to a stop. Tension and excitement are always the result, no matter how the dice land.

As you play your characters they'll change from their adventures and gain experience while learning about the world, overcoming monsters, and gathering riches. You'll discover how they feel about each other and where their moral compass points them. When they accrue enough experience they'll gain levels, becoming more powerful and having more options to explore.

You can play Dungeon World with the same group, session to session, over a long series of adventures, watching your characters change and grow together. You can play it as a self-contained game in a single-session, too. Whether a long campaign or a one-shot, Dungeon World's rules are here to guide you and help you create a world of fantasy adventure. Time to get out there and explore it!



CHAPTER 2

Playing *Dungeon World* means having a conversation; somebody says something, then you reply, maybe someone else changes it. We talk about the fiction—the world of the characters and the things that happen around them. As we play, the rules will change it, too. They have something to say about the world. There are no turns or rounds in *Dungeon World*, no rules to say whose turn it is to talk. Instead players take turns in the natural flow of the conversation, which always has some back-and-forth. The GM says something, the players respond. The players ask questions or make statements, the GM tells them what happens next. *Dungeon World* is never a monologue; it's always a conversation.

The rules help shape the conversation of play. While the GM and the players are talking, the rules and the fiction are talking, too. Every rule has an explicit fictional trigger that tells you when it is meant to come into the conversation.

Like any conversation, the time you spend listening is just as important as the time you spend talking. The details established by the other people at the table (the GM and the other players) are important to you; they might change what moves you can make, set up an opportunity for you, or create a challenge you have to face. The conversation works best when we all listen, ask questions, and build on each other's contributions.

This chapter is all about how to play *Dungeon World*. Here, you'll find information about the rules—how they arise from and contribute to the game. We'll cover both general rules, like making moves, and more specific rules, like those for dealing with damage and hit points.

ABILITY SCORES AND MODIFIERS

Many of the rules discussed in this chapter rely on a player character's abilities and their modifiers. The abilities are Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. They measure a player character's raw ability in each of those areas on a scale from 1 to 18, where 18 is the peak of mortal ability.

Each ability has a modifier associated with it that is used when rolling with that ability. These are written as three-letter abbreviations: str., con., dex., int., wis., cha. Modifiers range from -3 to +3. The modifier is always derived from the current ability score.

For more on abilities and modifiers, see the Character Creation rules on page 32.

PLAYING THE GAME

MAKING MOVES

The most basic unit of rules in Dungeon World is the move. A move looks like this:

When you **attack an enemy in melee**, roll+STR. *On a 10+, you deal your damage to the enemy and avoid their attack. At your option, you may choose to do +1d6 damage but expose yourself to the enemy's attack. *On a 7-9, you deal your damage to the enemy and the enemy makes an attack against you.

Moves are rules that tell you when they trigger and what effect they have. A move depends on a fictional action and always has some fictional effect. "Fictional" means that the action and effect come from the world of the characters we're describing. In the move above the trigger is "when you attack an enemy in melee." The effect is what follows: a roll to be made and differing fictional effects based on the outcome of the roll.

When a player describes their character doing something that triggers a move, that move happens and its rules apply. If the move requires a roll, its description will tell you what dice to roll and how to read their results.

A character can't take the fictional action that triggers a move without that move occurring. For example, if Isaac tells the GM that his character dashes past a crazed axe-wielding orc to the open door, he makes the defy danger move because its trigger is "when you act despite an imminent threat." Isaac can't just describe his character running past the orc without making the defy danger move and he can't make the defy danger move without acting despite an imminent threat or suffering a calamity. The moves and the fiction go hand-in-hand.

Everyone at the table should listen for when moves apply. If it's ever unclear if a move has been triggered, everyone should work together to clarify what's happening. Ask questions of everyone involved until everyone sees the situation the same way and then roll the dice, or don't, as the situation requires.

The GM's monsters, NPCs, and other assorted beasties also have moves, but they work differently.

The Monsters chapter on page 221 describes monster moves.

MOVES AND DICE

Most moves include the phrase “roll+x” where “x” is one of your character’s ability modifiers (CON for example). Unless the move tells you otherwise, that “roll” always means that you roll two six-sided dice and add their results to the value of the modifier. Some moves will have you add some other value to your roll instead of an ability modifier.

I’m making a move that asks me to roll+STR and my STR modifier is +1. I rolled two six-sided dice, got a one and a four. My total is six.

The results always fall into three basic categories. A total of 10 or higher (written 10+) is the best outcome. A total of 7–9 is still a success but it comes with compromises or cost. A 6 or lower is trouble, but you also get to mark XP.

Each move will tell you what happens on a 10+ and a 7–9. Most moves won’t say what happens on a 6-, that’s up to the GM but you also always mark XP.

Damage rolls work a little differently. They use different dice depending on who or what is dealing damage.

In a move the * marks the beginning of an outcome (like “On a 10+”) to make it easy to reference.

Damage rolls are covered in more detail later in this chapter on page 22.

THE BASIC OUTCOMES

- 10+: You do it with little trouble
- 7–9: You do it, but with complications or trouble
- 6-: The GM says what happens and you mark XP

MOVES AND EQUIPMENT

The most important role of a character's equipment is to help describe the moves they make. A character without a weapon of some sort isn't going to trigger the hack and slash move when fighting a dragon since a bare-knuckle punch really doesn't do much to inch-thick scales. It doesn't count for the purposes of triggering the move.

Likewise, sometimes equipment will avoid triggering a move. Climbing a sheer icy cliff is usually defying danger, but with a good set of climbing gear you might be able to avoid the imminent danger or calamity that triggers the move.

Weapons are particularly likely to modify what moves you can trigger. A character with a dagger can easily stab the goblin gnawing on his leg, triggering hack and slash, but the character with a halberd is going to have a much harder time bringing it to bear on such a close foe.

Items and gear of every sort have tags. Tags are terms to describe things. Some tags have a specific effect on the rules (things like damage reduction on armor or a magical bonus to a particular kind of move or stat). Other tags are purely about the fiction (like the close tag, which describes the length of a weapon and how near your enemies need to be for you to attack them). Tags help you describe your character's actions when the items are being used and they give the GM information about how the items you're using might go wrong or cause complications when you fail a roll.

Tags are covered in detail in the Equipment chapter on page 323.

THE EFFECTS OF MOVES

The effects of moves are always about the fictional world the characters inhabit. A 10+ on hack and slash doesn't just mean the mechanical effects, it means you successfully attacked something and did some type of harm to it.

Once you've figured out what the effects of the move are, apply them to the fiction and go back to the conversation. Always return to what's going on in the game.

Some moves have immediate mechanical effects, like dealing damage or giving someone a bonus to their next roll. These effects are always a reflection of the fictional world the characters are in; make sure to use the fiction when describing the effects of the move.

SOME MOVES...

...Use the phrase “deal damage.” Dealing damage means you roll the damage dice for your class; sometimes your weapon will add or subtract damage too. You use your damage dice any time you make an attack that could reasonably hurt your target. Usually that means you’re wielding a weapon, but your fists can be weapons with the right training or an interesting situation

...Say “take +1 forward.” That means to take +1 to your next move roll (not damage). The bonus can be greater than +1, or even a penalty, like -1. There also might be a condition, such as “take +1 forward to hack and slash,” in which case the bonus applies only to the next time you roll hack and slash, not any other move.

...Say “take +1 ongoing.” That means to take +1 to all move rolls (not damage). The bonus can be larger than +1, or it can be a penalty, like -1. There also might be a condition, such as “take +1 ongoing to volley.” An ongoing bonus also says what causes it to end, like “until you dismiss the spell” or “until you atone to your deity.”

...Give you “hold.” Hold is currency that allows you to make some choices later on by spending the hold as the move describes. Hold is always saved up for the move that generated it; you can’t spend your hold from defend on trap expert or vice versa, for example.

...Present a choice. The choice you make, like all move effects, dictates things that happen in the fiction in addition to any more mechanical effects. The choice you make on the 10+ result of hack and slash to deal more damage at the cost of opening yourself up is exactly what’s happening to your character: they have enough advantage that they can stay safe or push their luck.

...Give you a chance to say something about your character and their history. When you spout lore you may get asked how you know the information that the GM reveals. Take that opportunity to contribute to the game and show who your character really is. Just keep in mind the established facts and don’t contradict anything that’s already been described.

...Say “mark XP.” That means you add one to your current XP total.

XP is covered in detail on page 30.

HARM AND HEALING

"If it bleeds, we can kill it."
—Dutch, "Predator"

Cuts, bruises, and mortal wounds are common dangers for adventurers to face in Dungeon World. In the course of play, characters will take damage, heal, and maybe even die. A character's health is measured by their hit points (HP). Damage subtracts from HP. In the right conditions, or with medical or magical help, damage is healed and HP is restored.

HP

A character's HP is a measure of their stamina, endurance, and health. More HP means the character can fight longer and endure more trauma before facing Death's cold stare.

Your class tells your maximum HP. Your Constitution (the ability, not the modifier) comes into play as well, so more Constitution means more HP. If your Constitution permanently changes during play you adjust your HP to reflect your new Constitution score. Unless your Constitution changes your maximum HP stays the same.

DAMAGE

When a character takes damage they subtract the damage dealt from their current HP. Armor mitigates damage; if a character has armor they subtract its value from the damage dealt. This might mean a blow is turned away completely—that's fine, it's what armor is for! Damage can never take a character below 0 HP.

Damage is determined by the attacker. Player characters deal damage according to their class, the weapon used, and the move they've made.

If a move just says "deal damage" the character rolls their class's damage dice plus any bonuses or penalties from moves, weapons, or effects. If a move specifies an amount of damage, use that in place of the class's damage roll.

Monsters roll damage as listed in their description. Use this damage any time the monster takes direct action to hurt someone, even if they use a method other than their normal attack.

Other sources of damage—like being struck by a chunk of a collapsing tower, or falling into a pit—are left to the GM based on these options:

- It threatens bruises and scrapes at worst: d4 damage
- It's likely to spill some blood, but nothing horrendous: d6 damage
- It might break some bones: d8 damage
- It could kill a common person: d10 damage

Add the *ignores armor* tag if the source of the damage is particularly large or if the damage comes from magic or poison.

Temporary or circumstantial armor works the same way as armor that you wear: 1 armor for partial cover, 2 armor for major cover.

Damage is dealt based on the fiction. Moves that deal damage, like hack and slash, are just a special case of this: the move establishes that damage is being dealt in the fiction. Damage can be assigned even when no move is made, if it follows from the fiction.

HP loss is often only part of the effect. If the harm is generalized, like falling into a pit, losing the HP is probably all there is to it. When the harm is specific, like an orc pulling your arm from its socket, HP should be part of the effect but not the entirety of it. The bigger issue is dealing with the newly busted arm: how do you swing a sword or cast a spell? Likewise having your head chopped off is not HP damage, it's just you being dead.

DAMAGE FROM MULTIPLE CREATURES

It's a brave monster that goes into battle alone. Most creatures fight with someone at their side, and maybe another at their back, and possibly an archer covering the rear, and so on. This can lead to multiple monsters dealing their damage at once.

If multiple creatures attack at once roll the highest damage among them and add +1 damage for each monster beyond the first.

A goblin orkaster (d10+1 damage ignores armor) and three goblins (d6 damage) all throw their respective weapons—a magical acid orb for the orkaster, spears for the rest—at Lux as she assaults their barricade. I roll the highest damage, d10+1 ignores armor, and add +3 damage for the three other goblins. Adding it all up I tell Lux she takes 9 damage ignoring armor as the acid leaks into the scratches left by the spears.

STUN DAMAGE

Stun damage is non-lethal damage. A PC who takes stun damage is defying danger to do anything at all, the danger being “you’re stunned.” This lasts as long as makes sense in the fiction—you’re stunned until you can get a chance to clear your head or fix whatever stunned you. A GM character that takes stun damage doesn’t count it against their HP but will act accordingly, staggering around for a few seconds, fumbling blindly, etc.

ADDING AND SUBTRACTING DAMAGE

When a move tells you to add damage, you add that damage to the roll on the dice. If it tells you to add some dice (like “+1d4 damage”) you roll that extra dice and add its result to the total.

The same goes for subtracting damage: you subtract the number from the total rolled. If you subtract a dice (like “-1d6 damage”) you subtract the rolled amount from the original total. Damage never goes negative—0 damage is the minimum.

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