

Grunt

An Episodic, Mind, Body & Spirit RPG

Author's Proof

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Dust Cover

Grunt is a combat-oriented role playing game. Each character or team of characters is created by random design and cast by Fate or Fury into an historical, mythic, anarchocivic or science-fiction scenario. The rules are simple, quick and violently realistic, designed for ease of play. In GRUNT there are heroes, beasts and foes—there are no NPCs.

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Inspirational Quote

“That Small and forgotten word, No.”

–Lee Morrison, Stop the World, I Want To Get Off

Dedication

For Ben, who boxed with this old man on his grandfather's living room floor.

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To the Reader

This past Friday, June 21st of 2024, having negotiated the postmodern NPC Sea, arriving in Joliet, Illinois, my friend Dan, ran a role playing game for his family. I rolled up an old, lame, cook, a former warrior with two pots and a cleaver, who had been kicked out of a mercenary company for failure to cook anything beyond “vapid mediocrity.” His name was Gruel, his lot in life cruel, and he failed his first gut check in service to his new friends. Dan has gone back to role playing basics and uses a die-20, ability check system, which I quite liked.

In GRUNT, it is my simple ambition to finally make a realistic combat system that is also playable. The players will simply need: 6-sided and 20-sided dice, pencil & paper and imagination.

The game rules will be contained in 7 chapters. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are a guide to character creation through PLAY. You better enjoy this part, because your GRUNT might get trampled, cleaved or run through in a battle a few minutes into the adventure. Just as in real life, when a fighting man goes into mortal combat, the actual adventure will be briefer than the pain and toil leading to it. It can be expected, that the generation of a character and his outfitting, will take longer than the actual battle or adventure he is plunged into.

If he survives this episode, perhaps a campaign has been begun, perhaps he dies in the next episode. The idea is to throw all of life's dice into that one adventure, to abandon any thought of career, but to go Into the World, perhaps before The God of Battle in war, perhaps before cold Madam Night in a duel, and experience as close as can be done on a table top with pencil, paper and dice, the type of strife that either barred men from fame, or made them loom great in our mind's eye.

Chapters 4 and 5 describe how rules by which the GRUNT interacts with the world of combat, perhaps in a hunt, in a sniper duel, during the conduct of a military

skirmish or a crime, perhaps even in the chaos of a mass battle, or simply in a back street gang fight.

Chapter 6 present a historic episode from the life of Alexander the Great for play and then gives various ideas for developing other episodes in different historical periods or speculative settings, even for depicting your self and your friend's in a survival situation.

Arrian's Alexander was a large part of the inspiration for this undertaking. For that great man and his men entered battle and pursued conquest in a very expeditionary fashion as placing themselves before Heaven for judgment. When they crossed the Granicus to fight their way up out of a river in the face of the best men the enemy had to oppose them, they sent up "a shout to the God of Battle." This was nothing less then placing the risks they were taking and the qualities they undertook this battle with, under the judgment of the Higher Power. This sentiment is represented by the various ways in which the dice in GRUNT are used to determine results.

Chapter 7 provides the game specifics of the equipment and the effects of combat and adventure on a GRUNT. GRUNT, as a game, is here envisioned as a starting point, to be developed by the players. The entire frame of this design is presented for free on the gaming page at jameslafond.com for the enjoyment of and improvement by my unseen fellow gamers.

An 8th Chapter on monsters and manias was added, and there is a relevant article included as an appendix.

GRUNT contains:

-1. Fate, Patrimony & Time

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Creation #1

-2. Arete & Pathos

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Creation #2

-3. Discord, Fear & Rout

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Transformation #3

-4. In The World

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Composition #4

This turned out to be a huge chapter, covering most of the play mechanics.

-5. To The God of Battle

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Expedition #5

-6. Pathos

Grunt Role Playing Game Episode Creation & Play # 6

-7. Grunt Grinder

Weapons, Armor, Effects and Recovery #7

-8. Head Cases and Monsters #8

Fate, Patrimony & Time

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Creation #1

It is assumed that all player characters are of the warrior type. This means that Fate and Her twisted sisters, the three snake-haired Furies of Night, have already smiled upon them by placing a weapon in the hand. Since I have been inspired to make this RPG while listening to Alexander's Anabasis by Arrian, I will use that social setting for examples. Until very recent times, a genetic component to human achievement and status was recognized and reflected in institutions, particularly of the warrior class. Throughout Arrian one hears a name, and then spends thrice as long hearing the name of his father.

Hence, in Grunt, one begins play as the birth of a hero looms, with social status granted from its only warrior source, the father, as a slave girl taken from a conquered race is planted with your sire's seed—no mind the wishes of your squirming mother! In attendance are the shades of the ancestors of both parties, the farmer planting you his seed, and his booty, his tillage, her scheming shades having a say as well—

then the gods, perhaps even God Almighty Himself, might take an interest. Even Time, locked in the deepest hell, by his very inattention, places his stamp upon thee. So have you, a warrior, been sent into the miserable suffering realm of the living, even as gods jealous of your temporary nature, envious even of your doom, weave hurdles for you upon their dastard loom...

Enjoy, warrior, unlikely to earn a song; for your trials will not wend overlong.

Wicked Fate, however, is a fickle bride to every one of her leaf-lived grooms. Even Alexander, Greatest of Historical men, was not granted a poet with a fraction the range of Homer, who sang for Achilles, a fellow who would have been a subordinate unit commander in Alexander's own army. If a Bronze Age pirate might win renown that eluded the Iron Age's Greatest Conqueror, there is hope for your unmade form yet.

The goal of the episodic game of Grunt, is to earn a song, at least a line, in some epic. But first, before we temporal characters fail or succeed, we must be created.

Father's Race 1 d6

Historically, the low level men who win the most fame for a conquering race are often not of that Imperial blood, but soldiers of Fortune, which is to say more than fighting for pay. Alexander's #1 unit, used more than any other and cited the most in after action reports, were the semi-barbarian Agriane allies, who seem to have fought for the sheer joy of helping the Brat King of Antiquity bring the World Order to its bent knee. So, although most of Alexander's men were Macedonian, to whom administrative posts fell, as much of the killing was done by minority allies and mercenary units.

- 1. A Conquered and Bound Race [a Theban]
- 2. A Tributary Barbarian Race [a Thracian]
- 3. An Allied Barbarian Race [an Agriane]
- 4, 5. A Civilized Race: Ally, Mercenary or Volunteer [Thessalonian, Elean or Corinthian...]
- 6. A Man of the Conquering Race [Macedonian]
- ...

Father's Class 1 d6

- 1. Slave [can include many conscript soldier types, especially in modern adventures]

- 2. Freedman [manumitted]
- 3. Freeman [born free but not inheriting slaves]
- 4. Peasant [herder or farmer inheriting slaves]
- 5. Warrior Class
- 6. Ruling Class
- ...

Ruling Class Type 1d6

- 1. Merchant [slave driving/banking/mining]
- 2. Clan/Band Leader [headman]
- 3. Tribal/District Leader [chief]
- 4. Priest/Seer [advisor to prince]
- 5. Guard [companion to prince]
- 6. Prince [So, rolling 3 6s in a row on this makes your Alexander himself! That character will be made for you as an example in Arete & Pathos. But continue, let's see how your Alexander stacks up to the historical one.]

Choose Identity

Father's Name, Title, Race

Character's Name

Determine Blessings

If a character's father was of a certain class, no matter his race, then he may save that class die roll and use it to replace a poor ability die roll, as a pre-rolled advantage:

... Peasant Class Characters may use their 4 class roll to replace a lesser result on one of the Body Ability scores. Make the choice on the fly.

... Warrior Class Characters may use their 5 class roll to replace a lesser result on one of the Body, Mind or Spirit Ability scores.

... Ruling Class Characters may use their 6 class roll to replace a lesser result on any one of the Body, Mind or Spirit Ability scores.

Each character of the three fortunate classes only gets one blessing, essentially used as a fixed re-roll to redress a bad score. This blessing must be decided upon or rejected anytime a 3 or less is rolled during that process described under Warrior Creation. The other players should heckle or advise the creating player to represent the fact that mamma was taken against her will, but also with social sanction.

...

Warrior Creation

This process is done in order, one character at a time, with the other players present as angels, demons, jesters, advising uncles, jealous slaves, loyal servants, wicked stepmothers, helpful midwives, scheming uncles or even seers, making suggestions as the future warrior is ejected from the womb of the suffering slave girl, or even the princess chained by her father's alliance, that was planted with his father's seed.

Step 1

Name the grunt.

We already think we know who his daddy is.

Step 2

How old is this poor bastard now that his dreary life's one heroic test is upon him?

1d6

- 1. Too Young [12 to 17] years (11 + 1d6)
- 2. Young [15 to 25] years (13 + 2d6)
- 3, 4. Prime [25 to 35] years (23 + 2d6)
- 5. Veteran [33 to 48] years (30 + 3d6)
- 6. Too Old [44 to 64] years (40 + 4d6)

This age scheme was used by the legion of Republican Rome. Some men of the same age will be of an older class, one fellow too old at 45, and another still an able veteran at 48.

Step 3

Hand of Khronos [Time], Saturn to you Latin Mercenaries.

This process establishes the effects of mixed age groups of warriors or soldiers on combat operations at the lowest, personal level. Do not worry, there is something worthwhile about each age grade. There was a reason why Alexander was still served by his father's men, and his successors by them still into their 60s, and why Postmodern militaries with narrow age groupings lack psychological stamina. All fighters are assumed to be fit for duty at their age, with Time afflicting some men of the same age differently. For instance, fighters of prime and past prime may both be 35 years.

Too Young? 12 to 17 Years

Re-roll an Agility score of less than 3

Re-roll an Esoteric score of more than 3, but mark the original score as a potential that may be realized through play.

Young? 15 to 25 Years

Re-roll a Stamina of less than 3

Re-roll a Wit of more than 3—dummy! [place set aside result in brackets as potential]

Men of your age are boring but reliable.

Prime 25 to 35 Years

Re-roll a Stamina of less than 3

Re-roll a Strength of less than 3

Re-roll an Animistic of less than 3

You are the backbone of the army. Expect to be struck first.

Former Strength

Below we get into age related infirmity. When a high score is re-rolled and a low score results, that original high score is retained [in brackets] as an old worn ability. If the player makes a check against the over all ability of that given Pillar of Arete, during play, then he

may use his old time ability. For instance, if Grudge the Avenger once had a 6 agility and now has a 2, if he wishes to use that 6, even as a component of the overall body score, he must roll equal to or less than his overall body score.

If he rolls a 20, he is crippled in the attempt. [see crippling rule in play]

If he rolls a 1 he is restored by Nike to his previous ability. [See restoration rule in play.] This concept will be explained later, in detail. If he rolls less than his overall ability he may use his old agility score for the rest of the battle or action. However, the 1 restoration and 20 crippling rule are in force for the length of the immediate adventure.

Veteran 33 to 48 Years

Agility of more than 3 must be re-rolled.

Stamina of more than 3 re-rolled

Kit of less than 3 re-rolled

Wit of less than 3 re-rolled

Animistic of less than 3 re-rolled.

An expertise may be selected.

Expertise will be described in Pathos.
This is the NCO territory.

...

Too Old! 44 to 64 Years

An Old Man must make all of the same checks as a
Veteran. In addition:

Strength and Agility scores of more than 4 are re-rolled.

A 2nd expertise may be selected.

Can you spell garrison duty?

**Your warrior has now been brought to life and placed
within Time—decoration is the subject of steps 5 thru
10.**

Arete & Pathos

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Creation #2

The Three Pillars of Arete, or Heroic Trinity, are:

Body

Mind

Spirit

These are addressed in Steps 4 through 9, in order, below.

Step 4

The Three Pillars of Arete:

–Body

–Mind

–Spirit

Each is composed of three abilities.

Each player chooses which pillar he would lean on most heavily. Whichever of the Heroic Trinity he chooses, that die rolling process will grant him the latitude of reassigning a die roll, let's say for strength, to stamina, of from agility to stamina, giving him three choices, to include shifting one to another and moving the second

back to the ability slot the first one was moved from.
This choice is made before adjustments due to age or youth.

Steps 5, 6 and 7 are rolled in order

Step 5

Body = 3-18

Each of the 3 Body Abilities are 1d6

Strength 1-6

0 = scribe/woman

1 = boy

2 = youth

3 = man

4 = strongman

5 = very strong man, such as Odysseus

6 = superman, like Ajax, Achilles, Herakles

Beasts strength ranges up to 12, with monstrous strength limited to 18. This is covered in Chapter 8.

Stamina 1-6

0 = Slothful Eunuch or Postmodern American Landwhale

1 = Elderly peasant

2 = Woman

3 = Man

4 = Athlete

5 = Driven Athlete

6 = Tireless Paragons like Achilles and Alexander

Agility 1-6

0 = The slothful herd of human cattle

1 = Elderly

2 = Tinker

3 = Youth or Boy

4 = Athlete

5 = Superior Athlete

6 = Uncanny Athlete, such as a circus acrobat, skateboard, pro, etc.

A character's body score is used for general task resolution and combat, typically by rolling equal to or less than that 3-18 score on a d20. A 20 is always a disaster and a 1 is always a miracle. So people who fight a lot will have a greater chance at greatness and a surer appointment at Death's drear Door.

Body points also act as hit points or life points or power levels in other games. Each adventure should begin with

the heroes keeping a current life point tally. There are rules for fatigue addressed under play. A character reduced to 0 is at Death's Door, to be addressed under play. More on this will be discussed in Chapters 4 & 5.

The 1–6 Specific Abilities will be used for specific tasks.

Some uses are:

Strength is used for damage and for injury checks.

Stamina is used to determine the number of rounds one can act without fatigue.

Agility is used for damage reduction and other specific tasks.

...

Step 6

Mind: 3–18

Knit: 1–6 The biomechanical recall ability to learn through training, practice or experimentation, a physical intelligence skill key to warrior status.

–0: Modern, suburban man/woman/brain injured elder

–1: Clumsy

–2: Slow wit

–3: Sword food

- 4: Apt
- 5: Amazing
- 6: Peerless

This key element for hand to hand combat will be covered in detail under play.

Kit: Technical ability with mechanical weapons as well as all forms of weapon construction and maintenance.

-0. Look down the barrel while you fumble with the trigger.

-1. Worthless, subhuman.

-2. You might get it.

-3. Eventually you will learn something.

-4. Smart ass.

-5. Arrogant prick!

-6. Wizard of gadgets, get back out of the front line.

Better yet, go to the engineer's tent and invent something these other idiots can use!

Wit:

-0. Yes, Good Citizen, the Government is your friend, the tax collector your servant and the policeman is standing on your neck for your own safety!

-1. Barely smart enough to be tricked.

- 2. Mom only dropped you on your head twice? Smart enough to lose it all in dice. Union General officers circa 1862.
- 3. The average idiot, you are.
- 4. Don't get any big ideas, Slick.
- 5. Mad planning genius, a Napoleon, Caesar, Robert E. Lee.
- 6. Odysseus, Tamerlane, Alexander, Nathan Bedford Forest, Genghis Khan, the kind of genius that toys with lesser minds of considerable power.

Mind is the overall quality of your grunt brain. Such concepts as Mind's Eye and War Fog will be covered under play.

Step 7

Spirit 3-18

Animistic: 1-6

In play, Animistic spirit serves as bravery, and also as empathy with animals, and is the key ability of the mounted warrior. The down side of a high animistic score is its sets you up to be manipulated by men with

higher social scores or terrorized or befuddled by bad guys with high esoteric scores, basically the fate of the bugman who has been mesmerized by philosophers. Some resistance checks later in the game will reverse the value of an otherwise beneficial ability, like the high beauty score of a captive slave girl at first increasing warrior status and then being used to seduce him into forgetting Odin's warning about guest houses.

0 = The postmodern bugman out of touch with nature and afraid of his very shadow.

1 = Modern home owner

2 = Liar, Zombie whisperer

3 = Criminal/Military Leader, Mob Whisperer

4 = Empath, Horse/Dog/Grunt Whisperer

5 = Heroic Leader, Warrior Whisperer

6 = Primal Leader, Wolf Whisperer

Social: 1-6

Social ability is used to convince peers, negotiate with allies, make treaties with enemies, etc.

0 = Modern Voter/Sports Fan

1 = Church Lady, "There Should Be A Law!"

2 = Functionary, lower management

3 = Manager, Sergeant

4 = Politician, Captain

5 = Cunning Politician, Commander

6 = Master Politician, General

Esoteric: 1–6

0 = Atheist with Promethean aspirations to becoming a node of the collective Eater God.

1 = Secular Humanist, denying Eternity

2 = Agnostic, vaguely aware that greater powers than man menaces his steps.

3 = Deist.

4 = Poet, keenly aware of the Other Side, able to conduct rites of sacrifice and oath binding from an honest heart.

5 = Seers, Yogi's, Oracles, soothsayers, etc.

6 = Prophet, Messiah, and other such folk destined to rise to the attention of Kings.

Warrior concepts like mania [Discord, Fear and Rout [panic], madness, mind's eye, war fog, faith, guilt, greed, melancholy, doubt, rage, are developed latter in this process and not satisfactorily addressed until Chapter 8. I'm just the designer, you the developer, so any gaps or contradictions you will hopefully men.

Step 8

Arete

Warrior excellence in the grips of War and under the wiles of less simple-minded powers, is in part, the possession of certain skills and arts. All warriors are regarded as skilled in the use of weapons, including the body. Expertise, or mastery, is an indication that one of these skills has been the obsessive focus of the warrior, and grants him advantage when in a situation where that skill is applicable. When “skill” is used in play, we here refer to expertise or mastery.

These Basic Martial Skills are governed by Knit and include:

- Marching
- Running
- Jumping
- Riding
- Climbing
- Hiding
- Throwing
- Hurling
- Slinging
- Archery

- Battling
- Dueling

Operational Skills Are governed by Kit and include:

- Shooting firearms
- Using Chemical weapons, including fire
- Field artillery, of ancient mechanical or modern type
- Reading Terrain, to gain combat advantage, access to or egress from the enemy
- Quartermaster management of quarters, transport and supplies
- Armorer, making and maintaining weapons
- Engineering, siege craft and constructing defensive works [every Roman soldier had this Art]
- Seamanship
- Nautical carpentry, the carpenter being a very important crew member
- Navigation
- ...

Higher Martial Skills are governed by Wit and include:

- Task to Order: [Private] the ability to take an order without hesitation and at the same time put it into

sensible execution, this is the battle initiative quality of a soldier. “Up the ladder, sir!”

–Give Orders, [Sergeant] to a small unit without screwing it up. “Up the ladder, men!”

–Tactics, [Captain] for the execution of the commander’s stratagem. “If I send those poor bastards up that ladder, we can lay up two more.”

–Stratagem, [Commander/Brigadier] coming up with the plan for a battle zone. “The king wants men on that section of wall. Send some front liners up and we’ll have the Thracians through up flanking ladders and the Cretans feather the defenders.”

So, for an episode of Grunt, we could have the 4 players all go up on the decoy ladder, or have 1 player as the captain, and the other 3 players one to each ladder, the first men up, in contest with each other on the side ladders and the sergeant herding a file of grunts to their doom up the center ladder.

Success in actions like this gained many wounded soldiers easy garrison posts and prizes, widows and orphans tax and service exemption, and the most heroic

soldiers a promotion and another chance to look DEATH in the face.

Grunt is intended for the lowest level of combat, actions in passes, siege breaches & sorties, ship-to-ship battles, rearguard & vanguard actions, last stands of depleted units, etc.

Additional skills that fall outside of military operations and combat are not satisfactorily covered in Grunt. I mean, read the 5 letter title...

Step 9

Pathos

Now that you have created this war bastard destined to be sacrificed to WAR, we need to determine what has happened in his life, quickly—for WAR is thirsty! A warrior, by traditional definition has killed a man or has at least struck a man in combat and survived to tell of it.

About the only thing your character is going to get any better at is killing. Let's see how many scalps he has taken, if he is a Scythian, or merits he has earned after

battles. In organized armies, doing something other than killing, like mending and hoisting a ladder during a siege while defenders try and brain you with bricks, is even more important than taking a single life with your own bloody hands. For you have facilitated the death of many! Such deeds may be imagined by the GM during pathos determination and can easily be the focus of future adventures.

Roll 1d6 for each age grade, taking half that total as his number of battles, skirmishes, duels, etc. Then add his animism and endurance scores to his total number of actions and make this the number of foes he has either slain, foiled or captured. The player may decide what kind of warrior he is, here, perhaps never taking captive or preferring to do so. Are you a slave-maker or a man-butcher?

Actions +
Stamina +
Animism =
PATHOS

Pathos is your warrior drive to commit Arete, the excellent actions of the warrior.

Effects of Pathos will be played out as an extension of warrior creation, under Discord, Fear and Rout.

Discord, Fear & Rout

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Transformation #3.

A

Ares, Mars to you Latins and War to you souls brought into the later sunken world, has had his three agents in attendance at the planting of your soul in the field of your slave mother's woe. These fiends pay attention, and harbor jealousy for the best of men. They were there, plotting, when Silver-footed Thesis, dipped her son Achilles in the water of invulnerability, and again to remind Paris where to aim his arrow.

Exceptional warriors are punished by ancestry, Fate, the meddling angels of War, the demons of yore for approaching the peak of human prowess, which narrows the gap between heaven and earth and threatens admittance for the hero, such as Herakles, if this warrior comes so favorably to the attention of The Almighty.

This paragon of a warrior is thence afflicted with one of three manias:

Discord

Fear

Rout

This depends on how out of balance he is with man's intended low ability. A 4 ability gains a mania point, a 5, 2 mania points, a 6 3 mania points.

Below is the character of Achilles, in Grunt terms.

Name: Achilles

Sire/People: Peleus of the Myrmidons

Body = 18

Strength: 6

Stamina: 6

Agility: 6

Discord = 18 [3 for each 6 as his great superiority makes him the center of jealousy from lesser men like Agamemnon, and of gods even, such as Apollo. In addition he has survived combats in which he was unlucky (rolled a 20, which had to happen as he has been at constant war for some 10 years, taking cities before the 9 year siege of Troy.] at least 10 times. But, there is a ceiling on mania of 18, just as there is on overall abilities. This person is clinically insane by

modern standards. Rolling a 20 and surviving always grants a mania.]

Mind = 14

Knit: 6

Kit: 4

Wit: 4 [See the final chapter of the Iliad. He had taken cities, so had a better than average wit.]

Fear: = 15 [5 + 10 unlucky strokes to equal his 10 lucky ones. For men fear his mental arete, though less than his physical arete, causing them to scheme the more, and also causing Achilles to have a deep fear of losing honor. Alexander was afflicted by this worse, his wit of 6 driving him to commit to battles simply because others thought the operation impossible. He will be sketched at the bottom of this chapter.]

Spirit = 14

Animistic: 6 [Talks to horses and argues with a river.]

Social: 4 [He made a good case before the army.]

Esoteric: 4 [He distrusts the gods.]

Rout = 5 [This quality is the magic of the war LEADER of superior type, that his very presence, his animal magnetism, causes enemies to panic.]

Actions + 10, [100+, the ceiling, divided by 10]

Stamina + 6

Animism + 6

PATHOS = 22

At any point in play, a player of a GM may decide that a hero makes a mania check, Failure, rolling a 20 or simply higher than his mania on 1d20 is punished by heaven. Success, including the miraculous '1' is conversely rewarded. During the career of such men as Achilles, Alexander, Hadratta, Blackbeard, them taking to the front of the battle line brought a mania check, which generally cheered their fellows [granting advantages in game play] and shook their foes [inflicting disadvantages in game play.] Failure of such an action might shake his own men.

Pathos

Pathos is the advantage or initiative enjoyed at the start of a battle, a duel, a council of war, a negotiation for the surrender of a city, a siege, the throwing of a ladder upon a fortress wall by a file of soldiers, etc. Pathos will be present at all times, and is the primary quality of the

apex warrior: his presence, his mystique, “the power of his name,” that causes competent enemies to pause in doubt, to squander an action initiative or an advantage. The Game Master decides if there will be initiative, or if the action is simultaneous. If it is not simultaneous, then one pathos roll is made by the most pathological warrior on each side.

[Note, in battles, one side usually goes first, their efforts tested before the other counter attacks. But, in dueling, boxing and other ritual combats, as well as in single fight between men in battle, the action is resolved simultaneously, with a chance that both might slay one another at the same instant. The idea of “a turn’ is more applicable to a mass combat than single combat.]

1D20 is rolled.

The low roll is best in this system.

The result is subtracted from the leader’s pathos with the difference granting the initiative/advantage.

In this system a 1 always succeeds, and with a special consideration or impact, best left up to the GM.

A 20, by contrast, always fails. A 20 fail is not just a failure to achieve something, but brings a doomful penalty, again, left to the creative license of the GM, and discussed further at the bottom of this section.

An advantage is a re-roll of a die result, rolled by the GM or the player. If Sarpedon rolls a 2, subtracted from his 6 pathos, for a 4, against Achilles' roll of a 14, subtracted from his 22 pathos for a 7, the difference between the results of 4 and 7, in favor of Achilles, is 3. This grants 3 initiative actions or 3 advantage re-rolls, depending on the GM's episodic sense. Perhaps the GM decides that Achilles and his driver each have an initiative action before Sarpedon and his driver do anything, and then Achilles gets a re-roll.

In a duel, I suggest the Pathos player get re-rolls. Other ideas will be presented under dueling in the next chapter.

In a battle situation, perhaps the Pathos leader is granted an initiating action and a re-roll and one re-roll is assigned to his shield bearer, or NCO?

Rolling over one's pathos score in an interactive check does not bring a penalty, unless a 20 is rolled, triggering mania below. Pathos will be used often, and not just for initiative, or initial advantage determinations.

In firearms combats, such as The Shootout at the OK Corral, the pathos roll might decide the whole thing and turn it into a slaughter. This is how many actions initiated under extreme pathos, especially with modern firearms at close range, unfolded.

Mania & Pathos

Mania, is not just an acquired ability that may be used as described above, it is a quality that goes into pathos and may set the extent to which pathos is effective. Mania will also be used to determine post action state of being in Chapter 8.

The players and GM are encouraged to get creative with mania and pathos. Indeed, in the case of supernatural adventures, such as Orpheus' or Odysseus' venture into Hades, Dante's journey through Hell, or of Bran Mak

Morn's dealings with the Worms of the Earth or Conan's Phoenix on the Sword dream adventure [Robert E. Howard], then mania and pathos may be the ONLY abilities a player has. These abilities provide the basis for an entire field of supra-physical adventure that have not been fully detailed in Grunt.

Not being a player or belonging to a gaming group, being myself a loser hobo, I have no means of developing Grunt and hence leave that to you, the play-testers and developers.

In action: dueling or battle, skirmishing or hunting, A roll of a 20 triggers a negative manifestation of one of the three manias. A 1 result brings a favorable effect of that power. These apply with pathos and action rolls. The mania score indicates the duration and/or intensity of the effect. This roll result of 20, if survived, will increase that mania—yes, hero, the Furies are out to get you!

So, if, using our example from The Iliad above, Sarpedon, being the lower pathos character, rolls a 1, he gains advantage for a number of rounds equal to his

[spirit] Rout mania, +1—this is a blessing, and increases his Rout mania by 1, now. If he has no Rout mania, he gains 1–3 rout mania now, and it is applied in play, now, and kept until his death.

If, however, he rolls a 20, he will suffer a disadvantage for a number of rounds equal to his [mind] Fear mania, +1 laid as a curse/test upon him, increasing that score now and until Death takes him. If he has no Fear mania, he gains 1–3 of insight into his doomed plight, suffers those disadvantages, and, if he survives this misfortune he will be that much more feared by people.

[Note: The mind/fear penalty here afflicts those who overthink combat in progress instead of trusting their powers.]

Any character who survives a mortal combat in which he rolled a 20, gains a point of [body] Discord mania. This adds up.

Surviving a combat in which a character rolled a 1 gains nothing to the body and does not increase Discord mania, as this 1 actual depleted one's stock of luck!

But, the roll of a 20, was a test, and a warrior who passes War's test, gains. These are cumulative. If Sarpedon rolls 2 20s during the course of his chariot duel with Achilles, and survives that disaster, he gains 2 Discord mania. Achilles, maxed out on Discord at 18, can gain nothing, for the gods are weary of his rage.

So, when pathos or combat rolls trigger a mania check, a character who rolled a 1: gains 1 [spirit] Rout mania, or, if he had none, gained 1-3

A character who rolled a 20 gains 1, or 1-3 if he had none, [mind] Fear mania

This unlucky character, as the gods show their balancing hand, also gains, a 1 [body] Discord mania, as he learns from the hard school of misfortune more about delaying his inevitable demise. Such survival recommends him for fame and perhaps even immortality.

Grunt is intended to move fast and to permit characters to improve on the field, to be better fighters at the end of a battle than at the beginning, to learn fighting, or

perhaps climbing, as they fight or climb, so long as they are not killed in the process. In such hazardous undertakings the thing that almost does you in teaches you the most. That is the reason for the 20 disaster roll increasing mania ability more than the lucky roll.

The mechanics of the various warrior actions, in so far as they may result in character transformation and development in play, have been addressed according to pathos and mania. Pathos and mania will also have uses and effects in various actions, discussed in **Chapters 4 & 5.**

Pathos, Mania, Alexander & Ability Checks

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Transformation #3. B

We have established that rolling low is good, and high is bad. The rules for play will cover:

Actions

Equipment

Counsel of War

Parlay

Poetry [hurling insults as well]

Dueling [including boxing and other sports]

Shooting, loosing, hurling, throwing

Hunting [including skirmishing and manhunting]

Battle

Running away!

Pursuing broken foes

Rapine

Recruitment

Death's Door

Sacrifices

Crippled Yore

Divination

and more...

But first, to complete Character Transformation, an historical, rather than mythic prehistoric character. Alexander will be used in one episode provided at the end of the game, designed for 4 players, one being Alexander, the maniacal hero king.

Alexander

Son of Phillip of Macedon

Body = 15

Strength: 4 [Killed 5 warriors at Taxilla in seconds]

Stamina: 6 [The fittest general in history.]

Agility: 5

Discord = 9 at the Granicus [6 plus 3 of 6 battles], at Issus 15, Tyre 16, Arbella 17, Oxus, Hydapsis & Taxilla 18, gave him a point here for every battle that went sideways.

Mind = 16

Knit: 4

Kit: 6 [Innovative siege craft and developed engineering fixes.]

Wit: 6

Fear = 7 [plus 3 thru 11 depending on same experiences above, both representing 20s or potential disasters turned around. The base mania represents him at 16 in Illyria. He will be an 18 at 32 in India.]

Spirit = 18

Animistic: 6 [His taming of Bucephalus and his fearlessness.]

Social: 6 [Perhaps the best customized management of conquered enemies ever.]

Esoteric: 6 [A devoutly religious believer in heaven and blood who was honestly trying to earn a place in Heaven. This obsession, together with his extreme and growing pathos caused him to awe people to the point where it befuddled some of his ambitions and, it seems, got him murdered by the Chaldeans for treating their looting of temples like Jesus would treat the money lenders 300 and some years later.]

Panic = 9 + 1 at 16, +2 at 18, +3 at 21 at Thebes, +4 at 22 The Granicus, +5 at 23 at Issus, +6 at Tyre, +7 at Gaza, +8 at Arbella, and +9 getting him to 18 by 25 at Arbella, where the power of his name had a vast army panicking and running as soon as things went against

them, where earlier, up until Gaza, they often fought to the death.

Actions + 1 to 10, depending on the point in his career, by the time of his invasion of India. Actions include forced marches, over 20 sieges, decisions concerning the fate of each conquered people, place, army and captive dignitary, as well as diplomatic negotiations, speeches to the army, visits to the tents of the wounded, etc. Actions are added up, divided by ten, with any fraction retained as a whole number, such 1 action still counting as 1.]

Stamina + 6

Animism + 6

PATHOS = 13 on his ascension to the throne at about 21 years and a score of 22, near his death 12 years later.]

Mania

Discord, Fear and Rout will factor heavily in the play sessions. These are interactive or reflective. A character might use his discord mania in a battle to gain an advantage or even before a battle to panic the enemy into retreating rather than fighting, hesitating until

reinforcement come etc. However, in a parlay or counsel of war, the GM might decide that the player needs to make a discord check, just like an ability check, to determine if the jealousy for this hero harbored in other men's hearts splits the assembled men into factions.

Do note, that in GRUNT, die rolls are never modified, ever. [Determining abilities of some beasts and monsters in Chapter 8 does employ modified die rolls, such as 13–18, or 12+1d6.] These are real results, results that may only be overturned by other results, not modified by some molesting hand. When War makes a judgment, a man's ability may not twist it. But, Apollo's jealous arrow might avert War's spiteful sword stroke.

Checks

All abilities, including manias, are used for checks.

An advantage check is to re-roll an unsuccessful check.

A disadvantage check is to re-roll a successful check.

During this phase of Character Transformation the GM should test each player in his strongest area with an overall ability check [1d20], and one specific ability check [1d6]. Let's say, Eteus, the Agriane, through

practice, and a check of his 13 Body Ability, seeks to begin play with an advantage, a re-roll in his back pocket. The GM might also have Eteus check his esoteric score to determine if he is in disfavor or favor with the god of the mountain he has been assigned to climb by night.

Doing these two checks prior to play, ignites some back story [training, piety—did this guy sight in his rifle or pray?] and also demonstrates two very common play mechanics.

13 abilities are split into overall and simple.

7 Over all, aggregate abilities, being: Body, Mind, Spirit, Pathos, and the three manias, Discord, Fear and Panic, are checked using 1d20, with 1 a great stroke of “luck” or miraculous happening, and a 20 a terrible smite of fate or even an accursed imposition, an actual misfortune.

A godlike hero like Achilles at Troy or Alexander at Taxilla, with a pathos in excess of the normal limit of 18, will still not succeed on a 19, this number always

being a simple failure, and will undergo the normal mania process if rolling a 20 on pathos or in action.

An overreaching failure, let's say rolling a 17 against a 13 ability, might result in 4 disadvantages or the taking of 4 points of damage, depending on the GMs sense of play. Or, that 4 points might be added to the enemy's overall ability for the very next action, perhaps imbuing a foe with a 14 body with a temporary 18 for his clash with Alexander. The GM and players are encouraged to do something interesting with that overreach, just as successful rolls under an ability are often used in play. These will be discussed later under interactive play.

10 Simple, or specific abilities, which range from 1 to 6 [1] include: Strength, Stamina, Agility, Knit, Kit, Wit, Animistic, Social and Esoteric are checked with a roll of 1d6. A roll equal to or less than that score results in success. A roll in excess is a failure. As with over all ability checks, the difference between the ability and the roll is retained for various uses, as demonstrated below.

The 10th simple ability, is madness, discussed at the bottom of this section.

Hubris, Folly & Madness

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Transformation #3.

C

Hubris

If a player has a 6 endurance score, and he rolls a 6, then the Furies are aware that he is testing his mortal limits. In this case, he makes a mania check with 1d20, which is less likely to succeed than a coin toss, with even the most maniacal heroes like Achilles or Alexander having only a 9 until they have survived various misfortunes.

The roll of exactly his mania, a 1 in 20 chance, results in simple success.

A roll of less than his mania indicates that the Furies are pleased, and results in a number of concurrent advantage checks equal to the die difference and the applied to all consecutive actions. No saving these blessings. So, if Private Ed, the natural mechanic, was about to unjam that .50 Cal mounted on his dead captain's Little Willy Jeep, and his roll of 6 against his 6 Kit ability, brought other-wordly attention. Forced to roll

his pathos of 5 or less or face disaster, Ed scored a 2 on that 1d20, his next 3 actions will all be blessed with an advantage re-roll. If he rolled a 1, aside from the above advantages, he will check his Rout mania to see if he can go Audie Murphy on those Krauts. He has a 0 Rout, so gains a 1-3 [1d6 halved], rolls a 3, which becomes a 2, gains 2 Rout mania and, for now, 2 additional advantages.

Advantage re-rolls, if the first is not successful, may be used against the same failed result, Ed, if his player is bad enough with the dice, possibly burning up all 5 of his re-rolls, trying to knockout that Kraut armored car.

But, but, what is more likely, is that this smart ass who can fix anything, as he is about to turn the tide of battle against the Natsy counterattack at Kaserine Pass, has been singled out for punishment by the Furies, that he rolls a 10 against his 5, and his next 5 successful actions incur a disadvantage check, which means a re-roll of anything that DID succeed.

Folly

It is sometimes thought that a fool, a person who has a hopelessly low ability in something, is, on occasion, favored by Fate, for she is a she and does dote on certain mortal pets.

A person who has been cursed with a 1 ability, and is forced to make an ability check, might declare that he is praying. In such a case the roll of 1 is still successful, but a roll of 6 is also successful.

If successful, this adds 1 to the player's pathos.

If the character was successful by rolling a 6 he also gains an animism point [A huge deal, possibly resulting in increasing his Rout mania].

If he fails with an odd number, the 3 or 5, he is also afflicted with a disadvantage on his next action.

If he fails with a 2 or a 4, the even numbers, and yet survives this test, he has learned something and adds 1 to his 1 ability, increasing it to a 2.

Warriors, in GRUNT learn in action, not in some fencing school or training camp. Those venues, if there was any formal training at all, are regarded as already in their past and part of their active make up.

No ability may exceed 6. [Except with beasts and monsters, see Chapter 8.]

No overall ability may exceed 18, except for pathos, yet pathos checks of 19 and 20 still fail as per the rules.

Manias may increase through player action and exterior actions, though do not exceed 18.

Madness

If any character has a play result that would increase a mania beyond 18 he earns a madness point. When a player has earned 7 madness points he commits a suicidal act, hopefully taking many enemy with him, like Samson in the Philistine palace.

If he has 6 madness points and he rolls a 6 on his madness check he goes nuts then and there, doing as much damage to the world as possible, as he earns that

7th madness point. If he wins that battle, he dies by his own hand or in a fit of melancholy, perhaps burning himself on a pyre like Heracles.

Until that Herculean end, any time this player uses his pathos or mania, or is called upon to check his pathos or mania, he must make a madness check with 1d6. If he fails, rolling higher than his madness score, then he commits a mad act of combat, with his increased madness score, increased to that number he rolled. He may then return to the margins of sanity and continue his career of mundane rapine.

If he succeeds, there is no reprieve, he gains a madness point.

Berserkers

Intentional, functional madness, is the subject of this rule. Berserkers are a type of suicidal warrior who inflict madness upon themselves by going into a fury before battle, perhaps the night before, in some ritual. Once a berserker has inflicted madness on himself through whatever ritual he uses, he will always be subject to that condition, even if he declines more rites. Reversing this

condition through a journey to a shaman or wizard might for the basis for a retirement adventure?

1 point of madness is gained in each of these rites.

In certain formal societies, these rites must be observed, if battle is known to be nigh. In other societies this process might be a lone, personal rite. In such a case, a second rite could be engaged in to intensify the state.

If the battle or duel, or fight is not pre-meditated, then the berserker gains his powers for the battle, increasing his madness by 1 at its outset.

Every time he survives battle, a berserker then makes a madness check. If they fail, then their madness increases by 1.

A check that succeeds increases one body or spirit ability, and possibly also a mania and his pathos.

The berserker's powers are three:

#1: His animism ability is added to his body ability for combat. This may not exceed 18, though his Hit Points

may. This is a separate distinct temporary ability, which, combined with the other abilities below, causes the berserker to make his madness check the night after the battle. So, he can fight until night in this state, in as many battles as he can survive.

#2: His madness score is added to the damage he does when he strikes—yikes! A few points of damage is a big deal in Grunt.

#3: His esoteric score is also added to his hit points, which are his overall body/madness points, permitting him to fight with mortal wounds, like a bear. That night, as he loses his powers and makes his madness check, if his wounds exceeded his body [hit] points at all, he shall die. This is the Furies' price for being able to fight at negative body points when a none berserk man is incapable of fighting at 0.

Now that we know how your Grunt functions under stress, let's go onto forms of play.

In The World #1

Grunt RPG Overall & Specific Actions & Grunt Checks #4

Pathos, Mania, Advantage and Disadvantage have been discussed. Equipment is the final chapter, well, was until I added #8! However, some examples will accompany the basic concept of equipment in Grunt below.

Equipment, in combat, does not do intrinsic [rolled, random] damage, but enhances damage or reduces damage. In other actions, equipment, is likewise considered as an extension of the will, amplifying or reducing effects of actions, be they Body, Mind or Spirit actions.

The basics of Body, Mind & Spirit Actions are covered here, In The World #1, and focus on individual actions, not group actions like Battle or Counsel of War or the results of actions, like injury, maiming and death.

The basic mechanics are general, resolved with a 1d20 or specific, resolved with a 1d6.

Overall Body Check

A general or complex action, such as climbing, or throwing, are a function of an overall ability, the Body. These efforts are resolved by doing a 1d20 check against the 3 to 18 body ability, with a 1 miraculous, a 20 disastrous, and the margin of success indicated by the negative die difference: Ability - Roll = Level of Success.

For instance, if an archer has been detailed to run a message to the rear guard through enemy infiltrators, and his Body is 12, then he must roll a 12 or less, with a 1 indicating that he has arrived ahead of time and that he has perhaps noticed something important about the enemy dispositions. If he rolls a 9, and the backup runner rolled a 3, getting there, let's say 6 minutes before him, then he might suffer some social penalty. We will revisit this example of the upstaged runner under Spirit. [Yeah, I didn't go back to this, but it might make an interesting solo adventure.]

If our runner rolls a 20, that could be a blunder or he might have been noticed by archers and has to dodge arrows or be feathered to death, or both.

Specific Body Check

Lets' say he stumbled. He must now make 3 simple checks against his individual body abilities.

To determine if he was injured, he must make a Strength check on 1d6. If he fails he loses the die difference in hit points [which are temporary body points].

He must roll a Stamina check to see if he can try and make the rest of the run as intended. If he fails this, then he must change to a different action, the run and blunder having depleted him. Perhaps he can stalk the rest of the way, taking longer, hide until morning, begin stalking the sentries, or simply cause a diversion for the back up runner by charging the enemy sentries or leading them back to his own lines. In the case of a failed Overall check, and then failure of a Stamina check, the character must choose a different course of action.

Third, whether he is injured or diverted, he has blundered and must check and see how bad it was, by an Agility check. To determine if he made noise that alerted the enemy archers, he rolls a 1d6 against his 1d6 agility score. If his agility is 3, and he rolls a 5, the

difference is 2, so we can say he was heard by two archers.

Lets' say this messenger has blundered, avoided injury by making his Strength check, and made his Stamina, permitting him to continue his run for the allied camp, but that he failed his Agility check to determine if he alerted sentries, and that he did alert two nasty, Scythian sentries with his 5 roll against his 3 Agility. Both Scythians loose arrows in the dark.

In daylight, the Scythians would make a 1d6 against Agility, Knit or Kit [since they are skilled they use the applicable skill that favors them, if unskilled always go against Knit which is learning ability.] archery check to see if they could hit our messenger. He might then use his Agility to try and reduce damage. But in the dark, they loose without proper aim [darkness inflicts the use of the least favorable of the 3 abilities] and it is up to our messenger to dodge, if hit, using his agility to reduce damage.

Darkness: costs either a disadvantage in action or, in the case of a skill, the use of the least favorable applicable ability.

Total Darkness

In the case of a moonless or stormy night, the firing of the archers might be regarded as random, in which case the action might be resolved by having the messenger make an agility check.

He makes two rolls, 1 for each archer: a 1 indicates that 2 arrows have missed him in the dark. A 3 indicates that he has been uninjured but his clothing or armor has been impacted. [A 6 would have meant being hit by 3 arrows and probably slain.] If the GM decides on such a dicey use of agility, then that ability might not also be used as damage reduction.

A close call like this might be used by the GM as an adventure hook, such as the arrow deflecting gave the Scythians a sound cue, and they are now slowly stalking the messenger, making this a different action. We will return to this latter, below.

This is the standard use of Overall and Specific Ability in actions, whether physical, mental or spiritual.

Grunt Checks

A Grunt check is a method by which this combat-oriented game does not become so meat-headed that it cannot be used to replicate combat with firearms, and might also be expanded into a more complex social setting for fantasy and science-fiction play.

There are cases when a 4th and even 5th ability, from outside the overall ability governing the action, should be taken into consideration.

For instance, in dueling, Kit ability of the character to have a better understanding of his weapon than the other fellow, who is using the same weapon, is key. Dueling against a man using a different weapon requires an even higher level of weapon knowledge. So, at the outset of a duel, each player should make his Mind Kit check and compare the difference.

If Koragus has a 5 and rolls a 4, against Dioxippus who has a 6 and rolls a 2, then we subtract Koragus' 1 die

difference from Dioxippus 4, which leaves Dioxippus with 3 advantages, that is 3 re-rolls of any roll his controlling player does not want.

We then look to the disadvantage determined by Spirit Social, for a calm check: whose palms are sweating, who is nervous and who is better focused? In this case Koragus, a goon, with only a 3 Spirit Social, against Dioxippus, with his 4 Spirit Social, each roll a 3. the difference in favor of Dioxippus is 1, meaning that 1 successful roll by Koragus may be re-rolled at the GM's discretion.

In the various actions described below, under body, and then under Mind & Spirit, it will be noted with a GC, if a grunt check is required. A Grunt check will consist of an advantage roll and a disadvantage roll preceding the action. Grunt Checks also apply to simple actions, like a climber, assigned to scale an icy cliff at night, making a Spirit Animism gut check for disadvantage and a Mind Wit check for some kind of advantage.

[Let us note that I neglected to factor Grunt checks in the rest of the game. When used, Grunt check

advantages and disadvantages should be used to cancel out or augment those gained in the pathos roll, to arrive at one for each. I favor Grunt checks as an option for a gear specific setting, such as pistol dueling, man-hunting and spell-casting, to include conducting sacrifices before battle.]

Before we get to the specific skills, let us make some stipulations:

Current hit points, even if the character is down to 1 Hit Point, do not influence performance or call for advantage or disadvantage checks. Characters die quickly enough in Grunt as is.

But, War has his grinding wiles, and there is a way to determine his pleasure or impatience with your puny actions.

Overall Body Actions may be initiated only as many times a day as a character has Stamina points. A player with a 1 Stamina may only attempt a single action on the day. If he attempts a second, he must make a check

against Strength, and if he fails, well, he fails to act and suffers hit point loss equal to the die difference.

Once an action is initiated, the character may only act at full capacity for as many rounds as he has Stamina.

Once that number of rounds has been reached, for his next round of action he loses 1 Overall Body point, for the purpose of factoring his actions, at the start of every round. He does not lose individual body ability points. As soon as that character is granted rest, he recovers these overall ability points at the rate of his Stamina at the end of each round.

This is why boxers rest between rounds and why Roman soldiers fought in shifts, to arrest and reverse the decline of their physical powers. For this reason, firearms use and more complex equipment operation are covered under Mind. For instance, rowing and sailing are primarily physical. But Piloting, crewing and navigation of the same vessel are pre-dominantly, and increasingly cerebral.

In The World #2

Grunt Role Playing Game Body Actions #4. A

Below are resolution methods for the types of tasks that ancient warriors would face. Some more modern or fantastical tasks will be covered under Mind and Spirit. Any task that is not here, that the players or GM regard as physical, like flying a plane, driving a car or riding a motorcycle or mountain bike, I encourage those people to make up rules based on these models. At the bottom of this section under strongman stunts and diving, I have suggested an alternative use of the 1d6, that, it is hoped, will suggest another tool for some development innovations on the part of the players.

Body Actions

The 3 Body Abilities combine to 3–18 points for 1d20 action attempts. They are also used for specific 1d6 checks

Strength: factoring damage, checking for injury, determining load limit

Stamina: vigorous actions per day, rounds of unimpeded action, exhaustion

Agility: limiting blunders, avoiding/reducing damage

Marching: The distance one can cover on foot per day ranges up to 30 miles. To arrive at a maximum distance on a given day, add the Body & Spirit scores, including mania factors, subtract a roll 1d20, then divide the distance marched by 1 for level road, round it down for easy track, divide by 2 for rough track, divide by 3 for trackless & broken terrain and divide by 4 for trackless rugged terrain.

Running

Simple

A messenger is sent to run for a day. This is a function almost exclusively of stamina. Rate his daily base run ability at 3XStamina, for a range of 3–18 miles. Have him check for additional miles by doing a Strength and Agility check, with the margin over the score subtracting from the mileage and the 1d6 difference under the 1–6 scores adding that much to the mile distance. If the runner makes both of these checks, then permit him to attempt an heroic run by doing an Animism check, and applying the die difference in the same way.

[An example of running skill use will be given under Mind, or, might have been, had not Fate averted my eyes when I woke to write and rolled a 20. I believe I was thinking of the Athenian runner who died after delivering his message concerning the battle of Marathon. It was said he spoke with a god upon the way from Sparta in a previous run.]

Interactive

A race is simple, with an even start. But for pursuit of foes, establish a lead for the fleeing foe. For instance, if Achilles is running down some doomed Trojan hero, who has a 9 Body, with his 18 body, and they both roll a 9, then Achilles has gained 9 [of whatever measure the GM sees fit, be it strides, stades, days if it is a long hunt, etc.] and the poor Trojan improves not a wit. If the Trojan rolled a 3, gaining 6 against his potential of 9, and Achilles rolled an 18, then that lucky fellow has made some distance.

Climbing

Establish a difficulty from 1 to 6.

For every number of difficulty the climber must make a specific ability check.

1st point of difficulty requires an overall Body Check, a 1d20 against the 3–18 score. You are now climbing.

Next, by stages, you must make the following 1d6 checks. If you fail 1, you must now re-roll your successful Body Check, or fall.

2nd point of difficulty, also requires a Wit check to determine if the climber picked the right path/method.

3rd point of difficulty, also requires an Agility check.

4th point of assent peril, also requires a Strength check.

5th point of assent peril, also requires a Stamina check.

6th point of assent peril, an icy cliff at night, requires an Animism check.

Falls damage the character like so, 1 point per every level of difficulty, plus a check against his best body ability, Strength, Stamina or Agility, with 1d20, with him also sustaining the difference between a roll higher than that ability—Yikes! If he rolls lower, then he has caught himself somehow and the difficulty damage is reduced by whatever the lower die difference is, and the monkey can keep climbing. Any fall that does not kill the

character increases his Body Mania [Discord] and Pathos by 1.

Jumping

The distance to be jumped is determined.

20s fail no matter how easy, and 1s succeed against all odds.

A standing jump is done by a Body check, with a successful check indicating the covering of a distance equal to the Body score, plus any negative difference in the roll and score, or minus any positive difference between roll and score.

A Running Jump is done in the same fashion, except, the Overall Body ability is added. So, if Achilles rolls a 2, for a 16 die difference, it is added to his 18, for a new world record by a foot of 34 feet.

Stalking

Hunting a man or beast, by day or night, by sound, sight and scent, requires full body integration, intelligence and instinct. This ability includes hiding and ambushing

and sentry removal. To get close enough to strike or shoot, or be able to avoid the enemy's stroke or shot, a stalking score is determined:

Stalking score: Body + Discord [Body Mania] + Wit + Animism = STALK

Skill Note

The stalk skill permits the addition of Wit and Animism, from outside the Body suite, to be added.

The stalk of both parties is compared, with the normal range around 10 but master stalkers such as Liver-eating Johnson, Body 14 + Discord 5 + Wit 5 + Animism 5 = 29 may approach or even exceed 30.

Let's say Liver-eater is stalking a gunslinger with his same scores. The gunslinger, since he does not have the stalking skill, only uses his body score of 14 for the hunt.

Liver-eater rolls a 16, which would have failed if he was not an experienced tracker.

The gunslinger rolls a 13.

Liver-Eater's die difference is 13 to the gunslinger's 1, for a difference of 12. The 1st point gives Liver-Eater an advantage. The 2nd point gives the gunslinger a disadvantage. The remaining 10 points are applied to damage against the gunslinger, IF Liver-eater strikes him on his first stroke or shot, of which he will get two chances, as he has an Advantage re-roll.

Pathosis is not factored in stalking, yet may be affected.

A person who succeeds in a stalk, ambush, hunt, in this way, gains a Discord Body Mania point and a Pathos point, as this teaches a lot, as does climbing.

Riding

Riding a horse is physical.

You must have the horsemanship skill.

[Skills are discussed in more detail under Mind.]

A body check is made to determine if the beast will perform it's best for you.

If you do not have the horsemanship skill, this is done at a disadvantage, re-rolling a success. One may learn to ride a horse in this way, becoming a horseman after

succeeding in this trial by era 6 times minus your Knit ability score. That is right, a man with a 6 Knit will learn very quickly.

Once one is riding, how fast one goes is up to the horse, who has a body rating and is run like a man. In the case of a horseback fight, horse race, etc., the horsemen first make a Knit check to see if they get an advantage and then make a Body check to see if they incur a disadvantage.

Driving

A chariot team is handled in the same way. But rather than a Knit check for advantage, the driver makes a Kit check.

Skying

Using skies is done like handling a chariot, except the character's own body, rather than a horse's is used for the Body check.

Rowing

Working at the oars requires a Body Check with a Strength check to determine if there is an advantage and a Stamina check to determine a disadvantage.

Sailing

Sailing, that is handling the sails and operation of a sailing vessel, not piloting or navigating, calls for a Body Check with an Agility Check to determine Advantage and a Stamina check to determine disadvantage.

Advantage and Disadvantage

Both of the competing crews at the sails, at the oars, might generate advantages and disadvantages. In such cases, these numbers cancel each other out until only one player, or neither, has an advantage or disadvantage. Disadvantages cancel rival Disadvantages. Advantages cancel rival Advantages.

So, if Olaf at the oars has 3 advantages and 1 disadvantage in his pursuit of Loki working his oars across the Baltic, who has 2 advantages and 1 disadvantage, then neither player has a disadvantage and Olaf has 1 advantage. This is done to quicken play.

In some special episodes, involving great peril, or which perhaps represent a terminal manhunt, the GM might want to have the characters retain all the Advantages and Disadvantages to increase play length and suspense.

Wielding

The characters are all regarded as fighting men, able to use hand weapons. Particular Kit based weapon skills are limited to dueling and shooting.

Using any weapon or tool or object in hand-to-hand combat requires a body check for success. If one has made a body check they have struck the foe.

The wielder must possess a strength score equal to the weapon strength requirement [WSR], or damage is reduced by the negative difference. If a scribe with a strength of 0 uses a war ax which requires a 3, then his damage is reduced by 3, which happens to be the WD of the war ax.

Damage is factored like so: Strength + Knit + Weapon Damage [WD] = Damage. Example: Achilles Strength +6, Knit +6, + 3 spear = 15.

From this, Sarpedon's armor of 3 and agility of 3, reduced the stroke to 9 damage. Sarpendon had a 4 Strength, 3 Stamina and 3 Agility, for 10 points, so that unhappy hero stands at Death's door, with 1 HP, where he may keenly appreciate the attention of the starving stray dogs that will come out at night to feast upon his barely living body. An indulgent GM might have some wench drag him off to the camp follower's tents to repair him.

I got ahead here: all this damage stuff will be covered with proper nuance in Chapter 5. In combat Achilles will have a chance to knock Sarpendon over and deliver a stroke. I have gotten ahead of the design here and have given a partially accurate example of combat, that is also incomplete. This paragraph above is retained as a developmental example. As I am unable to develop these rules, I am retaining some "muddy" superseded mechanics, for the player/developer.

The damage equation is:

Damage: Strength+Weapon+Knit

Minus: Armor+ Agility

Equals damage sustained, placing offense in the assent where it should be and leaving open a Knit-based damage reduction option for a fighter who focuses on defensive weapon use.

Agility/Knit Note

There was an option, in the first draft, suggested above for agility being withheld from combat to be used for defense. Agility should remain as a basic ability to evade damage. The option should, and will, under specific rules for combat instead use the Knit ability, being withheld from potential damage, to guard against potential damage, achieving play balance, it being the odd factor in the 3 to 2 damage verse protection equation.

Upon review of these rules, it seems important to use agility as a standard damage reduction against the strength damage, with armor against weapon, which still grants the knit advantage to offense over defense. This

Knit factor may be countered, as described later under Combat, by using the weapon for defense, as a kind of armor.

The context in which a weapon is wielded, varies from duel, battle, brawl, stalk, skirmish, rout and capital punishment. In some cases both do damage, in others one or the other.

Lifting, Bending & Breaking

Rolling high with 1d6 is the method here used.

These are strict strength tasks, with a task rating of 1–13 against the strength score of the hero. If Achilles, with a 6 strength wishes to move a boulder rated at 9, he must roll a 3 or better. Note that a 13 object is immovable or unbreakable by a man, unless one rolls a 1. Miracles will be covered in more detail in Chapter 5.

Throwing

A body check is made to strike the target. An evasively moving or cover–using target must be hit at a Disadvantage. A target moving forward or away is done without advantage or disadvantage. A still target in the open is targeted at an Advantage. Damage is factored by

adding strength, weapon & knit and reduced by armor and agility. Weapons that are thrown are thrown directly by hand, without rotating: spears, lances, javelins, darts, rocks.

Hurling

Hurled weapons rotate, or are thrown in rotation: like, axes, hatchets, hammers, knives, bolos, etc. These weapons, to be thrown without damage reduction, require a Knit check. If this check is failed, the damage is reduced by the positive die difference.

Slings require possession of a specific skill. The damage of this weapon is a flat expression of the slinger's strength, like a bow.

Swimming

Requires a Knit check to learn and is accomplished with a Body Check. Swimming while encumbered, like Beowulf, or in averse situations, like Alexander's men swimming the Danube by night in armor with inflated and stuffed tent canvas, may be replicated according to the climbing or strength method, whichever the GM thinks most closely simulates the action.

Diving

Diving is the opposite of climbing and is simulated in the very same way, by assigning a difficulty rating to the dive. Succeeding in operating under water, requires a successful body check, then the graduated difficulty checks as in climbing. Success of a new crisis diver brings skill.

Notes

Some of the mechanics from this section will be expanded to play out chases, battle routs and posse pursuits in Chapter 5. Likewise, leadership and inspiration, effecting more than a single hero, will be covered under Mind and Spirit. Skill development and use will be fully covered under Mind.

Mind

Grunt Role Playing Game Mind Actions #4. B

Skill & Mastery

Before we get to mind actions, it is important to understand that this Umbrella Ability and its components afford skill development, to include Body and Spirit Skills.

What skill gets the character in action is an advantage re-roll when performing an action governed by that skill, like a swordsman using a sword. It also averts unskilled Disadvantage rerolls. Unless noted in a scenario, the heroes all start play with weapons and tools they are skilled with.

In some very specific actions, skill will be acquired by a 1d6 specific ability check. Most actions are learned in a more general way. The swordsman, needs body mechanics [Knit], understanding of the tool [Kit] and a framing of the weapon in the context of a battle, brawl, rout or duel [Wit]. So learning the sword is a general 1d20 pursuit.

Skills in Grunt are semi-generalized and loosely applied, based on my experience in combat sports, to include over 650 stick fights and over 220 [dull] machete duels. A man who can fight in any context: kenpo, boxing, wrestling, MMA, is almost always a blade man or stick fighter you can't trifle with after a single sparring session. Men were designed to wield weapons. In the case of specific skills, these will be enumerated below.

Basically, sports without equipment, like running are pure Knit. In the case of such a skill like climbing, considered a knit skill in free climbing, if the climb is so hard, like the Sogdian Rock, as to require equipment, have the hero make a Kit check for disadvantage. If he makes it, give him a climbing rig skill, so that this check is no longer required. Grunt is designed to put heroes under pressure that requires improvement in action.

Mastery is a concept that implies the ability to teach a warrior skill to one with no skill or with or without related experience. To instruct a person, in lets' say swordsmanship, the swordsman must make a Wit

[teaching] check and the student must make a Knit [physical learning] check.

The GM should set the training cycles. I recommend a week.

To instruct a gunman, the master gunfighter would make the Wit check and the gunman must then make a Kit check, since, the gun is a machine, a complex tool, where the sword is a simple tool, more of an extension of the body.

Skill

Whether instructed by a master or learning in action the use of the fist, the sword, spear, handgun, etc., once a skill is acquired it is used for three things.

-1. A lack of skill in an action requires a Disadvantage check. If this fails and the hero survives the action, he may make a Wit check to determine if he has acquired the skill. If he was successful, he has learned enough to get the deed done and has the skill.

-2. A skilled hero may declares that he is using his skill to seek Advantage. He must make a 1d6 Knit, Kit or Wit check, depending on the action and the situation. If he makes his Advantage check he gains a re roll.

-3. A skilled character, may acquire mastery, the ability to teach as described above, by declaring his intent, then making rolling 1d20 and 1d6 together, for a simultaneous Mind and Wit Check. If both are successful, he has mastered the salient point of the art and may attempt to pass it on, as described above.

Knit

The ability to coordinate body actions: balance, time & measure, eye-hand coordination, etc.

Running, Jumping [a pole vault would require a Kit check for Advantage or Disadvantage], swimming, diving [unless an air reservoir helmet is used, in which case a Kit check is required], lifting [unless a lever or other tool is used, in which case its an overall action], wrestling, pankration, boxing [except if gloves or gauntlets are used, in which case a Kit check must be made to gain an

advantage], riding, making love with vampire queen to stave off death...

Kit

Equipment repair and operation, such as gun smithing, artillery operation, lock picking, operating vehicles, flying planes balloons or gliders, etc. Navigation, unlike wilderness guiding, is a function of Kit instead of Wit because tools are used, such as load stone, plumb bob depth readings, compass, sextant, journal. The difference between Kit and Wit can be very slim and in certain cases, such as navigating without equipment like William Bligh steering that open boat for 3,000 miles, then Navigation would switch to Wit.

If the GM cannot make up his mind between two governing specific skills, like Kit and Wit in wayfinding at sea, then combine the two and have him make a 2-12 check.

Note that many pirate captains were forced into their post by sailors who did not have the brains or knowledge to navigate. The fact that some captains were the only person of the crew who could navigate

sometimes saved them. This was the case with Fletcher Christian, captaining the ship he and the crew took from Bligh in the mutiny on the Bounty, and especially with Black Bart Roberts.

Wit

Perceiving conditions or unfolding actions, planning, guiding, wayfinding. For instance, where the shipwright builds the ship and the carpenter prepares it, the pilot guides it through treacherous waters and the navigator charts the course with devices [exceptions noted above], the wilderness guide is engaged in something more akin to the cavalry troop's captain, framing mind's eye view of the situation and adapting a course of action.

Where the gunsmith uses Kit, and the rifleman uses his entire being in a Body Check deploying his weapon, it is the Wit of the squad leader that prevents the riflemen under his command from being caught in a cross fire or placed in enfilade, while seeking to place the enemy at such a Disadvantage. Whether or not the troop of Texas Rangers or the band of Comanches they are hunting meet in battle will have to do with the duel of Wits between the guides. Once the foes have encountered

each other, the Wits of the battle commanders will determine Advantage and Disadvantage. In the case of the tribal band leader, the guide and leader are typically one in the same.

Archery

The potential draw of a bow is rated from 1 [child's bow] to 6 [the bow of Odysseus]. If one has a strength of 3 and seeks to use a 4 bow, then his arrow only travels a 3 range and does 3 damage. Strength is not added to an arrow, so much as Strength is required to use the bow to its potential. So, a bow of 5, drawn by an archer with a 5 strength will do a base 5 damage.

Damage with all mechanical weapons has a base [Of course, with guns, there is no strength requirement to use the base.] Also, disadvantage for lack of skill is potentially terrible: a check is made against Knit, and then against Kit, and Wit to see if the use of the weapon is even understood, with a possible 3 Disadvantages for the unskilled archer or gunman.

Example of Archery

The unskilled archer, Joe peasant picking up a bow, which he is strong enough to draw, having a 3 and the bow being a 3 draw, must make a Disadvantage check against Knit, Kit and Wit, failing none, one, two, or in this cruel case all 3.

In the meantime, his foe, the Cretan Mercenary Archer Eurybolos, who is a master archer, with a strength of 4 and a bow that draws 4, makes an Overall body Advantage check.

Eurybolos has a 12 pathos and rolls a 9, for a 3 difference.

Joe has a 6 pathos and rolls a 4, for a difference of 2.

The difference is 1 in favor of Eurybolos. This means he may do 1 action before Joe, the section action being simultaneous, then Joe goes at the same time as Eurybolos. If the peasant had rolled a 3, all actions would be simultaneous. If Joe had rolled over his 6 pathos the enemy would commit all actions first. More on this under War.

Joe, on the other hand, has to make 4 successful rolls to hit. Joe is screwed. So let's see what happens to him.

Eurybolos rolls a 10 against his 12 Body, striking Joe with an arrow. The arrow does a 4 damage [Strength/Bow Draw] and the Knit of 4, for 8 +...

But Joe's home spun tunic, helps, right?

Sorry, Joe, there is more shit sliding down Reality Mountain.

Joe's Agility of 2 does reduce damage by 2, from 8 to 6, placing Joe at 1 HP and disabled.

Unused Advantage!

Yes, you gamers though you had me—and I thought you did, wondering how better fighters would get multiple attacks—but Joe's wondering on the armor quality of his bundled up homespun tunic, well that pissed off War.

Eurybolos [who will be speared at Thebes, Joe] has an unused Advantage. That means he gets another shot.

Adding to the 6 points Joe is eating, Eurybolus rolls a 3 against his 12 Body, meaning that he hit Joe with another arrow. Joe takes 4 [strength/bow draw]+4 [for knit] to = 8, less his 2 agility, for 6, which wipes out his last remaining hit point and kills him at -5.

Hit Points Note

0 = KO'd

-1 to -3 various levels of maimed

4 and lower through Death's door.

More on this later.

In the hands of a skilled archer or shooter, the base damage of the weapon is added to Knit. A 1 shot, is numerically miraculous and probably kills without GM intervention.

Mobility Skills

Skills 1 & 3 are possessed by all warriors.

-1. March, trek, hike, pack, etc.

-2. "Run, on the double"

-3. Climb

The following skills are not so common.

-4. Swimming

-5. Riding

-6. Droving, herding and leading pack animals, often performed by non combatants]

-7. Driving

-8. Stalking, a skill of light troops, tribal warriors, etc

-9. Sailing

Anyone can row with a whip to their back! Automatic skill acquisition was never so easy!

Weapon Skills

All warriors are regarded as skilled in 1-5, with heroes and officers also masters, able to train these skills to non combatants.

-1. Striking: punching, elbowing, butting, kicking, kneeing

-2. Wrestling: to include the use of slings and arrow cords to strangle sentries

-3. Basic: Sticks, staff, stones, clubs, axes, tomahawk, maces, mauls, hammers, including throwing of such

-4. Throw & Thrust: lance, spear, javelin, dart, harpoon

-5. Blade: knife, sword, machete, falchion, saber, cutlass

Specialized Skills

-6. Slings, including stone throwing machines

-7. Archery

-8. Bolt weapons, including crossbow and engines

-9. Firearms: Greek fire, naptha, rockets, magic bullshit, to include rockets, flame throwers [which seem to have been ancient siege engines]

-10. Shoulder fired weapons: muskets, rifles, shotguns: note that a rifle with bayonet also serves as a basic and a throw and thrust weapon.

-11. Handguns: pistols, a pistol may also serve, when empty, as a rock or club

-12. Guns: from culverns & carriage canon to howitzers, mortars and machine guns

Spirit

Grunt Role Playing Game Spirit Actions #4. C

Composition Note

This is the 2nd draft of this game, in which my inclination in the design has drifted towards the complex in some areas. My sense is that dueling, chases and hunts should take some time to play out and that the disasters of brawls and battles should run quickly at small scale. Agility should, absolutely be the primary damage reduction mechanic in body. Hence, it should be the corollary Esoteric ability that helps preserve the sanity of the combatant.

Some other nerd should be writing this section—but I'm the only nerd I have. So here it goes...

Spirit

Spirit, and its three components, Animism, Social and Esoteric, are the ability to deal emotionally with the world, or control your emotions within that soul-bending matrix. The stuff that other meatheads try to do to you on the battlefield is child's play compared to what philosophers, politicians, priests, merchants and

userers—not to mention their yummy analogues, women who have manlike intelligence—will do to your once bright, flickering soul!

Spirit skills deal with, or dispense, since the world is iniquitous, blessings and curses upon the spirit of a person. The spirit is its own field of play. A person's Overall Spirit points equal his sanity, with a score of 3 to 18. Establish spirit hit points, for sanity determination, just as one does with Overall Body points being used for Hit Points. These will represent the emotional resilience of the character. In horror settings, Sanity Points, or SPs might be more important than HPs. Even Herakles went insane and cremated himself. First, let's review Spirit as presented thus far:

Step 7

Spirit 3–18

Animistic: 1–6

In play, Animistic spirit serves as bravery, and also as empathy with animals, and is the key ability of the mounted warrior. The down side of a high animistic score is it sets you up to be manipulated by men with

higher social scores or terrorized or befuddled by bad guys with high esoteric scores, basically the fate of the bugman who has been mesmerized by philosophers.

0 = The postmodern bugman out of touch with nature and afraid of his very shadow.

1 = Modern home owner

2 = Liar, Zombie whisperer

3 = Criminal/Military Leader, Mob Whisperer

4 = Empath, Horse/Dog/Grunt Whisperer

5 = Heroic Leader, Warrior Whisperer

6 = Primal Leader, Wolf Whisperer

Social: 1–6

Social ability is used to convince peers, negotiate with allies, make treaties with enemies, etc.

0 = Modern Voter/Sports Fan

1 = Church Lady, “There Should Be A Law!”

2 = Functionary, lower management

3 = Manager, Sergeant

4 = Politician, Captain

5 = Cunning Politician, Commander

6 = Master Politician, General

Esoteric: 1–6

0 = Atheist with Promethean aspirations to becoming a node of the collective Eater God.

1 = Secular Humanist, denying Eternity

2 = Agnostic, vaguely aware that greater powers than man menaces his steps.

3 = Deist.

4 = Poet, keenly aware of the Other Side, able to conduct rites of sacrifice and oath binding from an honest heart.

5 = Seers, Yogi's, Oracles, soothsayers, etc.

Having reviewed this, after having forgotten it, one can plainly see:

... that Animism is the Honorable, Honest, barbaric, virtuous aspect of the warrior, with those who have low animism inspired by those with high animism, to follow where they go, for this reason, characters from heroic cultures: Greek, Germanic, Celtic, Nordic, Amerindian, American frontiersmen, Confederate soldiers, should, after their first adventure experience, get to re-roll their animism score, keeping the old score if it is better.

More on this later. High Animism, honorable characters tend to follow their ken and to reject social and esoteric

leadership. Therefore, politicians and philosophers, who naturally manipulate or indoctrinate their lesser ken, must learn arcane skills to undermine the honor and trick the hero to be misled through his own better nature!

... that Social is the duplicitous, civilized, managerial, slavish aspect, with those with low social enslaved by those with high social, which encourages manipulation, strict class division, and being driven by the lash or fear into battle, such as Persian, Roman, Conscript soldiers, British Empire and Union Army soldiers. Once a private in such an army is inducted or trained, his social score is reduced by 1. Social skill includes the talent for hurling insults between battle lines, for being a camp crier and herding reluctant men into battle.

Conversely, an officer in such an army, after his first battle may re-roll his animism score, potentially becoming a pariah among his class like Burton, Forest, Custer, Gordon, Patton & Hackworth, now becoming a better leader but less likely to climb the political rank ladder.

Or, player's choice, he might bend the knee in his heart and re-roll his Social score, keeping the better of the two and develop a taste, indeed a thirst for, BOOT POLISH!

... Esoteric is the quality of penetrating, understanding, and articulating [communicating to other big-brained nimbi] the human condition. Expression is a function of Animism. The ability to convince the less enlightened is a function of Social. Composing songs and poems, these are esoteric things. But performing them are social exercises. So, very often, the most brilliant insight is acquired by one without the talent of a painter or musician to express higher values or deeper truths and is rarely paired with a high Social skill permitting the enlightened one to convince others and gain disciples.

After the God of Battle has made his pitiless will known on the field, a soldier that has not been positively active and has suffered or who has seen suffering, must make a Spirit check. If he succeeds, he should gain a Pathos and a Rout. If he fails, he shall lose a Social point and have it randomly reassigned, on a 1d6 to: 1-2 Animism, 3-6 Esoteric.

Much of the use of Spirit scores is focused on improving those scores. Spirit is the motivating force of a person and a group they lead. Also, the extreme imbalance of the 3 specific abilities, with a separation largely in kind at 3 and 4, with increasingly materialistic [low Animism], slavish [low Social] or Atheistic [low Esoteric], makes high scores on behalf of leaders important, and when combined with low follower scores, potentially world bending. This is the entirety of Postmodern Social Media influence mechanics: politics and sorcery writ in ether, exactly what Robert E. Howard presented as sorcery in his various Conan yarns. A GM will find that the rules of Grunt are perfect for converting any Robert E. Howard story into an adventure.

Example: if Moses came to the Crow tribe in their migration from the Great Lakes to the Rockies, he would just be a chief that did his job. But, among a slave population in Egypt, he became The Deliverer. [I'm not placing the big man as an example, out of respect to his residence on the Cross.] Apollonius of Tyanna and Epictetus were so effective as teachers, to count emperors among their students, in large part because

they lived in a world whose people had become slavish from bottom to top, with even leaders now behaved as slaves and emperors cowered before their guards who moved them like puppets and slew them at will.

Likewise, Sidartha, Zoroaster and Gandhi would have been just another wise counselor among the tribal peoples of North America. But, in a slave society, their humanity, which would simply be above the average in a heroic society, shone like a beacon, like a very sun.

The general idea of Spirit is that the user of a spirit power makes 2 checks:

... 1. Overall Spirit check [1d20] to determine if he has the current power to use his specific ability: Animism, Social, Esoteric. Failure is not penalized, unless the petitioner of the unseen powers rolls a 20, in which case he has a crisis and must make sanity check. If he succeeds he gains 1 Spirit Mania. If he fails he now makes a Pathos check. If he fails this he secludes himself for a number of days equal to the die difference and gains a Pathos. If he succeeds he gains a Pathos without seclusion. The careers of Alexander, Burton, Forest, Gordon and Patton are thick with these-

regenerative seclusions. Conversely, a 1 on such a check gains a Mania, or a Pathos, or a re-roll of Esoteric, at the player's preference.

... 2. Specific ability check [1d6]

If this is a personal, individual action, it is done, and success or failure is ranked by the die difference with the score, with the GM positing some graduated intensity of experience. Perhaps a 6 roll over a 4 ability smites the confidence of the Philosopher in his attempt to formulate a theory on the afterlife, or a doctrine for Christian observance, and he must seclude himself to regain it. A 1 should be treated as a great epiphany, with the cosmically-inclined character gaining some boon.

In the case of human interaction, like a hero using his mesmerism to inspire his men to charge a vast army or to stand against Grendel in fight, then the followers need only make an Animism check. Conversely, mesmerism, using animism to manipulate a person or persons, requires the object of this attention to fail his check!

So, when Thulsa Doom attempts to mesmerize Conan in the “unarguably greatest movie of all time,” the sorcerer has made his spirit check, and his Animism check as per his Mesmerism skill, forcing Conan to make an Animism check. A moneylender trying to deceive the barbarian would use his Social ability to force the barbarian to make a Social check or be cheated. As will be noted under Spirit skills, these are tied to abilities and sometimes target the same ability in another, or a different ability, as described below.

In social, a counsel of war, in which a rival character controlled by the GM is opposing the honestly thought out plan of the hero [like Parmenio objecting to Alexander before the Granicus] Alexander must make his Social roll and his companions must make their Animism roll, as he is appealing to that quality, to their sense of honor, for Animism is the seat of honor.

However, in the case of Alcibiades giving a speech to the Athenians he seeks to manipulate for HIS own good and to their collective demise, he must make his social and they must fail their social!

If, on the other hand, a pirate captain is suggesting a dastardly deed in order to get rich, in violation of the Pirate Code the crew is operating under [these were drawn up and signed], he must make his Social check and most of them must fail their Animism [honor] check to go along with the evil act.

Oh my, the section that I almost subtitled Brainy Bullshit, has grown overlong. I will break here and return with the actual Skill, Action and Mania portions of Spirit for Grunt, the RPG that should be hidden from your wife and played in a bunker in New Zealand while the Orks rise from the defecation zones of Western Civilization to do their unseen masters' bidding.

Guts, Faith, Leadership & Sorcery

Grunt Role Playing Game Spirit Actions #4. D

The spirits section of the character sheet should look like this.

Spirit: [3–18] Serves as Sanity score.

Animism: [1–6]

Social: [1–6]

Esoteric: [1–6]

Mania = Rout [Panic]: 0+ The power of your name, the terror inspired by your attention, the essence achieved by Gilgamesh, Alexander, Roland and Tamerlane.

Pathos, at the bottom of the page, is often consulted by the spiritual actor, for the higher one's pathos, the more attention he has gained from the Higher World.

According to the mechanics discussed above in the last section, the Spirit powers below will be presented, with the hopes that players, especially of science-fiction and fantasy settings, will expand and improve this effort.

Onward, diabolical and sagacious adventurers and GMs alike.

Spirit Actions

First, unfortunately, just as the bold bodily warrior is dependent on his mind to learn the skills of man–butchering and obstacle–overcoming, for you to ascend to Leadership of, Rule over, or Mastery of lesser men with your superior Spirit, you must be smart enough to learn the mechanics.

Spirit skills will be acquired in character generation, as much as the player succeeds, gaining the first skill, he may attempt the next. Alexander had this stuff when he was 16. The Spirit journey begins with a Single Overall Spirit check.

For the player who fails this—too bad, you are obtuse and doomed to wonder at the great souls that rule your life and cast you into strife. Practice with that ax, Ivan.

For the player whose character passed his overall check, he gets one, pre–play, character generation check against each of his specific abilities, permitting him to attempt to learn the first skill from each list below. When one attempt is successful, he may keep doing checks

under that ability, even if it means he acquires the entire list. [Thulsa Doom territory there.] If he does, let him make up skills. Once skills are used up or the player fails a check, or he can't make up any more magical bullshit, move onto the next list.

Spirit skill use always entails an Overall Spirit check, then the Specific Spirit check, then the subject of the Spirit user's attention makes a check.

Then, if the check is in the interest of the subject, such as healing, honorable leadership, counsel, teaching, then the subject of the Spirit user's attention, makes a specific ability check in the ability noted in order to heal, grasp, learn, etc. However, if, for instance a spirit user is attempting to manipulate in certain ways, like Alcibiades appealing to Athenian sense of honor against Athenian interests, then making the Animism/Honor check will result in the voters electing to die in some foreign land for no good cause. Essentially, this is the mechanic of democracy, a Politician using his social skill, and the people's sense of honor, for his good, against the interest of the people.

Pathos checks will often come into play with groups and in tests of will. For where Animism does represent one's natural Honor, one's Pathos represents his Will.

Mania, in the spirit realm, represented by Rout/Panic is the character's ability to instill panic, sow hysteria and to shatter confidence and conviction—"to keep up the scare," among a confused enemy, as Nathan Bedford Forest, "Wizard of the Saddle," used to say. Most warriors will want to direct this quality at foes. But political leaders, bankers and other kinds of sorcerers [like medical scientists during 2019–23] may direct their Mania at their own people, or people supposedly under their care, or an enemy population [for rulers are generally the enemy of their bamboozled subjects] in order to more totally dominate, deconstruct, use, profit from, enslave and even kill the target subjects.

How Skills Work

Unskilled Attempts

One who does not possess a skill must make the overall Body Check and then the Specific Ability Check.

Likewise, after those two successful checks, a subject of

an UNSKILLED spirit user's attention, gets two checks to save himself, an Overall Spirit and a Specific Spirit ability check. So, for an unskilled character to try and convince a mob to follow him, he must make 2 checks and they must fail 2 checks.

Skilled Sorcery

But, one with the skill, may choose to make whichever kind of check favors his personal makeup: Overall or Specific. Anyone can try and sway the mob, but the politician is much better at it. The mob then makes a collective BS check. Dealing with such a group, I suggest the mob making a 1d20 check against the politician's Pathos.

Gaining skills in order is only done pre-play, with any of these skills, unless noted, available to a hero who makes the regular guy ability checks and succeeds. One could, for instance, go from reality TV construction boss to Presidential candidate, just like that, if the fates align.

The GM may come up with a better way of resolving acts based on the skills, or an attempt to develop a skill in action, listed below.

The Skills

Animism

These skills are in the form of resistance to conditions and enemy Mania and Pathos based attempts to cause crisis in honor and faith. #1 thru 3 are typically reversed as spells by mesmerists, politicians and sorcerers. As noted above one can attempt to learn through acts.

-1. Discord: resistance to peer pressure, majority opinion and honor limiting civil convention, for instance, the fortitude to go to war when others warn against it, such as naysayers at Heroat discouraging Beowulf.

Resistance to political discourse.

-2. Fear: to overcome fear of physical harm, through a gut check, the key quality of a warrior. Whenever a warrior's Spirit Mania exceeds this number he may use that, with, in the case of a mania over 6, calling for a re roll and a second 6 failing.

-3. Rout/Panic: resisting mass hysteria, standing and fighting in an honorable last stand [like the 300 Greek mercenaries who decided to stand and die against Alexander, only to be spared and recruited for their bravery], and resisting esoteric pressure, of the expert class doctrine, ideology, theology and scienceology that

you lack understanding of, just as the trooper in the Kyber pass that stood and died for his unit's honor, may not have understood what blunders his general made that put him in that shit position, and was therefore not unduly troubled by questions of "should've done" and simply concerned himself with knocking this robed buggers from the saddle with his last few rounds..

-4. Prayer: honest appeal to Heaven, directly, with no sacrifice or recitation of scripture, for assistance. The skill is the ability to open the heart to Eternity, not in any technique. The boon, if granted, is defined by the GM in game terms most appropriate to the character and setting.

-5. Empathy: the ability to reach out in concord without the need of language or writing or sign, but simply with body language, transparently reflecting good will. This is the key skill of the horseman and the handler of hounds. The Tarzan character is the best example of a master empath in adventure fiction.

-6. Eyes of Resolve: this is your staredown skill. The art of this is to practice reflecting your will to do or die in eye to eye contact. This is the primary skill that permitted me to dissuade hundreds of hoodrats from touching me and getting stabbed. They never saw my

knife. But they KNEW, that I was going all the way. Their perspective of being inclined to partway measures made them unsuitable for this pressure. How this works, is once the Resolved Man makes his check, then his foe must fail it. Against modern criminals, making your check means likely success, with the criminal having to roll against his 1 atheist score. But against a viking with a 5, your resolve will merely grant you respect. This is the key skill of the duelist. If the foe fails, he must make a gut check or suffer a disadvantage, a 20 or a 6 [he might have a choice if he has this skill. If he has no skill then he has to make an Overall Spirit Check and a Specific Mesmerism Check]. Failure simply means he quits, leaves, or surrender.

-7. Steel Eyes: One may not acquire this without Empath and Eyes of Resolve. It requires a double check, once against each, to acquire Steel Eyes. In case of failure, another attempt may not be made until after a mortal combat, duel, battle, etc. Making your check requires the foe to make his. If he fails, he has a disadvantage.

-8. War Cry: This is the plea to the God of Battle, or, for you Christians, to The Almighty. If you, or your fellows, make your War Cry check, then the foes must make a Spirit Mania: Rout/Panic check or suffer a disadvantage.

This is not the common obligatory war cry, but the cry of Achilles, of men who have lion like wills. Those with the war cry skill might use their Discord mania instead. If they have a 6 or greater Discord, a double 6 fails.

-9. Mesmerism: permits the mesmerist to influence the subject, even against his better interest.

-10. Fanaticism: permits the fanatic to direct the subject as a willing slave, even into overt suicide.

Social

The following skills all build on one another and require the former to be possessed before the latter may be acquired. Unless, one successfully attempts to leap ahead, in which case he does so with 3 rolls, as he does an overall check, a social check, and has a disadvantage roll on the latter. If he does this, he might start out as high as 6. 7 and above, cannot be attempted without #6: Rally.

-1. Calm: ability to resist Discord, Mesmerism and Fanaticism

-2. Planning: to sell a plan to companions or have an alteration in an existing plan modified

-3. Council: negotiation with ally

- 4. Counsel: to assist your leader in planning, at least in part, by offering information, such as an enemy position or characteristic
- 5. Parlay: negotiation with rival or enemy
- 6. Rally: to rouse discordant or broken fellows or followers to collective action
- 7. Selection: to influence those who know you to support your rise to power, even of being the leader of a raiding party [tribal/Athenian democratic politics]
- 8. Election: to convince people who do not know you to support your rise to power [modern/republican Roman politics]
- 9. Autocrat: to convince those who oppose you that resistance is futile and to step aside or hide [postmodern/imperial Roman politics]
- 10. Ascension: to convince those under your sway that YOU have the benediction of Heaven, that you are chosen by God to Rule in His name, by Divine Right, ancient Near Eastern and Medieval Christian politics.

Esoteric

These are abilities that only require a subject resistance at higher levels and are, at lower levels concerned with discovering hidden knowledge. Attempts to drive a

person insane, either magical or through mesmerism or gas lighting, target Esoteric, the inner self.

-0. Stoicism, is not a requirement for higher skills, but makes one skilled in resisting direct attacks upon the soul of a person.

-1. Acts: to interpret [immediate] pending activity based on recent/current fraternal actions, to gain an advantage

-2. Signs: to interpret pending activity based on recent enemy actions, to gain an advantage

-3. Birds: to interpret the Will of Heaven based on avian activity [birds do predict hard winters and natural disasters], to avoid a disadvantage

-4. Divination: the ability to conduct sacrifices [like defaming a whistle blower through media press releases or cutting open a ram] in order to, if successful on a 1d6 to gain an advantage [1 or 2] or avoid/nullify a disadvantage [3 thru 6].

-5. Wrath of God: the ability to read the Will of Heaven based on large scale climate activity and of lesser phenomena like the sweating statue of Orpheus. Same result as Divination.

Interactive Skills

- 6. Teach: the teacher makes a Wit check and an Esoteric check. If he succeeds in teaching a history or philosophy or sorcery subject, the student must now make the same two checks, or, continue in ignorance.
- 7. Philosophy: To teach doctrine to a collective body, one must do it in a group of disciples or companions, making a Social check and then an Esoteric check. A Didact, or a Disciple, adhering to this doctrine [the root of “doctor”/ being an ideologue] need only make a social check, done in public, and the Faithful will automatically follow.
- 8. Prophecy: if one possess 1 thru 7, he may make a Spirit Check and an Esoteric, to present a prophecy about long term events that will be presented with disciple support to the Faithful as defined above. Faithful with 4 or more Animism or Spirit Mania scores may choose to believe or not. If not, they become heretics. Those choosing to believe become orthodox didacts. People with less than 4 Animism and Mania have no choice, they believe!
- 9. Sorcery: to include Science, is based on presenting a fact, a reality that can be understood by the subject, in order to form the basis for deceiving the believing

person concerning a wider. The sorcerer or scientist simply needs this skill, to commit sorcery, which is deception based on real perception. The sorcerer makes an Esoteric Check. If he does, then he may then attempt to place his subject under the pale of a disadvantage roll. The sorcerer, then decides if he is going to force an Animism, Esoteric or a Wit check on the subject of his spell. This was done to America in 2020, and 90% of Americans failed the check that the Creep State coven of sorcerers forced upon them: Esoteric checks against Conservatives, Animism checks forced upon Liberals, and Wit checks forced upon the Religious.

-10. Gaslight: the ability to lie with such power from the pulpit, permits the Sorcerer to force the subjects within the hearing of his voice or that of his priests, preachers, agents, oracles [TV reporters, social media influencers, the Pythia at Delphi] to make a check against his lowest score: Animism or Wit, or potentially go mad. Missing a check, triggers an overall Mind or Spirit check, whichever is lowest. If the overall check is missed the subject becomes a zombie follower of the Sorcerer, or, if he makes this overall check, he becomes incapable of using his Wit in this regard unless he first makes an Animism check.

To The God of Battle

Grunt Role Playing Game Character Expedition #5

I have not repeated the rules for pathos, mania, folly, madness and berserk from Chapter 3.

Mind's Eye

Before a combat of some type, a hero may decide to seek a vision at a glance, taking in whatever the field of battle, a fencing strip, a boxing ring, a battle array or a siege, and trust to his intuition. A 1d6 check against Esoteric grants a temporary increase in Pathos equal to the die difference. If those temporary pathos points prove crucial, that is necessary, for prevailing in the pathos roll, then they become permanent.

Rounds

Combat in Grunt is conducted in rounds, with some actions done in "you go, I go" fashion, and some simultaneous. The length of a round is abstract, and may represent seconds of dueling, minutes of battle or hours of hunting.

Mania

Once in every combat of any kind, any hero may apply a single Mania score to an action:

Discord to Pathos,

Fear to damage reduction, and

Rout to damage.

If any such action results in success: In Pathos

Advantage, avoiding death or disability, or taking life and cheering War on his scalp-draped throne of discord, that mania score is increased by 1.

Once a hero has reached a mania of 6, it can be obvious that he will steadily gain that mania and also pathos. I do not propose a limit to adding discord to pathos. But a roll playing solution. By the time Alexander returned to Babylon he was over 30 in pathos and 18 in Discord. He would have to roll 20s or be killed to loose in a military action. The Chaldeans had him poisoned.

Pathos

Before a combat, the foes, and in case of a battle or team fight, the leaders, make a pathos check. Whichever has the highest die difference, being a roll on 1d20 lower than the pathos score, gains advantages equal to

the difference in the lower die difference and the higher, for his side. This has been covered earlier with Achilles and Sarpedon.

If the losing pathos hero rolls over his pathos score, he gains 1 disadvantage. This score, his over roll, is not factored in the advantages of his foe, who simply takes his raw die difference, between his score and roll, as his number of advantages. This is probably a disaster.

Pathos advantages and disadvantages must all be used in the first round of combat. These represent the initial favor of Fate or Fortune, with War and his three servants taking the 2nd round and on.

Dueling

Including boxing, wrestling, MMA, stick-fighting, sword fighting, knife-fighting and gladiatorial combat, pistol dueling, are forms of ritual combat in which the foes agree to certain limits on their actions [like not leaping into the stands at the arena, but fighting it out, or ducking during a pistol duel] and are usually supervised, or, held to a strict code of honor.

Note: The damage done in unarmed combats are covered under equipment, as is defending.

Preceding a duel the following checks are made:

- Minds Eye

- Pathos

- Knit: 1 d6 check for damage reduction

- Kit: 1 d6 check for damage augmentation

- Wit: 1 d6 check for advantage/disadvantage, meaning one might overthink the duel and gain a disadvantage.

Wit disadvantages and advantages are additional to those in pathos and may result in rolls and counter roll cycles.

A dueling round is simultaneous.

The duelist's each make an Overall Body Check, with no factoring of damage done until advantage and disadvantage rolls are all exhausted. Advantage and disadvantage re-rolls are NOT applied to damage results. Damage reduction and augmentation is covered in more detail under equipment.

Once the rolls have been made, a duelist who has missed his check and rolled higher than his Body takes a number of damage equal to the difference—oops, ran into that jab!

Then, the hero who has rolled under his Body inflicts $\text{Strength} + \text{Weapon} + \text{Knit}$, Minus the Armor and Agility of the other.

Dedicated Defense

At the start of a round, a player may announce that he is dedicating his weapon to defense. His knit will not be factored for damage, if he is successful. However, it may now be used for damage reduction if he is hit.

Nuances

Balk: If their natural die Roll is the same, they both inflict ZERO damage.

Time & Measure: If both make their body check, the hero with the lower natural roll, which may not have succeeded in the die difference, earns an advantage for the next round, if he survives this round.

Fury: If a hero rolls a 1, and the die difference is still against him, then he still strikes and is permitted to add his pathos & discord mania to the damage.

Fate: A hero who rolled higher but still one the die difference, suffers a disadvantage in the next round.

Once damage has been factored, if this is not a first blood duel, but a mortal affray, another round begins without additional Mind's eye, Pathos, Knit, Kit or Wit checks.

Armor and Agility: are always subtracted from damage. Exception, a hero who is wearing more armor points than he has strength points, reduces his Agility modifier by the number of points his armor exceeds his strength. As described above knit may be reserved for damage reduction rather than dedicated to damage.

Mercy: Damage may also be reduced by the hero striking his foe, at will, sometimes to disarm, or, perhaps to gain a surrender. The duelist has the option not to kill his foe, though it may not always be successful, as he may only reduce damage equal to his agility.

Disarming

A duelist may reduce his damage equal to the number of Agility points he has. This enables him to make an Overall Body check to disarm. If he fails, he has still reduced damage to his foe. If he rolls a 20, he gives his foe a chance to disarm him with a Body check. A roll of a 1 results in a disarm that gives the weapon to the disarming foe. Simple disarms knock the weapon away.

Disarming is done differently in brawling, which is the kind of combat one engages in in Battle. However, disarming in hunt and skirmish situations is the same as in dueling.

Dueling mechanics permit both parties to be slain or injured at the same time, but this is rare.

Any time both foes make their Body check and the die difference is the same, they both inflict wounds, making this a rare case of a possible mutual kill in a duel. Above are some other nuances that might result in both duelists inflicting damage at the same time.

Knockdown

Any time a foe is damaged, a hero with an unused advantage, may use it to make a Body check. A success results in a knockdown, which inflicts the downed fighter with a disadvantage. In modern boxing, it afflicts him with a lost point and the fight is restarted after a 10 count.

Hunting

Including skirmishing and manhunting, low intensity efforts to outwit, stalk, outmaneuver and ambush, have been covered under Mind.

Brawling

A brawl is, like a duel, simultaneous combat.

The difference is that you are in chaos or urgent straights and have no time for dancing.

Disadvantage rolls gained in Pathos must be used in the first round.

Use of advantage rolls is optional in a brawl, where they may be saved, or more accurately, “pushed.”

Both players make a body check, do not compare their results, and inflict damage based on the difference in their roll and their Body Ability, inflicting Strength+Weapon+Die Difference, rather than knit, minus Armor & Agility.

Brawling Defense

A defensive effort might be made by assigning the die difference to damage reduction, rather than just hitting the foe while he hits you. In military battles, this decision is often a top down affair, with soldiers told to hold before counter attacking. Berserkers, of course, are not permitted such a craven option.

Pushing

In a brawl, a hero with an advantage may use each advantage he has against a second foe, fighting multiple foes at a time.

Momentum

In a brawl, anytime a foe is disarmed, downed, disabled or Slain, the hero who did it gets an Advantage, permitting him to attempt to finish the foe where he lays

with that earned Advantage, or attacking a second foe, and so on.

Disarming in Brawl

This governed by Strength, reducing damage by the strength score, and, if successful in striking the foe, makes a strength check to determine if he disarmed the enemy. A 1 gives the disarming hero his foe's weapon. Other successes knock it away. A failure permits the enemy to try and disarm by making a strength check.

Bowling Over Foes

In a brawl, instead of disarming, a hero might try and knockdown a foe he has damaged [the stroke must have resulted in damage, not deflected by armor or evaded by agility] with a strength check. A 6 failure [or double 6] for heroes with 6 strength, sends the strong man down. Being downed, in a brawl, as in a duel, results in a disadvantage. A success knocks down the foe, who now has a disadvantage.

Battle is brawling, a more direct and less evasive kind of combat than dueling.

Battle

Minds Eye [above]

Pathos [above]

Discord

The side whose leader has gained the pathos advantage decides if his men are attacking or defending.

Rounds: attackers and defenders make Overall Body checks. The attacker inflicts damage $\text{Strength} + \text{Die Difference} + \text{Weapon} +$ and the defender nullifies damage with $\text{Armor} + \text{Agility} +$.

Defending in Battle

A battle, rather than simply a brawl, is a more formal set piece affair in which equipment plays a greater role. Essentially, a fighter acting as soldier, who makes his Kit check, may assign his weapon's damage to his own damage reduction, along with the die difference used in the normal brawling defense. The damage value of the weapon in the equipment list is now assigned to damage reduction.

Shield Attack: Conversely, in battle, brawl or duel, a shield may be withheld from damage reduction and used for offense and dedicated to damage augmentation.

Fear

After a full round, in which the defenders were able to counter attack, the fallen are counted. If losses are equal, to within 10%, battle continues to another round.

The side who has suffered the most losses must make individual Gut checks. Those who fail these checks will not counter attack the next round, only defend, dedicating weapons and die difference to damage reduction.

Design Note: when a fighter who knows what he is doing, refuses to attack and dedicates himself to defense, it is really hard to get to him as he does not open up.

After any round in which half of the combatants on one side have failed Gut checks, the leader must make a Social check. If he fails, his men who have failed their Gut checks break and run. Those who had made their

Gut checks, he may attempt to Rally. If they make an additional Gut check they gain the Calm skill, a Fear Mania point and a Pathos point, and will not break the rest of this action.

Sarge Bought It!

If a leader is killed, his men must make a Gut check or an additional Gut check. Any man who makes such a check, may rise to the occasion by attempting a Social check after his successful "I lost my leader" Gut check. If he fails, no one notices. If he succeeds he gains a Fear Mania and Pathos, and the Rally skill, and is a natural, leader anointed by WAR.

A good adventure for a single player would be making him a squad leader and attempting to rally his men as a rear guard for his fleeing main platoon.

Rout

Running away and pursuing are the name of this phase. Any unbroken individuals on the broken side, may stand and fight in a last stand with a Gut check. A leader who has not broken, can take the individual unbroken men of

his party and direct them in a delaying action if he makes a Wit check.

Warriors on the winning side, if they are not commanded to stand or pursue, let's say in a chaotic battle without clear leadership, make a Gut check, or a Rout check if they prefer, to pursue broken foes or try and slaughter the rear guard. The die difference is retained as that man's advantages against broken [not rear guard] foes. Failure to make this Rout check, means the character tends to the Rapine of fallen foes and/or care of his wounded fellows.

War Fog

When a team, squad, platoon, company or army has broken, in order for either side to organize cooperative actions, such as meeting a second force, marching to another place, gathering a broken army's remnants into a new place, must require an Overall Spirit check on the part of the Leader, before he can order and conduct Rallying operations and maneuver, to include pursuing broken foes. In the Napoleonic Age, certain cavalry leaders, like Murat, were valued largely for this quality of hunting down fleeing foes in pitiless pursuit.

Rapine

Rampaging victors each gain a Pathos and rout Mania point, and may each then, make a Pathos or Rout Mania check on 1d20 to determine if they captured foes, camp followers, women and children, horses, however the GM defines the booty, equal to the die difference. Rolling higher means he looted only gear and goods.

Say, Geronimo, with his 18 pathos, rolls a 12, for a difference of 6 after hitting a wagon train. That could be six ugly mules, or perhaps a fine, blond, white, Texas Heiress good for ransom or breeding!

See equipment listing for female values.

Death's Door

Hit Point

0 = Disabled, for a few moments, KO'd in boxing, choked in wrestling, unable to act unless a berserk maniac, see Berserker section

-1 = Disabled, all day or night, with loss of 1 Strength, Endurance or Agility, walking wounded, able to stagger or limp, but not run or march.

- 2 = Disabled all day and night, with loss of 2 body points at GM discretion
- 3 = Disabled for 2 days and nights, with loss of 3 body points.
- 4 = Dead, meet Eternity

Put those maiming points in brackets as some might heal below. Medical healing is dealt with under equipment, where the slave women and physicians are stowed.

Crippled Yore

Characters who are disabled to -1 and below recover like so:

Have long term body point losses for a year.

Every year that passes, they can make a check against existing Overall Body to heal 1 point, of their choice.

+1 per day, until conscious/able to move and able to act as walking wounded

When a wounded warrior gets to 1 HP, he may make an overall Body Check against his current, maimed total. If he makes it he regains the difference between his

original Overall Body and his current the 2nd day. Then each day after he gains his current Strength back until at full.

Medical and faith healing are covered under equipment.

Surrender

A hero may reduce the damage he does with a hand weapon, not a missile weapon, at will, by a factor equal to his strength, instead of driving his enemy lower, in order to spare and gain the surrender of a foe. This may leave the foe able, above 0. Yet, the foe will know that he was “dead to rites” [not rights] and have a chance to insist on death or agree to surrender.

A foe at mercy then makes a pathos check. If he fails he surrenders. If he succeeds he demands death and refuses cooperation. If he insists on death, the withheld strength damage may now be applied.

The hero who receives such a surrender gains a pathos point from his captive, who loses a pathos point. If the captive has an equal Pathos to the captor, he gains 2 and the captive loses only 1. If the captive has a greater

pathos than the captor, than that happy hero gains 4
pathos to the captive's 1. Feudal Europe was in part
governed by such mercy relationships gained in battle.

Episodes & Epics

Grunt Role Playing Game Episode Creation & Play # 6

Episode Creation & Play

A historical and a poetic episode are each presented. Each may begin the start of an Epic, traditionally called in RPGs, a campaign.

The Agrianes Yielded Nothing

In a little known campaign in the mountains of Asia Minor, an Asiatic tribe defied Alexander. These people held a severe mountain pass and, according to Arrian, were a tribe of a renown race of warriors. A key height was occupied by Alexander's advance light troops, the Archers and the Agrianes. The archers in Alexander's service were often subject to terrible casualties. The loss of no less than three "brigadier" generals commanding them attested to their use at close range with no armor. As the barbarian warriors counter attacked, they drove the archers from the hill, but "the Agrianes yielded nothing."

The Agrianes were semi-barbarian volunteers who fought in an ethnic block and seem to have been armed

in three fashions: 200 Royal Agriane Guards, light hoplites [similar to the Arkadian battalion of the Spartan army, known as the Skiratt], 200 slingers [shepherds], and 600 Thracian-style peltasts, probably owning small, mixed agricultural plots. This was Alexander's elite strike force, seeing 65 actions and rarely suffering significant casualties. For this reason I suppose an integrated force, with small units reflecting that mix, and preventing enemy light forces and horse to wipe out what most historians assume were simply light armed peltasts.

For this adventure, the players roll to determine their position in an overrun file of Agrianes:

Clitus, File Leader [Sargent], cowherd, hunter

Armor: Aspis, heavy shield, [3] Corinthian helmet [1]

Arms: Dory, 11 foot spear, [3], Xiphos, "Reaper" sword [3]

Pathos = 9, Discord =4, Fear =4, Rout =4

...

Arebolos, Slinger, shepherd, hunter

Armor: Wolf-hide Cowl & Fleece vest and cloak [1]

Arms: Sling & Bullets [1], machera “cleaver” [2], knife [1]
Pathos = 4, Discord = 1, Fear = 2, Rout = 4

...

Glaukus, Peltast, lead thrower, farmer, hunter

Armor: Wide brimmed horseman’s hat to help with sunrise, sunset & winter vision and pelte “thrower’s shield” shaped like a crescent [2]

Arms: 5 4-foot feathered darts [2], machera [2], knife [1]
Pathos = 5, Discord = 2, Fear = 4, Rout = 5

...

The characters should each gain a re-roll on Stamina, Agility, Knit and Animism.

Additional players are all peltasts like Glaukus.

Names: Phrynon, Eurymachus, Aretion, Timon, Creon

...

Missian Enemy

These foes number 10. Nine of these are peltasts.

There abilities should be rolled as so:

1d6

1-2 = 2

3-5 = 3

6 = 4

The tenth man is the file leader, and is armed with 2 throwing axes [2] and 1 battle ax [4]. He has a 6 pathos, 3 Discord, 3 Fear and 3 Panic.

His abilities will be rolled on the same table as his men, with one re-roll permitted for Body, Mind & Spirit.

...

The goal of the episode is to hold on the hill against superior numbers for 5 rounds of combat.

-Elimination of the Missians is a decisive victory.

-Breaking of the Missians a marginal victory.

-Holding without breaking or being wiped out is a draw, as, on the 6th round, the Foot Companions, in heavy armor come to the relief. The Agrianes are being used as bait.

-Being wiped out is an honorable end, also a draw as this is a holding action, with any KO'd or maimed warriors rewarded and the slain given a heroes burial.

-Breaking is unacceptable and is the only means of defeat.

If the players like, this might be the beginning of a campaign with increased pathos, mania and skill helping these front line fighters campaign with Alexander into India. If this is desired, all characters who did not runaway get rewarded and increase in applicable areas of ability, mania, skill and pathos. Any players whose character's are slain may roll up a new replacement of that grade [Guard, Slinger, Pelast] and follow the veterans into glory.

My book, The Son of God, will detail all of Alexander's battles for those interested in such a campaign. At this point, the Agrianes already have a dozen actions behind them.

...

Heroat Hall

House Carls Defend the King's Hall against Grendel

This is a horror show. The players should try and have fun being slaughtered. Whoever does the most damage against he monster should play Beowulf in the rematch, with the others playing his Shieldmen.

Carls are rolled at random, with a 1–6 Pathos and 0–2 mania scores. They must roll a successful agility check to get their shield to arm and another to grab their spear. Swords are considered at hand.

Armor: leather coat sewn with iron rings & helmet [3], shield [3]. If a house carl only has a 3 strength, then he subtracts 3 from his agility damage reduction.

Arms: spear [3], sword [3].

Grendel (see bestiary at end of equipment for reference)

Pathos = 12

Body = 23

Strength = 12 [giant monsters roll 1d20 for strength checks but do base strength damage, Grendel doing a minimum of 14, 12 strength + 2 for claws or fangs]

Stamina = 6

Agility = 5 [-1 damage for hide, for a 6 damage reduction]

Discord = 9

...

Mind = 9

Knit = 4

Kit = 2

Wit = 3

Fear = 9

...

Spirit = 9

Animism = 6

Social = 1

Esoteric = 2

Rout = 9

...

After this horrific introduction, one might wish to begin a campaign in which Beowulf is insulted at drink on arrival and either yawns or duels with his heckler, then his Shieldmen lay in ambush for Grendel in the hall, then hunt his mother, then fight a battle against Skraelings, and then fight the Dragon.

Wending Shield Men

Pathos = 5, 6 or 7 [roll 1d6], manias are rolled on 1d6, abilities random with 2 re-rolls on Body

Armor: Brass or oiled iron scale coats and bore tusk helmets [4] shields [3] (Since no man has a 7 strength, such armor will result in loss of agility damage reduction.)

Arms: Spear [3], Sword [3]

Beowulf

Pathos = 20

Body = 18

Strength = 6

Stamina = 6

Agility = 6

Discord = 12

...

Mind = 14

Knit = 6

Kit = 3

Wit = 5

Fear = 9

Skill: Swimming, Dueling, Rally, Diving, Wrestling, Stalking [Grendel], Hunting [Grendel's mother], see equipment for effects. Beowulf does, in the poem, set aside an advantage roll attack and sue it to make his

wrestling [knit score] skill check and reduces grappling damage.

...

Spirit = 14

Animism = 6

Social = 5

Esoteric = 3

Rout = 6 (This is the 1d20 pursuit of broken foe ability, which he fails as Grendel escapes.)

Beowulf is armed and armored like his fellows, but has a remarkable sword [4]

...

Epilogue

Below are some outlines for Episodes I plan on eventually writing and publishing on the web site.

-3. Primal Episodes: 3 Ice Age Hunts

Mammoth Hunters versus Auroch Hunters circa 30,000 B.P.

-4. Mythic Episodes: 7 Footfalls of the Distant One

The Early Bronze Age characters face the foes of Gilgamesh and Enkidu.

-5. Ancient Episodes: 3 Feats for Alexander

Tasks assigned to the famed Agriane warriors from 336 through 323 B.C.

-6. Dark Age Episodes: 3 Viking Raids

Like you would want to play anything but a Viking?

-7. Early Modern Episodes: 3 Foraging Forays

Hundred Years War, 30 Years War, Seven Years War

-8. Harm City Adventures: 3 Gang Fights

Baltimore Groes, Joliet Jocks, Oakland Tweakers versus the Player Gang

-9. Dark Future Episodes: Foes from The Last Whiteman
Pimps, Guardsmen, Slavers, Tenties, Meat Police, Officer Blatz & Hinterlander

Grunt Grinder

Weapons, Armor, Effects and Recovery #7

Strength Weapons

The number is the amount of intrinsic damage it does. If one does not have strength equal to the damage of the weapon then the difference is reduced from the weapon's damage. So, if a scribe tries to fight with a battle ax with his 1 strength, then the 4 damage of the battle ax is reduced to 1.

If a slave girl with a strength of zero uses this weapon, her weapon damage is reduced to 1, but she is not able to add a strength score of 1, like the scribe does. Soy boys be warned. A person with a 0 strength using a 0 weapon does 0 damage. A weapon valued at 1, does 1 damage in the hands of a 0 strength wielder.

Knit and Damage

Note that Knit may only be applied to damage when the weapon is used by a skilled wielder.

Knit may be used to reduce damage on the part of a skilled fighter.

An unskilled fighter, let's say a rifleman who has never used a sword and picks one up, may use the sword for defense with a skill check. If he does, he is now skilled.

Also, the use of non weapons, for instance a man at banquet picking up a stool and improvising it as a shield, is also determined with a Knit check. Once this check is made, Knit and the forensic property of the weapon, using a bench as a heavy shield [3], a chair as a medium shield [2] or a stool as a light shield [1] may be sued for damage reduction. The fighter now adds chair to his skill set.

Knit and Projectile Weapons: A skilled archer or thrower or hurler, may employ his Knit for damage. When he does so, he forgoes the die difference damage, which is a random indication of how sensitive the portion of the target impacted was, and instead relies on his skill. But, if a roll is made that would inflict more damage than the Knit score, that total is used instead. The point is that in

using projectile weapons. Knit and die difference are never added together, it being one or the other.

Armor

All armor counts as strength weapons, as the material must be worn or carried. So, lack of strength to fully employ a shield of 3 and an armor of 3, on the part of a man with 5 strength, means that his agility damage reduction of 3 [his agility score] is reduced by the difference between his armor and his strength, to a 2. Let us cover weapons and armor together, with armor occupying the second line, the third line occupied by archery.

Strength Weapon Progression

The number lists the damage the weapon does and the damage the armor deflects or absorbs.

0 =

Weapons: the human body, cords, ropes, straps, belts that require strength

Armor: the human body and simple unlayered, unquilted, unpadding, unhardened clothing

Punching, kicking and grappling are unarmed combat means, which rely on Strength in the unskilled, or the Strength, Knit or Agility of a skilled combatant [his choice]. A skilled user may choose to use Strength, Agility or Knit for damage modification. An unskilled boxer or wrestler MUST use his strength. Damage reduction is also a use of such a skill. For instance, Beowulf, a skilled wrestler, used his pathos roll [18 over Grendel's 12] to gain two advantages, used one advantage to grapple defensively, reducing damage with a Knit check, and the other advantage to dislocate the monster's arm.

Archery: Dubs, or dummy arrows with no points but padded, do only strength/draw damage, with no damage done for die difference.

...

1 =

Weapons: sticks, rods, stones, hooves, being simple weapons along with whips, chains, knotted ropes and other flexible weapons that require strength and skill for use. Skill permits the application of a hero's "Knit" to

damage, but does require strength to wield, sling stones and bullets.

Armor: hides, padded or quilted garments, a small hand shield, a helmet, though it covers only a small area covers a highly exposed, targeted and sensitive area

Weapons may be dedicated to defense rather than attack in any type of combat. In a stick fight against a Ugandan porter who does not want to carry his scientific instruments, Sir Captain Richard Francis Burton, might use his stick to defend [damage reduced by 1 for the stick's properties, plus Knit or Agility or Strength, his choice]. This combat is a prop, in order to set up his mesmerism stare which will hopefully convince the savage to worship his master as a very god of cudgel work, without the need to injure the laborer, thus tragically reducing his ability to carry his master's instrument case over the mountains.

Archery: child's bow, kinetic impact of light poison dart.
...

2 =

Weapons: edged weapons that are not weighted such as claws, fangs, talons, also knives, edged weapons that are limited such as a dagger with no edge or a razor or cleaver with no point, limit damage potential in a fluid combat.

Also, weighted weapons such as clubs, clubbed muskets, weighted flexible weapons like flails, etc. Also darts, javelins and other thrown hafted point weapons. This category may be rated higher against a non resisting or bound target.

Thrown or hurled weapons used by the unskilled add Strength. Those thrown by the skilled may apply Knit, Kit or Strength.

Armor: Hardened leather armor, or protective garments somehow reinforced, a slight or small shield or pelte, a stick and hide Zulu shield

Archery: light bow, which can be drawn by a person of 2 strength. For instance, a normal man of 2 who grabs a more powerful bow, may use it, if he makes a strength

check, but may only draw it to a 2 power. A strength of 1 using a 2 bow inflicts 1 damage plus the die difference, which is the aim.

...

3=

Weapons: weighted edged weapons like sabers, swords, hatchets, or heavier hafted light blades like spears, pikes and lances, which enable horizontal weighting, and making them similar to their natural analog which would be a horn, a tusk, or an antler that might gore the enemy. Thus, any man thrusting two handed, or a skilled spear man thrusting one-handed with a spear, a man thrusting a spear from a horse, a soldier with bayonet on musket, or a unicorn charging and goring, all accomplish the same improvement, adding strength to the weapon base of 3.

Heavy shields such as the aspis, hoplon, bogarian, scutum, kite shield, Viking shield, various mail and scale armor

Archery: heavy self bow, cross bow

...

4 =

Weapons: Bastard swords, light two-handed swords and exceptionally forged blades, battle axes, war hammers

Armor: Mail improved with plate additions.

Archery: composite bow, heavy cross bow

...

5 =

Weapons: Great swords, great axes, lockbar axes, halberds, two handed war hammers

Armor: Plate

Archery: Small siege bow, long bow

...

6 =

Weapons: Dragon Claws, Titanic and giant weapons, mechanical steel weapons like chain saws, back ho buckets, etc.

Armor: Modern ballistic armor, dragon scales, etc.

Archery: heavy siege bow, great hero bow

Kit Based Weapons

The armor is the same as in Strength based weapons, which is depressing. The damage enhancement of these weapons are skill, not strength based, with Kit, Knit or Wit added, at players discretion. As with archery, the skilled user may choose Knit instead of die difference for damage, but differ to die difference if it proves better. This is a kind of safety against just rolling one's Overall body score on the 1d20 to hit roll and doing only base weapon damage. It is an option of the skilled gunman.

Note, that most military musket users in the Black Powder Era, did not have aiming skill, but were simply loading and discharging. This would be the difference in the Kentucky rifleman and the Red Coat with his musket in 1776–83, or the Texan rifleman and the Mexican soldier 1837, who was using the left over Brown Bess muskets once used by the British Soldiers.

Fast Draw: the ability to quickly deploy a secured weapon, be it a sheathed sword or a holstered pistol, is a function of Knit or Agility, which ever the player chooses. Once a firearm is out Agility is only used for damage reduction and Knit [that is interfacing of the body with the tool], Kit [knowledge of the tool] and Wit [overall smarts, like Clint Eastwood's character in A Fist Full of Dollars wearing a steel plate under his poncho, knowing that his foe always aimed at and hit the heart].

Gun nuts will of course want to correct and improve the load ratings of the weapons below, which, I predict, will not make the targets of these weapons any more comfortable in their perforated suits or uniforms.

0=

Paint ball gun, bee bee gun, etc.

...

1=

Air rifle, small caliber pistol [.22, .25]

...

2 =

Medium caliber pistol [.32]

...

3 =

Primitive dueling or light pistol, small caliber rimfire rifle, Black Beard's brace of pistols.

...

4 =

Primitive heavy pistol, often used as a club.

...

5 =

Primitive light long gun, fowling piece or horseman's carbine, 9MM pistol, 36MM pistol

...

6 =

Primitive medium long gun, Jaeger's light rifle, Pennsylvania or Kentucky Rifle, matchlock, arquebus, hackbutt... .38 special

...

7 =

Musket, a heavy, large caliber slow load, that was used on a tripod by sword armed musketeers in the 1600s, and, beginning at about 1700, was replaced with a lighter but still heavier weapon which bore a bayonet and was a better than a pike in overall hand to hand. From this point, pike's were made short and given hooks for naval action, as pikemen were no longer needed to defend musketeers from horsemen as they reloaded, .40 to .45 caliber pistols, 4.10 shot gun

...

8 =

Modern light rifle [5.56 MM], improved musket [mid 1800s], late black powder rifles of higher caliber used west of the Mississippi, magnum and .50 cal pistols, 20 gauge shotgun

...

9 =

16 gauge shotgun

10 =

Modern medium rifle [7MM]

11 =

12 gauge shotgun

...

12=

Modern rifle, standard [9MM]

...

13=

10 gauge shotgun

...

14=

Modern rifle, heavy

...

One may continue with more specialized, advanced fire arms. But Grunt becomes an exercise in luck and attrition once high caliber high velocity lead starts flying. I don't expect this game to be much fun beyond bank robberies and sniper duels and blasting colonial savages armed with machetes after 1900.

16 =

1 pounder, Colvern, swivel gun

...

20 =

2 pounder.

For larger loads add 4 points per pound of shot, up to the 32 pounders that ripped through ships timbers and men and killed 30 armored knights with one ball at Pavia in, 1538, I think.

...

Booty & Healing

Gilgamesh, Alexander, Attila & Timur collected booty that often had names; fleshy possessions who could recall with a tear in their dainty eye, dashed hopes and crushed dreams and back stories that no one cared about. Some of these had healing powers, such as apothecaries, physicians, witches, sorcerers and slave girls. The former may be rolled up by the GM with values assigned as they make sense for the wise man's vocation. But the other healing slave, the woman, is valued below.

Body 5-18

Strength = 0-2

Stamina = 1-3

Agility = 1-3

Utility = 0-3 hauling your gear, tanning hides, dressing scalps that you took, rummaging through the dead and dying on the battlefield for useful loot, etc.

Beauty = 2-7 [7? People are going to murder you over that bitch.]

Fertility of your slave girl is based on a body check, with the die difference how many children she can bear.

Wits?

Really, you had to ask!

Okay, if the wench insists on exceeding her design and using her head for something other than a musical instrument, then add her agility and utility. That score will determine how good of a healer she is, rolling her provisional wit or less.

Warning, a wench with a 6 Wit, will cause you endless headaches and probably seduce one of your meathead bodyguards into challenging you to a duel.

A bitch with a 7—Attila is coming to claim her, so trade her for a good horse.

Head Cases & Monsters

Grunt #8: Rage, Brooding, Drunkenness, Lust, Greed, Guilt, Doubt, Mirth, Melancholy, Cosmophobia, Faith & Bestiary

Negative Mania Manifestations

In this psychological addendum we may discuss the down side of mania, as such are wont to manifest after battle, especially among the victors. For the losers do not have the luxury of second-guessing, confession and binge drinking from their lonely biers in the still corners of The Cities of Shades. Let's not forget Achilles and Alexander brooding in their tents.

Death's Shadow

After the moans of the dying, the cries of the women and the whimpering of the children have overtaken the comparatively pleasant Song of Battle, each character makes a 1d6 Esoteric check to determine if his soul was shivered. Monks and sorcerers, Yogi and confessors seek to develop and increase their esoteric score for this reason, to remain unbuffeted by the world.

About that, the GM should design a specific quest, inward against insanity, or outward into privation fraught nature, or into the chaos of suffering urban humanity for visions from beyond.

Barbarian warriors should typically gain a re-roll on after battle esoteric checks, as youthful vision quests are part of pre-civilized culture.

If the soul has been shivered, then the GM will either decide whether Body, Mind or Spirit was more tested in the recent action, and have the hero make a 1d20 mania check, or he will be a prick and demand from Heaven's throne that the highest mania score be checked against a 1d20. You see, making this mania check is bad, failing it is good. In this way the crazy get crazier. Making the check increases mania by 1 point, failing it keeps it stable.

For these mania manifestation checks, good becomes bad, a "1" result amounts to a curse [adventure hook dangling] and a "20" a blessing [I prefer a permanent pathos re-roll for a heavenly blessing, or maybe War's own sword falling from Heaven at Attila's feet.]

Delilah, Brisais Clause

Oh, if the hero has acquired a slave girl of remarkable beauty, a 4 or better, he must make a 1d6 against her machinations or make a mania check against a second ability: Discord, Fear or Rout.

Conversely, if the slave girl is an ugly wench, and thus works hard to sooth all of his mental ills rather than bewitching him, he will get to re-roll a failed mania check.

If she, through her wicked beauty or caring conformity, gets him a blessing in this way, improve her utility score by 1!

Gathering of Furies & Angels

Again, what would make a mania check successful in action, makes it unsuccessful after action. This is why the best war leaders often get fired and demoted between wars.

If one rolls higher than the mania, without hitting the 20, there is no effect.

If one rolls lower than his mania, then have the other players convene a council of Furies or Angels, with the GM sitting as judge, to decide how the hero will be afflicted. This is the metaphysical version of the gathering of kites picking over the dead on the battlefield. This could result in a heavenly or hellish adventure, with the hero accompanied by dead from the battle who could be conveniently played by the uncursed players as a bonus adventure.

The GM should keep an eye on how a curse may be used as a test to gain a blessing if the hero prevails.

...

Curses

Body Mania or Discord

-1. Lust: must rape in full armor, now, never mind that you dragged the poor Thracian wench onto your Corinthian slave girl's mat where she sleeps happily fettered to your cot—which the poor lad sitting wide eyed in the corner hauls over hill and dale... What could go wrong?

- 2. Mirth: seeks entertainment and diversion and is difficult to focus on the next task.
- 3. Drunkenness: drinking to insensibility and even helplessness is a common affliction after battle. Irish warriors and English pirates often suffer this affliction.
- 4. Melancholy, a deep depression that prevents the use of the hero's pathos until he is jarred by exterior action. This chaining of the hero's physical instincts can be lethal.

Mind Mania or Fear

- 1. Fear: A reluctance to take action, the craven shakes brought on by the calculus of post battle reality.
- 2. Greed: The curse of Agamemnon, as the hero desires more than his fellows, based on the fact that he is smarter than those oafs.
- 3. Brooding: Dark pondering afflicts the warrior second guesses his actions, the Furies using his mind to wrestle alone with the possibilities that might have been and might be in the future.
- 4. The Distant One: This is a particular curse that causes the more brilliant maniacs, like Alexander and Napoleon, or Nathan Bedford Forrest bitch slapping Braxton Bragg, to lose social traction as they gain in

genius. This curse causes a Social disadvantage until it is lifted by a successful Social action, or by a battle that does not cause this curse to repeat.

-5. Doubt: That is correct, Oh Nimbus Minded Prince, big brained killers suffer between the ears a lot. The hero afflicted with doubt has a disadvantage in his next action, until he succeeds in something. This could be really bad for a low level soldier or army leader. You, Oh Prince, are privileged to have others fall in your stead!

...

Spirit Mania or Rout/Panic

-1. Faith Fall: The hero, such as Miamoto Musashi on Mount Nagasaki, writing The Book of Five Rings, Percival or Arthur, has a crisis in faith and must seclude himself and pray and is pretty much useless in the mean time. At the end of his ritual seclusion, such as when Xenophon would make sacrifice to Zeus during the march of the 10,000, the hero MAY [not must] now make a Social check on 1d6, to see if he can sell his insights to his companions. If the check is made, he gains the die difference in advantages to assign then and there to his fellows. If he fails, he is afflicted by the

die difference in disadvantages in his next action, which might be a challenge to his enlightened leadership.

-2. Rage: Unreasoning anger afflicts the hero whose highest spirit ability is Animism, as it did Achilles. The instincts that the world is out to get him, have been proven true, and he will simmer in uncooperative hate until some greater emotion stirs him, in which case, all of that stored up rage [his Animism score] is applied to his first pathos check, when eh is awakened from his sizzling self pity. Woe to Hector.

-3. Cosmophobia: Fear of Heaven, Time or the Hereafter, or in the case of some Postmodern sorcerer, Climate Change, afflicts the hero who has his highest spirit ability as esoteric and triggers a vision quest. Whether it is Alexander getting lost in the desert looking for the Oracle of Amon, figuring out the Gordion Knot while Darius schemes, or merely your best sentry removal stud insisting on climbing a mountain to speak with a particular kind of owl before he slits throats by moonlight for you again, this can be mighty inconvenient. Yet, the Cosmophobic character, if he survives his quest, will gain an advantage roll to be saved for when he needs it, a Rout point, and a pathos point.

...

Please, feel free to add more mania pitfalls to your version of Grunt, such as specific fears that might take success in action at a disadvantage to overcome: such as fear of heights, of water, or even fear of failure causing a disadvantage check against pathos. Mania manifestations can be a good way to balance out play in which the party has been over successful.

Bestiary

Beasts are split into animals and monsters.

Animals

Animals are rated the same as humans, except that animals have no mania.

Predators have a pathos of 2-12.

Plant eaters have a pathos of 1-6.

Domestic animals have their pathos halved, such that a wolf will have a 2-12 and a dog 1-6, a zebra 1-6 and a horse 1-3.

In some ways animals are inferior and some ways superior.

Inferiority is addressed as a disadvantage, such that a domestic animal with an inferior animism, will operate at a disadvantage when trying to resist a command and a gorilla with a superior strength will operate at a multiple advantage.

The Standard Animal Keys

M = manlike [1d6]

Subhuman -1-4

Extraordinary +2-3

Superhuman + 3-4

...being a minus 4 ability to a plus value assigned to a 1d6.

Great = 13-18

Categories c. and d. below are for very large animals or monsters.

Values for animals and monsters may be set at, for instance, Strength:

a. 4-9 [1d6 + 3], wolf, stag, chimp, leopard

b. 5-10 [1d6 +4], lion, tiger, bear, gorilla, moose

c. 7-12 [1d6 +6], Hippo or over-sized beasts listed above

d. GREAT ABILITY: 13-18 [1d6 +6], elephant

An animal's abilities are rolled, and then the subhuman score modifier is applied to reduce it as far as 0 or the superhuman is applied to increase it. Abilities increased

beyond 18, such as Grendel's strength of 22, still fail checks at 19 and 20.

For specific ability checks, an animal with a score exceeding 6 has its check done on 2D6.

Beasts [animal or monster], with scores exceeding 10 points make specific ability checks on 1d20.

Animals may have over 18 Overall body points and therefore higher Hit Points. But any body score over 18 is regarded as an 18 for Overall Body 1d20 checks.

I will make a hound dog, a gorilla and lion below as examples.

Hound Dog

Pathos 1-6

Body: Strength =M, Stamina =M, Agility =M

Mind: Knit =M [physical learning], Kit -3 [Does he understand what humans use that tool for?], Wit -2

Spirit: Animism =M, Social -1 [does he know what his master wants?], Esoteric [have fun here]

Weapons: fangs [2] Armor: hide [1]

Gorilla

Pathos 1–3 [a chimp would have 2–12]

Body: Strength +4, Stamina –3, Agility +2

Mind: Knit –2, Kit –3, Wit –2

Spirit: Animism +1, Social –4, Eosteric =? [I need some design help here for animal esoteric.]

Weapons: body/fists [1], Armor: hide [1]

That +4 strength could result in a +10 damage and the +2 agility an 8 damage reduction in case a 6 is rolled, is daunting for a single man armed with a hand weapon.

A great ape, basically a gorilla-sized chimp, with fangs and claw-like nails could make a cool monster, like Thak, in the Conan story Rogues in the House.

Let's do a lion, before going to monsters.

Kit for animals may be used to determine how well they grasp the use of human weapons against them or tack to control them. A smart lion might understand when a gun is ready to fire. Thak, in the example above, figured out how to operate his Sorcerer master's traps.

An animal with a 0 kit, really does not understand that the thing the human is holding will kill him.

A 1 grasps the danger vaguely and is afraid and runs, a 2 has a phobia of weapons and takes evasive action, a 3 knows how to overcome their use, like the Ghost and the Darkness pair of leonine man-hunters.

Lion

2-12 pathos [really overpowers a normal human in advantage and initiative]

Body: Strength +4, Stamina -2, Agility +4

Mind: Knit +2, Kit -3, Wit -2

Spirit: Animism +4, Social -2 [reading human group action and intent], Esoteric [This might be kept level and used for weather prediction on the animal's part, or having some understanding of its specific human enemy, like the lion that tracked its hunter back to his distant home and killed him. In considering lions, I am inclined to give predators a full esoteric score and have it applied to their understanding of humans and/or their social interaction with their own kind.

Weapons: claws/fangs [2], Armor: hide [1]

Elephant

An elephant is an example of an animal with a monstrous strength of 13–18 [12 = 1d6] and a human range esoteric score.

Weapons: tusks/skull [3], Armor: hide [1] Military elephants wore armor of [4]

An elephant gore/toss/stomp/crush would use its weighted/pointed weapon array generalized at [3] plus a strength bonus of 13 to 18, killing most humans, even armored and/or agile ones, that it struck.

Multiple Weapons

Note that multiple attacks in Grunt are Advantage-based, and that multiple weapons on beasts and in the hands of grunts, such as using the shield along with the sword to attack rather than defend, are a matter of damage augmentation, not additional attacks. A lion is regarded as attacking with claws and/or fangs, just as the elephant with any or all of its weapons. So, an elephant, who uses weighted weapons [feet, trunk, skull], which each value 2 damage, but has tusks rated at 3, does damage according to its most forensically lethal weapon.

Likewise with monsters below, Grendel, for instance assumed to be clawing, rending or biting as he feels fit, with his greatest asset, his fangs, setting his weapon rating.

This steers us towards the Monstrous.

Monsters

These beasts have the bodies of superior animals or superhumans. They possess, as their main ability a high pathos. Roll a monster's pathos with 3d6.

Their manias should also be rolled the same way, 3d6.

Each monster should also have one of its specific abilities in Body, Mind & Spirit, rolled as a 3-18, such as Grendel's strength.

The other 7 specific abilities, might be rolled as:

M = manlike [1d6]

Subhuman -1-4

Extraordinary +2-3

Superhuman + 3-4

Great = 13-18

...depending on the GM's sense for the monster. In any case, a monster should have one great [3–18] ability and the rest either extraordinary or ordinary.

Dragons and Titans, for instance, might have multiple Great Abilities. Hit Points and sanity points for such creatures are likely to exceed 20.

Like with animals, over all body may result in more than 18 HP, but never for an overall ability 1d20 check, except in the case of pathos. Overall Body checks should always fail on a 19 and critically on a 20.

Vampires

In the case of a vampire, I suggest a 5–10 strength and stamina and a 3–18 agility, which is damage reduction. For vampire nerds, you might make up an entire hierarchy. As kind of demigods of death, I like vampires to be mostly superhuman in various areas during their power arch at night:

- a. 4–9 [1d6 + 3]
- b. 5–10 [1d6 +4]
- c. 7–12 [1d6 +6]

d. 13–18 [1d6 +6]

And during the day, when they wane, to have subhuman to extraordinary powers.

Subhuman –1 down to –4

Ordinary 1d6

Extraordinary 1d6 +1 or +2

...

I hope my fellow gamers like GRUNT. Other than providing some science–fiction and historical scenarios, the design is complete. Since I have almost no chance to play an RPG, the development is left to you, the experts.

Thank you,

**James LaFond, Oakley, Utah, as autumns storms roll in,
Saturday, August 17, 2024**

Appendix

The Charmed Hero

Lockhart Prompts LaFond on Lucky Men

James,

I recently viewed an interview with Tucker Carlson and a former Cuban CIA operative. This guy had to trust agents in Cuba he had never met after being dropped off in a rubber raft. He was the last American to see Che Guerva before the Bolivians executed him. He survived numerous helicopter wrecks in Vietnam, and said he was never afraid, that he was one of the good guys, a force for good and that he was not going out that way. This reminded me right off the bat of Trump, praying on the floor after he hit the deck after being shot while his bodyguards did nothing. A YouTube guy made a prophecy a month ago that exactly this would happen. It makes me wonder, are certain combatants—and at this point, since he has been shot and half of America would like to see him dead and the system does not like him, Trump is a combatant—how does luck play into such the uncanny survival of certain people?” [1]

–Lynn

Lynn, it occurs that this makes a perfect sidebar for the role playing game, Grunt, that I am working on. How does one explain the good fortune, the luck, the favor of fate of such men as Alexander and Tamerlane?

The answer, to the ancients, was simple, God's favor. The modern mind, even of the Christian and neopagan, works along purely materialistic lines. Evidence is what the modern religious mind wants, to include the atheist, who, is often the most pious and religiously narrow-minded as any rustic of dim Antiquity.

I will use the structure of the triple trinity of arete that I came up with for the game to hang this on. Listening to Alexander by Arrian nine times now over the past month, after reading it twice, has driven this addled mind to try and quantify "the power of his name." Last night at the used book store around the corner, I saw seven biographies of Alexander, three of which I had read. After all this time, the ripple that this maniac youth sent down through Time continues to amaze the sharpest historical minds. Between 336 and 323 B.C. he accomplished more than what all save the Mongols, who

would take twice as long with better gear to exceed him did in the A.D. 1200s.

Below are the qualities assigned to a character placed in an historic battle. I will explain each according to Skeptical and Faithful examples. Note that just yesterday, the mere turning of the head of a presidential candidate turned what would have been a head blown in half to receive a mere graze to the ear instead. Chance is still with us.

Mass industrial warfare has reduced the chances of a combatant surviving physically and psychologically beyond a month in an active battle front to zero. Men like Audie Murphy were pulled from combat as poster boys for the WWII war effort because their leaders knew that they would probably die the next week if left at the front. Thus, most of the best men of that war died in an inhuman storm of fire and iron.

Physical

Body:

All very lucky combatants, such as Beowulf, compared to his men who were eaten by the monster, were said to

have had at least one remarkable physical strength. Most had all aspects of physicality in abundance, larger, stronger, quicker and more enduring than their lesser fellows.

Strength:

The strength of Nathan Bedford Forrest, permitted him, after being shot when he charged a brigade by himself, to pick a normal man up by one hand and use him as a human shield while riding off.

The ancients would have simply opined that Herakles must have possessed his father and injected his mother with a seed of heavenly wrath.

Endurance:

John Colter, after being mauled by a bear, crawled, limped and walked in the wilderness for 6 months to get his revenge. A normal man, even a strong man, would have died in the shallow grave dug for him by his lesser fellows.

The Sioux warriors who found Colter, though he was a trespasser, respected him as having been blessed by an extra-human power, and did not take his scalp.

Agility:

Hernan De Soto was the most agile horseman of the invasion of Peru. This permitted him to project his will more effectively than captains who sat their mount in a convenient vantage. He, has perhaps killed more people than any other human with his own hands, thanks largely to his ability in the saddle.

The Mississippi tribes Soto terrorized, toppling their entire civilization of millions with some 500 men, were so convinced that he was a God of Battle, that when his force was reduced to half strength and wearing animal skins, and he died from a lingering arrow wound, his men buried him secretly, with sure knowledge that if the tens of thousands of Indians that surrounded them knew that the God of Battle had died, that they would be quickly overrun.

...

Agency

being the smartest man on the scene, also lends to survival.

Mind

Knit:

How easily does one learn a new task? Alexander was such a quick study, that he was able to watch engineers conduct standard siege operations, grasp the fundamentals, and then improvise down to the point of showing soldiers how to sink piles better. Simply being smarter than the knuckleheads around you begins the process of being regarded as a lucky charm. Once this begins, the deft mind may use this.

The ancients would describe the ability of Joshua to improvise before Jericho, perhaps using trumpets to coordinate local assaults on the city, by the favor of God.

Kit:

Captain John Smith had his own balls blown off due to a mishandling of his firearms gear. If he had been better at adapting his technology to river boat warfare in the

wilderness, he might have become a colonel or general some day.

The ability of Alexander to quickly get a portion of his army across the Danube in the face of two armies, by filling tent canvas with straw, so astonished the Royal Scythians who laughed at other invaders, that they assumed the brat king held the favor of the God of Battle, and abandoned their town.

Wit:

The ability of Julius Caesar to understand a wide range of equipment and its uses, better than the individual experts in his veteran army, and then integrate this into his tactics at the double siege of Alesia in Gaul, would be credited to a high IQ by today's experts and the inspiring hand of Vulcan in concord with Mars by the ancients.

...

Metaphysical

Chance, inexplicable survival against the odds, has traditionally been the realm of the gods.

Spirit

Animistic:

The ability of a leader, such as the men mentioned above, to panic enemies, has often been combined with high levels of animal empathy. Alexander had Oxhead the horse, who would only permit him to ride him. Soto had Bruto the Indian-eating hound who he was more closely linked to than any Spaniard. Nathan Bedford Forrest faced down hounds large enough to eat him when a boy, and as a man, was able to command horses with pure energy and terrify and inspire men with his voice. These very lucky men made their own luck thru a primal sense that they were destined to win and those other fellows over there had been placed before them like leaves before the wind.

Moderns explain such cases, especially Alexander and Hannibal, by blaming the losers for being cowards or untrained, when, in fact, the foes of these conquerors, who would all make slave girls of the modern intellectual, knew a conqueror when they saw one. The boxing fan sees Michael Spinx falling before Mike Tyson as a coward, yet he beat up some 30 larger professional boxers. Like Mike Tyson's first 20 opponents, the

soldiers that ran in terror from great captains gave way before a greater power destined to overthrow them. Who was right, fat men in arm chairs defaming conquerors for knowing at a glance when they had been placed before a much more powerful version of themselves, or Grendel, who when grabbed by Beowulf, knew that he was not half the monster that this chieftain was?

Social:

Understanding how one's own social power ripples through the hearts and minds of lesser men, is key for ongoing success, so that one does not suffer the fate of most of these lucky men, Alexander, Caesar, Shaka Zulu, who all underestimated the hatred that went hand in hand with the respect and fear they instilled, and were murdered by their most trusted associates.

Esoteric:

An appreciation for greater powers, has inspired such devote men as Alexander, Attila, Patton and Stonewall Jackson to take risks that other men in their own stations averred. This also is seen as evidence among

their followers that their leader has been chosen for a higher purpose by God or blessed with a luck or guardian angel. This is entirely discounted by the skeptic who points out that the necessary blindness caused by this far away view dooms such men to an early end.

But would you rather be the academic who is terrified of the panhandler at the crosswalk on the way to your lecture to sissies and women, or Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton, who would hand his brief case to the man considering stealing it for the laptop within, put the hand just unburdened on the simian shoulder, as the other hefts the brass headed cane, and say, “A likely fellow you seem. Now, be a credit to your overburdened race, and halt these speeding cars before holding the door.”

Furthermore, which of the large minds depicted above have been favored by Heaven, or, if you still cling to your brief case, by the soup-like powers elevated by Mister Darwin?

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Notes

-1. Viewing the video of Trump's gaze with eternity, I noted that his behavior was indicative of a man who sensed that his own security detail meant him harm, and that he believed he was being ushered off to a veiled death by medical intervention. Trump here shows a high animistic and social sense in the Spirit, buttressed by his uncanny wit, and his unconventional speaking style, which forgoes the statue like repose of the trained politician.