

COBBIN QUEST



GRANT HOWITT

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*King Twigg Spitter of Twiggspitonia,
the first King of the Goblin Hordes and
definitely not making it all up as he goes
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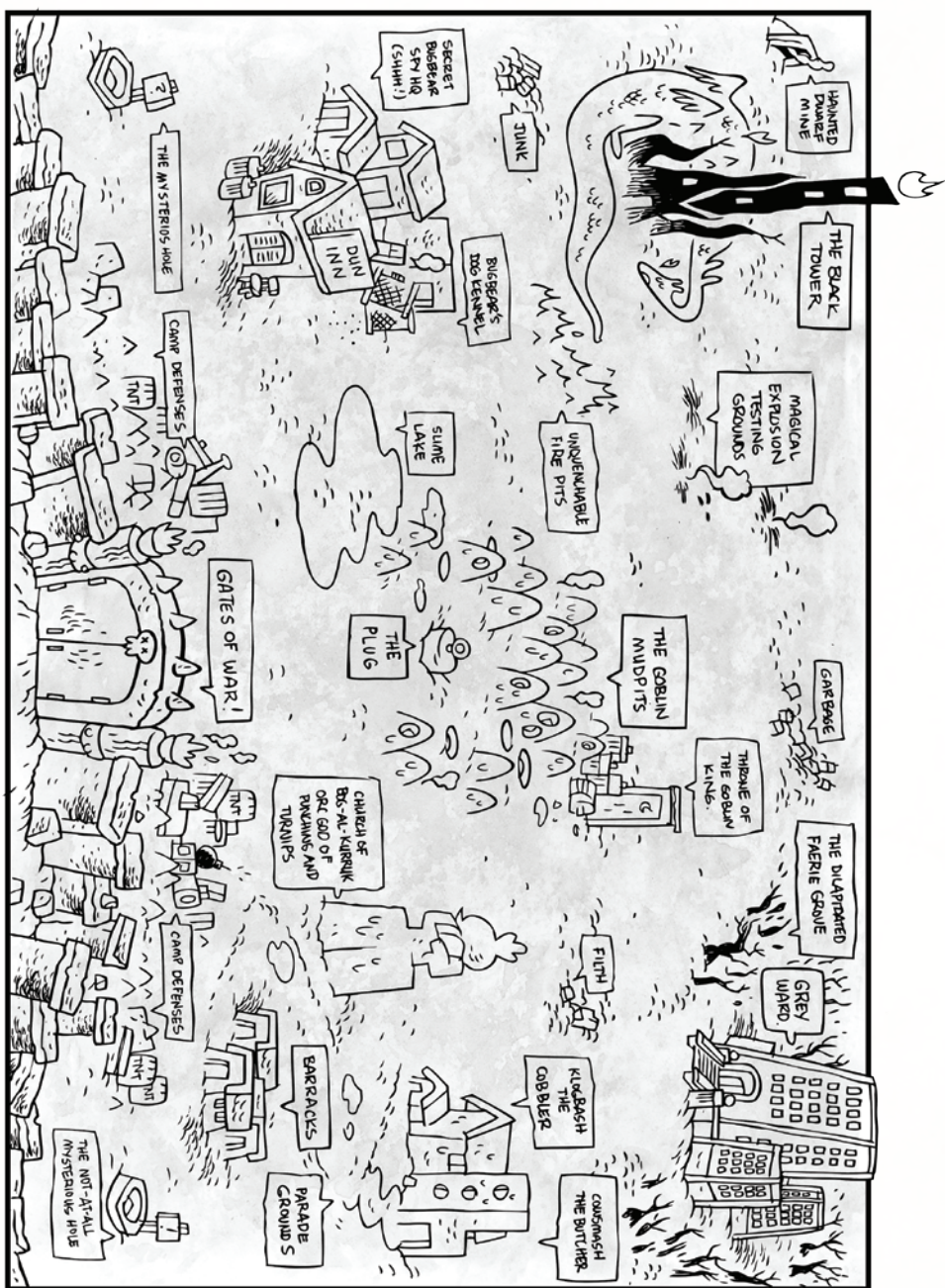
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GOBLIN QUEST

A NEW DAY DAWNS on the Great Battle Camp. The orcs march in the square outside their barracks, the hobgoblins file and crossreference in the Grey Wards, the bugbears plot and scheme in the Dun Inn. Above it all, the Black Tower of the wizards stands proud, holding the wicked sorcerer-generals that command the army to The War.

And underfoot, in the dank caverns under the world, in the Green Pits, spawn the goblins. The goblins are bred for war, for cannon fodder, for hopeless attacks, for death.

You are a goblin. You have a week to live and you are going to make a mark. You are going to undertake... A GOBLIN QUEST.

WHAT IS GOBLIN QUEST?

GOBLIN QUEST IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME. As you play, you'll tell stories about goblins trying to achieve basic tasks and meeting fatal misadventure as they do it. You'll play the goblins, and you'll steer them through (or, more commonly, directly into) adversity, and you'll have a fun time doing it.

It's not a game about winning; there are no points for surviving the longest, or achieving the most goals. The aim of the game is to have fun with your friends. Even if all the goblins fail in their quest, if you've had fun losing, that still counts.

Goblin Quest is designed to be played from start to finish in a single sitting – it should take around two hours to complete a story. The more players you have, the longer the game will take to play.

WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING?

When you roleplay, you and your friends take on the roles of different characters and take part in a story that you all make up together. In most roleplaying games you take on the role of a single character – a mysterious ranger, a forgetful wizard, a brave space marine, a determined investigator, etc – but in *Goblin Quest* you'll take on the role of five goblins, one after the other, as they die off in quick succession.

When you play, you're in control of your character – everything they do and say. You can talk in the first person ("I walk over to the dog and pull its tail!") or the third person ("Gitsnub the 'Orrible walks over to the dog and pulls its tail!") – both are good. Do whatever you feel comfortable with.

When you act, you need to discover what happens as a result and whether you achieve your goals. Does the dog bite you? Does it run around and create a distraction, like you wanted? Does it chase you off? Every time you do something, you'll need to roll dice to see what effect it has on the world. (More on this on p42.)



Joe Grooney, Goblin Vegan Punk Rocker

WHO CAN PLAY?

Goblin Quest is suitable for both adults and children who don't mind acting a bit silly. It does require attention and imagination from the players, so having someone who knows the rules to guide the players and describe the world can be very useful.

WILL WE NEED A GAMESMASTER?

Lots of roleplaying games require the presence of a Dungeonmaster, Storyteller, Gamesmaster or some other Head Honcho to control the flow of the game and play everything that isn't one of the player characters. In Goblin Quest, the role of Gamesmaster is optional as the rules are designed to work without one.

However, if you'd like to be a Gamesmaster, or if you want to lead the other players through the game instead of playing, it can be loads of fun. (I love being the Gamesmaster when I play – maybe even more than playing the goblins.) Check out the Gamesmastering section on p54 for more on what you'll need to do.

If you've bought this book, read through the main section before you play, so at least one of you has an idea of the rules and setting. (Don't worry - it's not long, and parts of it are actually quite good.)

WHAT WILL I NEED TO PLAY?

Firstly, you'll need two to six players (including you) who'll play the goblins on their Quest. You can play with more, but it can get a little hectic, so I wouldn't recommend it.

You'll then need pencils and pens for everyone – coloured ones are good, felt tips are best – a handful of six-sided dice, and a copy of the character sheet for every player. One player will need a copy of the Quest Sheet.

If you can print out a copy of the map for everyone to look at and scribble on, that's great.

Each player will also need an Action Token (poker chips, bottlecaps, or especially colourful dice are good) and you'll need something to hold them in. A mug is fine.

PLAYING WITH KIDS

Goblin Quest does as standard involve the deaths of multiple goblins, so if that's the sort of thing that upsets the group you're with, you can change it to "knocked out" or "so hurt they give up and go home for a cup of tea." The game will play pretty much the same.

This book is written to be the sort of thing that adults can enjoy and kids can really enjoy, because kids love stories about stuff dying all over the place, and ugly monsters knifing each other in the back, and explosions, and snot, and stupid ideas. So there's a lot of that kind of thing in here.

If you're worried about upsetting younger players with stuff they might find in this book, have a talk with them before they read it, or go through with a big black pen and cross out the stuff you don't like. Or do whatever! I'm not a parent. You know your kids better than I do.

I will promise, though, that there are no rude words in it. Aside from this one: *BUMS*.

WHAT ARE ALL THESE ADVENTURE IDEAS?

I asked some awesome games-designer types to write adventure ideas for me, and they did so, and the results are scattered throughout this book. When you're thinking of a quest to undertake, read through these for inspiration. Some of them are so good that you won't have to combine them with others to build a custom quest, either – there's enough there to fill out a full night's play on their own.

WHAT ARE THESE RULES HACKS?

Thanks to a legion of keen Kickstarter backers, *Goblin Quest* comes complete with rules hacks. These are tweaks to the main system that let you tell stories other than ones about goblins – ones about kobolds, swordfighters, 1920's occult investigators, inept super heroes, sci-fi explorers, regency ladies and, um, Sean Bean.

You don't need to read these before you play *Goblin Quest*, and I'd actually recommend that you get a game of the core system under your belt before you give them a go as they play with the system in some tricky ways.

ANYTHING ELSE?

Goblins don't have genders, except when they want to, or when you want them to. In that spirit, I've not assumed that people of any particular gender are going to be playing *Goblin Quest* more than any other, and I've tried to keep things balanced where I can.

I use "dice" instead of "die," because even though I'm pretty sure I'm wrong I'm not about to change now after nearly thirty years of calling it a "dice." Similarly, the traditional phrase for the referee in RPGs is the "Game Master," not the "Gamesmaster," but I prefer the latter as it doesn't shove two "m" sounds next to each other when you say it out loud.



WHAT IS THE GREAT BATTLE CAMP, AND WHO LIVES THERE?

GOBLINS ARE BORN, AND LIVE within, the The Great Battle Camp. It was built in ancient history - well over seven years ago - and stands as a bulwark against the Armies of Good that threaten the safety of the Realm of Darkness.

To the west lies a valley where the orcs have had a go at farming parsnips (it's not going very well); to the north, a grand ocean and a harbour town called Bazal-Thur where mad-eyed fishermen barter for slaves in exchange for treasures dug from the sea bed; to the south, the twisted Grey Forest holds a cadre of isolationist wood elves and many stranger things besides; and to the east, The War, where humans and gnomes and dwarves meet the armies of evil in battle.

Goblins, it should be noted, have very little understanding of any of this. They are broadly aware of The War thanks to their programming and a vast array of rumours, but most wouldn't understand the idea of Bazal-Thur even if it was explained very slowly using sock puppets.

The enigmatic wizards, rulers of the camp, reside in the monolithic Black Tower in the north of the camp; they are the leaders of the army and, as far as goblins know, a cross between Kings and Gods.

The brutal armoured orcs spend their days marching up and down outside their barracks and shouting at each other.

The conniving bugbears skulk around the one decent pub, the Dun Inn, and murder each other when they're not betting on dog fights.

The bureaucratic hobgoblins, ashamed of their fey heritage, scurry throughout the Grey Wards, administrating the day-to-day business of the army.

In the centre of the camp, buried deep underground, lie the Green Pits – the manky, sulphurous, sticky underground holes where goblins are eternally spawned to serve as cannon fodder.

Around once a week, the Army masses up – grand ranks of clanking orcs, shifty detachments of bugbears, cadres of black-robed wizards and a solid block of very killable goblins standing at the front – and marches off to war then comes back a couple of days later. Well, not the goblins. Everyone else comes back, more often than not.



The Wizards

THE WIZARDS ARE INSCRUTABLE and strange. They shuffle to and fro in their midnight robes, hiding their true faces, for magic has twisted and warped their bodies over centuries of misuse. Some merely look like pale humans; others sport compound eyes, or tentacles, or beaks, or great fangs.

Indeed, it is thought that the High Wizard – the leader of the army of evil, the controller of the Great Battle Camp – is just an octopus in an unconvincing disguise. They are masters of dark magic, and can conjure a deadly spell with a flick of the wrist. (That is, if they have wrists. A flick of the pseudopod, in any case.)

The wizards reside in the Black Tower – a place of dark secrets and many dangers – and exist in a rigid hierarchical structure, with low-ranking wizards performing mundane tasks (animating brooms to sweep the floors, conjuring dinner) in the lower floors for the benefit of the higher-ranking ones in the grim opulence of the levels above.

Goblins are, of course, not allowed in the Black Tower. But no-one aside from wizards (and their mysterious black-armoured guards) is allowed in the tower. The wizards hate everyone.

But if a brave goblin (or five) were to sneak in and bypass the watchful eyes and magical traps, the rewards are great – arcane trinkets, books of heretical knowledge, experimental creatures, and legendary curses. Maybe those last two aren't "rewards," as such, come to think of it. More "things that kill you."

FIVE FUN FACTS ABOUT WIZARDS

All wizards can fly. This is because they have magical robes that suck air through the hood and expel it from the bottom. Non-wizards who try to use the robes often resemble an untied balloon shooting across the sky.

Wizards use wands to cast their spells, unless they're really good at magic, at which point they just wave their hands around and stuff happens. Wizard Wands are very useful items, but you have to persuade the wand to let you use it. Plus it's hard to tell what spells the wizard has stored within without just firing them off randomly.

Wizards are deathly afraid of gnomes (for some reason); some think that gnomish genocide is the entire reason for the great war. They'll hunt down and kill, or run away in a blind panic from, any gnomes they find.

The roof of the Black Tower contains a teleportation circle that lets the wizards go anywhere they want instantaneously. The controls – a series of heavy stone circles on runners, etched with arcane symbols – are impossible to read without a working knowledge of the language used by the Lost Star Gods.

To truly kill a wizard, you have to find his (or her) (or... its) phylactery, an item or creature that holds part of his soul, and destroy it too – they can be rings, or stone hearts, or magical swords, or noble ghost pegasi. Low-ranking wizards who aren't very good at magic usually make do with using their keys as a phylactery.

The Orcs

ORCS ARE BRUTES – huge, burly, armoured maniacs, always spoiling for a fight, and almost impossible to put down. It's said that the Great Goblin Hero Spag once managed to defeat an orc in combat, but that was back in the Time of Legends – well over a year and a half ago – and goblins were bigger then. And he had help from his thirty brothers and sisters.

Orcs are the shock troops of the Army of Evil, and they love their job. They spend their days hanging around the barracks, brawling and rowing and shouting, and the position of “Sergeant” in the orc ranks is often determined by who is the best at punching other orcs rather than who has even a shred of tactical nous.

Orcs are in charge of the weapons in the camp, so they've got plenty of swords and axes and hammers and other weapons too big for a goblin to even lift on their own. They also have access to ballistae, catapults, trebuchets and a variety of other unpredictable ways of launching rocks or pointy bits of metal (or goblins) into their enemies.

FIVE FUN FACTS ABOUT ORCS

Orcs worship Bog-Al-Kurruk, the God of Hitting Things, and their five daily sessions of “prayer” generally consist of punching each other while chanting His name. The Parsnip is a holy vegetable of Bog-Al-Kurruk. Hand-held ranged weapons – like crossbows – are sacrilege to Bog-Al-Kurruk. (Siege weapons are okay.)

Once an orc can afford a suit of plate armour, he or she will padlock themselves into it to make sure that no-one else steals it off them when they're sleeping. Most orcs give the key to their mum to look after, but now some wear it around their necks as a show of bravado.

Orcs don't hate goblins on sight; they tend to view them as tiny little cousins. Unfortunately an orc's method of showing affection is a series of punches and kicks that are fatal for goblins, so longlasting friendships rarely develop.

Orcs are really, really stupid; like, power stupid. They're so stupid that most mind-control magic doesn't work on them because it just passes through and goes out the other side. This makes them excellent at beating up elves, gnomes, and other soft sorcerer types.

Orcs are really, really strong. A big orc can easily heft a whole horse above their heads, then chuck it into a surprised cavalry unit. En masse, a horde of orcs can destroy pretty much anything – if someone gives them a good reason to.



The Hobgoblins

HOBGOBLINS ARE CLEVER, but not in a fun way. They're bureaucrats and treasurers – powerfully boring creatures that make sure that the Army of Evil actually functions on a day-to-day basis. Hobgoblins relish the power that they wield, and take every opportunity to be joyless jobsworths.

Hobgoblins are slightly smaller than a human (but still significantly bigger than a goblin), and their half-fey ancestry gives them a wide variety of physical quirks and peculiarities – feathers, translucent wings, pumpkins for heads, multicoloured eyes, glowing orbs of light buzzing around their heads, and so on. Most hobgoblins are ashamed of their colourful traits and try to cover them up with layer upon layer of sombre grey robes.

Hobgoblins view goblins as a commodity to be ordered and filed away, but a commodity that keeps getting out and stealing other commodities and generally making a nuisance of itself.

They live and work in the Grey Wards, a neatly-ordered series of buildings on the West side of the battle camp. From there, they manage the distribution of resources for most everything in the camp (aside from the really special stuff, which the other races don't trust the hobgoblins with at all). If you want to find something, you can probably track it down in the Wards – so long as the hobgoblins don't find you and chase you out of there. They can be pretty deadly with a broom or a thrown paperweight.

FIVE FUN FACTS ABOUT HOBGOBLINS

Hobgoblins were kicked out of the Faerie Realm for being too boring. This fills them with pride.

Hobgoblins, when enraged, can shoot wyitchfire out of their eyes. They try not to, because it makes a mess, but it's a constant worry for the goblins.

Hobgoblins have documentation for every eventuality, and documentation covering what to do if they can't find documentation for any given situation. (Luckily, that has never happened.) If you can show a hobgoblin the correct documentation, they'll let you get away with almost anything.

Hobgoblins wear a variety of different glasses and magnifying monocles to read small print and double-check forms. The more successful a hobgoblin is, the thicker (and more numerous) his glasses are.

No-one has ever seen a hobgoblin's feet, hidden as they are under all the robes. Presumably they must have really embarrassing feet.



The Bugbears

THE BUGBEARS ARE VICIOUS and cruel creatures, great rangy monsters that would stand as tall as an orc (if they ever stood up straight, which they don't). Covered in patchy hair and with mouths full of wicked-sharp teeth, bugbears are scouts and skirmishers for the Army of Evil. They specialise in sneaking up on their enemies, winning fights when they outnumber the enemy at least two to one, and stealing anything that isn't nailed down.

They spend their days sharpening their knives and fleecing each other out of money through crooked games of chance in the Dun Inn, the only pub in the whole of the Great Battle Camp. To make up for being the only pub, the Dun Inn is a sprawling shanty-town of a thing, a rickety amalgamation of leftover building materials that the bugbears have stolen from elsewhere in the camp. Most goblins who dare to enter the pub never come out again.

Bugbears view goblins as playthings, and they play the sort of games that result in severely injured goblins. They're conniving ne'er-do-wells to the last one, though, and no great friends with the other races in the camp, so it's possible that – if they can survive the initiation rites – a smart goblin could get a favour off one of them.

FIVE FUN FACTS ABOUT BUGBEARS

It's said that bugbears kidnap and enslave demons, and this lets them cast dark magic spells which make them even sneakier and even more bloodthirsty.

The closest thing that bugbear society has to art is Crooked Gambling. If one bugbear cheats another out of money through underhand means, the victim will often congratulate the winner on a job well done. (Then stab them in the throat, of course.)

Bugbears brew all sorts of ales and spirits in the cavernous depths of the Dun Inn, although seeing as they can't get the finest materials they often end up with something close to Prison Wine. Bugbears don't mind, and if a drink blinds them, that's often regarded as a mark in its favour.

Bugbears specialise in contraband and smuggling, so if you need banned items – say, those of Dwarven or Elven manufacture – then the Dun Inn is the best place to start looking.

There are tunnels under the Dun Inn that run to most every place in the camp, often bypassing defences and guards. Of course, they're full of mangy dogs that the bugbears use in pit-fights, so you really have to weigh the odds before you think about using 'em.



The Goblins

AN ANCIENT EXPERIMENT IN MAGICAL SLAVE-LABOUR, goblins are spawned in the Green Pits that were built under the Great Battle Camp long ago. They're are hauled from the ground fully-formed in clutches, family groups of between five and fifteen, and left to dry out in the sun like tomatoes.

Goblins are terrible slave-labour; they're diminutive, weak, stupid, unskilled, disobedient and prone to fatal accidents as a matter of course. But the wizards don't know how to turn the spawning pits off, so rather than let the goblins build up and run rampant, the lowest of the low-ranking wizards are tasked with plucking them from the ground and assigning them menial tasks.

The goblins are organised into mobs and sent off through the Gates of War to join the battle against the forces of Good. Turning their propensity for fatal accidents into a strength, the wizards use them as cannon fodder and distractions by herding them onto battlefields and watching as the enemy waste their ammunition and strength slaying goblin after goblin.

Not every goblin is sent away to the war, though – the wizard slavemasters are lazy, and often unpaid part-time interns, so a few goblins slip through the cracks now and then. These goblins, robbed of purpose, gather together and decide that a life of slavery and sacrifice isn't for them – they want to leave a mark on Goblin Culture. They want to undertake a Quest.

There are, in the Great Battle Camp, about twenty-five Goblin Quests going on simultaneously. Most of them don't get past the planning stage.

FIVE FUN FACTS ABOUT GOBLINS

Goblins live, on average, for about a week. It's said that Mogwak the Ancient Goblin King lived for eleven days, but that's just a myth. Goblins don't die of old age; they just attract enough unwanted misery that events transpire to kill them within a week. It's unclear whether this is a quirk of their magical construction or just fatal incompetence on their part.

Goblins are delicious. This is a problem for most goblins throughout their short lives.

Goblins are magically imprinted with knowledge and skills whilst they're forming in the ground. However, there isn't a lot of space in a goblin brain, and the imprinting spells are all out of date, and those unpaid part-time interns keep messing with the inputs.

Goblins can eat almost anything. This is useful, because no-one feeds them so they have to take what they can get, but also redundant because they gain no nourishment from food; they come with all the energy they need built-in. As such, most goblins only eat out of joy, spite, or as and when it's required as part of a convoluted disguise.

Goblins are light and remarkably aerodynamic, making them a useful throwing weapon for orcs. A skilled orc can fell an opponent at a hundred paces with a well-aimed goblin. Most orcs prefer to use throwing axes as, unlike goblins, they can be re-used.

ROBIN D LAWS' ADVENTURE IDEAS

ROBIN D LAWS IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE GAMES DESIGNERS, having turned out some genre-defining works over the last twenty or so years and generally shaping the face of the industry wherever he went. Here, because I can, I got him to write adventure ideas about lighting your farts.

CHICKEN DREAM — The rule in a goblin warren is that if you dream you are a chicken, everyone in the group can hunt and try to eat you, because maybe you taste like chicken. They get the right to do this until the next time you sleep. But of course if you lie down to try to fall asleep, that makes you easy pickings. Last night you all dreamt you were chickens. Why, oh why, did you tell everybody else that?

GREAT GRAUK — Other goblins fear and respect you if you have a bright blue tail feather from a great grauk to stick in your hat. That's because the grauk is a vicious bird, with a long, stabby beak specially designed for pecking out goblin eyes. You hear its distinctive cluck coming from the forest right now, taunting you.

MEAN STATUE — You found a stone statue of a nasty-looking human deep in the woods. It wears a crown and has a big flowing stone beard. It called you a bunch of mean names but also promises you one wish apiece if you go into the human town and set it on fire.

MUSHROOM CIRCLE — You fell asleep in a ring of mushrooms, which now that you think of it is faerie magic. When you woke up, all the boy goblins had turned into girl goblins and all the girls into boys. You maybe want to change back later, but in the meantime there's got to be a way to use this to play mean tricks on somebody.





POISON MICE — You just found a big pile of dead mice left behind by a human rat catcher. Dead mice is tasty, but when you ate these you puked real bad. The human killed them with poison! Good thing you didn't eat too many. Maybe you can sell them to the big mean hobgoblins in the neighboring gulley, and get away before they eat the mice and start puking their guts out, or dying, or whatever happens to hobgoblins when they eat a bunch of poison.

POOL OF SNOT — The chieftain commands you: "Deep in the Forest of Grue bubbles a great pool of green snot. This is either the original spawning ground of all goblinkind, or a just a pool of green snot. Go find out which."

SCARY SCARY KNIGHT — A human knight in black metal armor, covered in spikes, has fallen into quicksand in the ravine nearby. He probably has all kinds of shiny treasures on him. How do you get them from the quicksand, without letting him free? Because he'd kill you all without hardly looking at you if you gave him half the chance.

SIX FEET DOWN — The other day you saw the big scary humans hold a funeral for one of their own, with plenty of crying and weeping. You crept up close and saw one of them drop a gleaming thing in the coffin before it was buried. The dead can't use glittering jewels, so surely no one will mind if you go dig up the old lady and get it.

SPIDER BELLY — Your chieftain woke up this morning with a big welt on his gut, which has swollen up something fierce. The shaman says a giant spider laid eggs in his belly when he was dead drunk. (The spider pierces your stomach with a sharp egg-laying thingy, and shoots the eggs inside. Ew!) The shaman can't cure this, but the faeries who live in a nearby field of wildflowers can. Trouble is, faeries hate goblins, because you catch and eat them whenever you can. How can you trick them into curing the chieftain?

WHO FIRE FARTED? — Someone burned down the hut containing all the wooden spears and bows and arrows, too. To find out who did it, the chieftain has summoned a Truth-Seeker, a scary wise goblin woman who talks to spirits. She can tell when you're lying. The problem is, you did, when you were having fun lighting your farts on fire. How can you blame it on someone else?

MAKING YOUR GOBLINS

IN MANY ROLEPLAYING GAMES YOU ONLY PLAY ONE CHARACTER, but in *Goblin Quest* you will create five goblins to control. All of your characters will be part of the same clutch, a nest of goblins spawned in the green pits, and they will share some familial similarities – but they will each have their own quirks.

You won't be playing all of them at once, though – just one at a time. Assume that the other characters in your clutch are off-screen. When one goblin dies, replace them with a new one from your clutch until you have no more goblins left. If you run out of goblins, though, your adventure isn't over; see the *Goblin Death* section on p46 for more information if that happens.

Any new goblin turning up in a scene will be fully aware of the *Quest*, and what's happened up until now. Wizard scholars have put this down to a complex system of pheromone communication or a long-forgotten hive-mind implanted as part of their genetic modification, although neither of these are true and much of the information is received through gossip and eavesdropping.



Fill out the section marked “clutch” on your sheet first.

Under “Honorific,” write the surname of your clutch – this could be “Longtooth” or “Butterfingers” or “the Grim” or “that smells funny” or any other suitable moniker. (There are long lists of examples for all the things you'll need to invent in character creation at the end of the book.)

Under “Expertise,” note down what your clutch of goblins are especially good at – popular examples are “Running Away” or “Ganging Up On Things” or “Looking Pathetic Enough To Escape Harm,” but you can write whatever you like.

Under “Quirk,” note down something that all the goblins in your clutch are or have – this could be “Covered in Stolen Hair,” “Unusually Long Ears,” “Brightly-Patterned Skin,” “Impressively Stupid,” or anything else you can come up with.

Malcolm is making his clutch. He picks the Honorific “Happalap,” because it’s fun to say, writes down their expertise as “Musicians” and their quirk as “Irritatingly Loud.” He’s putting together a band.

Next, decide what your goblins' Dream will be.

Every goblin has a Dream, and thanks to lazy genetic imprinting, all goblins in your clutch have the same dream. Pick your one from the list below and write it on your sheet, or make up your own:

DIPLOMAT	To meet interesting people
TRAVELLER	To discover new places
COLLECTOR	To own something truly valuable
BEAST FRIEND	To make friends with animals
CELEBRITY	To make your name (and your face) known
WARRIOR	To fight, and win!
BUILDER	To make a lasting impression on the camp
GOURMAND	To eat and drink interesting things

Malcolm toys with Diplomat for a while, but there's only one choice for the world's first all goblin boy band – Celebrity!

Next, decide what your Ancestral Heirloom will be.

Your Ancestral Heirloom has been “handed down” through your clutch for “generations” and in no way found in the bins near the spawning pits half an hour ago. (It totally was found near the bins. Don't tell the other goblins.)

Example Heirlooms are – The Bin Lid of Protection, The Incredibly Lucky Rope, The Big Heavy Rock, The Chair Leg of Bashing, The Sockpuppet of Wisdom, and so on.

Write the name of your Heirloom on your sheet. Draw your Heirloom in the space provided.

If (when) the current bearer of the Heirloom dies, any surviving member of your clutch will step up, grab hold of it, and continue the Goblin Quest.

Malcolm figures that a semi-functional musical instrument will serve as an excellent heirloom, so he writes down “The Ukulele of Twanging” and draws a battered uke in the space on his sheet.

Give your first goblin a name.

Every goblin has a Name either chosen by themselves, given to them by the other goblins, or imprinted in their memory by some bored Wizard lab assistant working in the Green Pits. Common names are Spit, Grobblit, Flick, Snukker, Drip, Wonk, Dreg, Spludge, Bitey, and so on.

Describe your first goblin.

Every goblin also has a Defining Feature - a word or two that describes what sets them apart from the other goblins. This can be something as simple as “Fat” or “Sneaky” or “Bossy” but it might be as complex as “Dreams of a Better Life” or “Walks Backwards.”

Draw your first goblin.

Draw your first goblin in the space provided. This does not have to be an especially elaborate drawing; you can just put eyes and mouth on the outline and be done with it, if you'd like. Or you can get creative and add features, clothing and props too. Don't get too attached to it as it will die very, very soon.

Repeat this process for as many other goblins as you can be bothered.

Malcolm names his first goblin Grob Happalap. He picks "Shy" as a Defining Feature, and sketches a little goblin in a waistcoat and hat. He's ready to play!

Finally, practice your goblin voice.

Practice your Goblin Voice. This is vitally important. For the full Goblin Quest experience, you must talk in a stupid high-pitched voice whenever you're talking in character as your goblin.

This is so important I'm going to write it again: You Must. Talk in. A high-pitched voice. Make it horrible and grating. Do it. Do it first, before anyone else. Read this paragraph aloud in it. Are you eating pizza, or something, at the table? I give you full permission to have as much pizza as you want if you do the voice first. That's a thing I can do. I'm doing that.

If you can keep someone awake with your horrible voice, that's ideal. Keeping people awake is an important part of a successful Goblin Quest game.



*Mushroom, Goblin Wizard
and Fungi Expert*

ON GOBLIN CONSENSUAL CULTURE

GOBLINS OFTEN HAVE A SHAKY GRASP of what is actually going on. Coupled with their very short lifespan and a culture that is based almost exclusively on poorly-remembered gossip and misunderstood interpretations of actual, better cultures, this means that it's hard to pin down precisely how goblin society works on any given day and, indeed, if it is working at all or if it needs to be turned off and on again to fix it.

To this end, you may find examples of things in this book that contradict each other. In one paragraph you might read that goblins have no formalised system of internal government and merely follow orders from whoever shouted at them most recently; in another, you will hear tell of a Goblin King who rules over all Goblankind with a greasy fist. It is important to remember that while these things are mutually exclusive, they are also both true.

Who's to say that, this week, some goblin hasn't found a crown that the other goblins believe grants them the divine right of rule? Generally, once two goblins agree on something, it is widely considered to be true until something more interesting comes along to replace it.

This phenomenon extends outside of goblin society and into the wider world. Are the wizards, grand rulers of the Army of Evil, *really* shapeshifting octopus/spider hybrids in unconvincing disguises?

Is it more interesting, or perhaps more believable, to suggest that they're just super-keen venture capitalists with a penchant for strange fashion? Do they run the Old World's first television station, broadcasting unreality shows to homes all around the globe through powerful scrying circles? Are they metamorphosed dragons, hoarding gold? Are all the Serious Wizards actually off in a bigger camp somewhere, leaving the camp staffed entirely by clueless work experience students?

As far as goblins are concerned, all of these things – and more! – are true. From a goblin's extremely limited point of view, their interpretations of reality are all that matter; and, as a player, they're all that matter to you too. Maybe that hoard of draconic gold you found is actually 57p in loose change and three boiled sweets; so long as you believe it's a draconic hoard, that's all that matters.

This is the golden rule: when you're reading this book, and (more importantly) when you're playing *Goblin Quest*, keep an open mind to ideas and concepts that are being thrown around.

Do you want to go on a grand adventure outside of the camp? To discover strange human cities, or dwarven tunnels, or visit the opera, or poke a whacking great dragon in the eye? Go for it!

Think like a goblin, when you play. Say yes and work with what other players say.

However, *and this is important*, if another player suggests something that makes you uncomfortable, let them know and ask them to change it. This is a story you're making up together for you all to enjoy, and you should all respect that.

MERRITT KOPAS' ADVENTURE IDEAS

MERRITT MAKES THOUGHT-PROVOKING COMPUTER GAMES (for grown-ups) and curates Forest Ambassador, an ongoing collection of excellent indie videogame entertainment. Here are some adventures she would like you to undertake, if you please:

TAKE BOAT — You've got your grubby little hands on a ship! Well, it's really more of a dinghy. "Dinghy" might even be too generous, actually. Anyway, you've somehow got your hands on a somehow-seaworthy pile of wood and the ocean is your oyster. At the very least, it's full of delicious oysters. What will you do? Who will you rob? How much loot can you pile into your boat before it inevitably sinks to the bottom of the sea?

PUTTING THE BAND BACK TOGETHER — When Boss Bluggasnik demands to be entertained, you'd better be entertaining — unless you want to end up like the last unlucky gobs whose comedy routine didn't go over so well with him. There's only one thing Bluggasnik loves as much as thrashing goblins and that's the sound of a full zorbler band. Guess you'd better beg, borrow, and steal as many instruments as you can and get practising!

AN ENCHANTED EVENING — You heard something called the Wizards' Ball had the best grub around, so you whipped up the perfect disguise and swiped an invitation from some unlucky schmuck. Now you're inside, and as long as nobody can tell that Wizard E. Wizzing is really just a bunch of goblins standing on each other's shoulders under a big robe and a mask, you're about to eat of the finest meals you've ever eaten.

THE DIRTY DOZEN — Grizzo the bugbear's cadre of elite goblin bodyguards and lackeys has been taunting and jeering at you all day. Well, you're not gonna take it anymore. You've pinched a clutch of the smelliest eggs you could find, waited until just the perfect moment, and now they're gonna be the ones with egg on their faces. Assuming you don't just lose patience and eat them first, that is.

STEWED GOONS — You've finally got the last ingredient for Nabgrub's famous 'filth belcher' stew: a rare mushroom that only grows deep underground. Now you've just gotta bring it back and you'll get all the stew you can eat. The only catch is, the mushrooms are just a little — a little — explosively volatile, and the cave's full of goblin-eating Things.



*A Crustacean Shepherd
tends to her clackety flock*

DENTAL PLAN — *You need yer ears checked? You 'erd me. Get out there and don't come back until you've got a dragin toof!* Probably you should have thought twice about messing around with old Lugrot's tent. Now it's just you, these absurdly large pliers, and a firebreathing mass of cantankerous scales that's none too likely to willingly give up one of its pearly whites.

STOP THE PIGEON — Someone's been sending messages with some kind of magic bird through the Great Battle Camp, and guess what? You got picked to catch it and figure out what it's up to. Finally, an easy gig — it's just one enchanted bird, how tough can it be to grab?

THE BIG GREEN — Goblinball is a messy, dangerous sport. Nobody's exactly clear on the rules, but they seem to involve a big, heavy spiked ball stuck on the end of a chain and a number of very upset boars. You never had a shot before, but everything's different since you swiped that strength-enhancing potion from that shady alchemist. This year, when the dust settles, it's your bloody carcasses they're gonna be cheering for.

YOU'VE BEAN HAD — You had to steal an awful lot, but it was worth it to finally get your hands on that mysterious stranger's magical beans. Who knows what's gonna happen when you plant them? Hopefully you'll find out before Biggarm realizes it was you who pinched his lucky ring to pay for them.

THE BOAR PRIZE — Every month there's a goblin lottery. The good news is, you finally won! The bad news is that the prize is giving the boss' prize boar, Foulswiller, a bath. You're gonna have to wheedle your way out of it or else hope Foulswiller's in an uncharacteristically good mood if you're gonna get out of this in one piece.

GOBLIN QUEST CREATION

ONCE YOU'VE MADE YOUR GOBLINS, you'll need to determine what sort of quest they're undertaking as a group. If you've got a Gamesmaster in the group, they will guide you through this process; if not, generally the person who suggested that you all play *Goblin Quest* should take the lead. Making a quest is done by asking six questions that some, or all, of the players will answer.

QUESTION ONE: *What do you want to do?*

Every goblin clutch has a goal. You'll notice that, throughout this book, there are *loads* of suggestions for quests from Famous Games Designers – take a look through them, and if one takes your fancy, note it down. Or make up your own! Feel free to get inventive, and don't let this book stop you from coming up with something off-the-wall. Have a look at the map and see if anything inspires you – what do you want to explore? (Is there something you want to explore that's not on the map? Draw it on the map.)

Once everyone's got an idea of what they want to do, get someone to write them all down and read them all out. (You don't have to write down the whole thing; just a few words to remind yourself.) Then, working as a group, it's up to you to make them into a single quest that you'll *all* undertake.

Why do all the goblins undertake the same quest? Why are they so convoluted? That's a quirk of the goblin mental process. (It's also much more fun to play, because if you all charge off in different directions it takes *ages* to finish. You'll have plenty of time to misbehave, anyway, even if you work together.)

Try to work out where the quests fit together, and build them into a whole. Can you tweak existing parts of the quests to fit a little better? Ask the person who picked the quest if that's something they're okay with. Remember that nothing is set in stone at this point.

There aren't any hard and fast rules for this bit of the process. You'll just have to work together.

*Sarah, Tom and Alex are playing *Goblin Quest*, and they all flick through the book while they're making characters and take a look at the adventure ideas.*

Sarah decides she wants her quest to be "Steal the prize pig from the pig show!"

Tom wants to "spy on some nearby bears by disguising ourselves as a bear," and Alex wants to "explore a mysterious pool of snot that might be the source of all goblinkind, or it might just be a pool of snot."

Sarah volunteers to write this all down and lead the group in combining them.

"Hm," she says, "how about we spy on some nearby pigs instead? That way, we could use the stolen pig as a disguise."

"How about we steal the prize bear from the bear show?" says Alex. Everyone agrees that this is a strong idea.

Sally says: "So we're stealing a bear and then using it as a disguise to investigate a mysterious pool of snot?"

"Which the bears are guarding, obviously," says Tom.

"Obviously," says Alex.

DO WE HAVE TO COMBINE A BUNCH OF DIFFERENT QUESTS?

Not really, but it's fun if everyone's involved in making up the adventure. If you're all happy to have a pop at a single adventure (say, one of the sixty or so that are dotted casually around this very book) then go for it, and instead focus on what your goblins would do to help out.

QUESTION TWO: *What materials do you need to do it?*

Once you've worked out what your quest is, you need to make the plan, and the first part of the plan is working out some things you'll need. If you wanted to get to war, you'd need armour, weapons and transport. If you wanted to throw a fancy party, you'd need cake, jelly, and hats.

The first three stages of your quest will generally involve getting what you'll need, and probably getting into the places where what you need is stored. Write these down now as a group under Task One and name it.

QUESTION THREE: *What's next?*

Have you got everything you need? Do you need to get into position to enact your plan? Work out if there's anything vital that you're missing before you line up for the final part of the quest.



QUESTION FOUR: *How are you going to actually do it?*

The stage is set. The goblins have everything they need. It's time to make a mark. Break down your final task into three stages, as before, with the final stage resulting in your glorious victory.

The players write down the following under their first task, named BEAR LARCENY:

STAGE ONE:

Infiltrate the Bear Show without being seen.

STAGE TWO:

Find the prize-winning bear.

STAGE THREE:

Abscond with said bear.

The second task, called CREATE A FUNCTIONAL BEARSUIT, looks like this:

STAGE ONE:

Somehow kill a fully-grown bear, and a prize-winning one at that.

STAGE TWO:

Turn it into a functional bearsuit.

STAGE THREE:

Teach yourselves how to operate the bearsuit.

The third task, called DISCOVER THE SECRET OF SNOT, looks like this:

STAGE ONE:

Infiltrate bear society.

STAGE TWO:




Defeat the mighty bear guardian of the Snotpool.

STAGE THREE:

Discover the secret of the Snotpool, and live to tell the tale!

QUESTION FIVE: *What goes wrong?*

Goblins are inherently unlucky. For each Task in your quest, you'll need to determine a Misfortune. First, roll on the following table to determine where the Misfortune hits:

	Stage One
	Stage Two
	Stage Three

Then, roll on the Misfortune table below. Roll 2 six-sided dice; one of these will give you the category of the Misfortune, and the other will give you a specific misfortune within that category. You'll have two different options (unless you roll doubles) so pick whichever one you prefer, or the one that makes most sense. Write it down after the relevant Step so you remember what it is and when it takes effect. (If you really like the sound of a particular misfortune, you can just pick it without rolling.)

Misfortunes Table



ORCS AND BUGBEARS



A drunk orc arrives and starts stepping on everything



A bugbear makes you a deal that you foolishly accept



Two orcs having a brawl stumble into the quest



An orc war chariot goes wild and crashes through the scene



The catapult on top of the orc barracks misfires



Some bugbears decide to play goblin football



GOBLINS AND HOBGOBLINS



A hobgoblin cart full of paperwork and supplies crashes into the goblins



A rival group of goblins on their own quest interfere with yours somehow



One of the goblins turns out to be a dragon-blood kobold spy in disguise



A hobgoblin arrives and demands to see identity papers, which you do not possess



A bitter, wizened goblin elder (six days old) casts a bad luck curse on the party



A hobgoblin forces the goblins to carry something really heavy really far



THE ARMIES OF GOOD



The armies of good attack the Gates of War



A lost dwarf miner-scout from the pops up in the camp



An enemy bombardment hits the camp



A mischievous gnome illusionist weaves some grand illusion, confusing everyone



Wood-elf magic briefly animates nearby plants, and they are angry



A loose warhorse gets in and starts stamping around like a maniac

SURPRISE!

It can be fun to have the Misfortunes come up as a surprise, so feel free to have multiple people write them down secretly on scraps of paper and leave them face-down with the scene number on the back. Then, just after the first player declares their action in the scene (but before they roll the dice), flip over the paper and try to work the Misfortune into your results.

After rolling for Misfortunes, the group's first task now looks like this:

BEAR LARCENY:

STAGE ONE: Infiltrate the Bear Show without being seen.

STAGE TWO: Find the prize-winning bear.

STAGE THREE: Abscond with said bear.

MISFORTUNE: A big, over-friendly dog approaches.

They repeat this process for the other two Tasks.



CRUEL NATURE

- Swifts appear and divebomb the goblins, hoping to eat their myriad lice
- A hawk spies the goblins and decides that they look delicious
- Ants! Thousands upon thousands of ants!
- A badger arrives, hungry for blood
- A big, overly-friendly dog approaches
- A cheeky magpie steals items from the goblins



ROGUE MAGIC

- A stray blast spell from the Wizard's Tower escapes and causes havoc
- Super-intelligent mutant rats outwit the goblins
- Gravity is briefly and dangerously reversed
- A water-spirit bound into service by the wizards grows angry, and attacks
- Leftover magic animates (and upsets) an animal skeleton
- A wizard levitates into the scene looking for goblin teeth to power a spell



MISCELLANEOUS PROBLEMS

- Something important explodes
- A thunderstorm breaks overhead and lightning strikes
- The Green Pits are undermining the camp and buildings start falling down
- Everyone's really hungry all of a sudden, and needs to eat immediately
- Something important is hidden at the bottom of the rubbish pits
- Fire! Everywhere!

ALTERNATE MISFORTUNES TABLE FROM ROB HEINSOO

I ASKED ROB HEINSOO, AN ACTUAL PROPER GAMES DESIGNER, to write some adventure ideas for me. He got back to me and said that what he really wanted to do was write more Misfortunes Table, and that he had in fact done such a thing, and here they are attached to the email, and apologies if that wasn't what I was after.

Anyway, now you can read them. (And a sixth one that I wrote, to round out the numbers.) These are a bit more off-the-wall than the standard Misfortunes, and they tend to have a larger scope so you might need to include them in later scenes, and some of them mess with the rules a little. But I'm sure you can handle it.

■ LARGE PROBLEMS

- A weapon from an enemy god splinters off from the War and careens through part of the camp.

- 1d6 of the nearest wizards glow bright blue and then erupt into blue flame, sending strange-tasting smoke and dangerous blue beams sparking in all directions.

- The sun sets all of a sudden, like it just whizzes down towards the horizon in the west? East? Then bad things start happening.

- All the orcs nearby go crazy, attacking each other and anyone else who looks like they're breathing!

- A goblin from another clutch suddenly rises into the air, glowing green and gold, yelling with an incredible loud voice about how "the United Goblins of the Green can overcome anyth-" But the rest of his speech gets lost as fireballs from the wizards roast him. And everything else, just to make sure.

- All your Ancestral Heirlooms suddenly combine into One Thing and begin eating goblins.

■ TRANSFORMATIONS

- Illumination! Each of your current living goblins realizes its true place in the universe. Uh-oh.

- Frenzy! Some wizard's miscast spell drives you and your questers crazy for a dozen red moments.

- The hatching! One of the goblins sloughs its skin and becomes a terrible terrible monster. Or a human. Same difference.

- Small zombies! Any goblins dead earlier in this adventure come after the living, looking for companions in death. If no one has died yet, are you actually cheaty bugbears? Cue a super-tough zombie at the first death.

- Elfdom! Are the goblins infiltrators? They begin looking like small elves, though their mental state does not change.

- Confession! Some strange wind forces you all to say the truth and nothing but the truth. Forever until death.



Grunk, who lost an ear to a hungry duergar

●● PORTENTS

- Everything the goblins have had to eat lately comes roaring out, alive, more or less, and angry. If no one has had anything to eat or drink, it happens to someone near the goblins.
- The questers stumble into a hidden but unlocked pen full of intelligent three-eyed goats.
- Arrows rain in on the goblins, and one that hits has a message attached.
- A rain of frogs is one thing, but these frogs are as big as horses. And hungrier.
- One of the Ancestral Heirlooms turns out to actually be magic. It's very bad magic.
- Strange tattoos bearing symbols the goblins have never seen before surface on each goblin's skin. Which wouldn't be a problem except other people in the Camp of War can read.

●● UH-OH-HO-NO

- When you finish this task, time loops and you're back at the start of the task. You have to do it again, but all the dead goblins are dead and everything is a little worse this time.
- Any goblins who die in this task, or have already been replaced by non-goblins, are replaced by hungry undead, like, right now! So if you die, roleplay an undead until the next stage.
- There's some strange magic at work, and any goblin who touches another goblin can't shake free. Goblin ball!
- A super ninja elf assassin armed with a hand crossbow tries to kill the most talkative goblin and anyone who gets in the way, mistaking the goblins for hobgoblins. Whoops.
- The latest bugbear animal fight turns out to be a free-range goblin hunt. Incoming!
- Some wizard tried to light a fire and got carried away. Now anyone who gets hurt starts to burn.



WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

- A goblin you don't know runs up, trips, dies, and the thing they were stealing tumbles onto your feet. The object's owners are coming up fast.
- A giant wolf attaches itself to you like a guard. It's your friend. Until someone screws up and rolls a 1. It won't be your friend after that. Oh no.
- A bugbear gives you some dice to hold for them. They're going to need them back. Don't give them to anyone else. Or else.
- A drunk orc mistakes the strongest-looking goblin in the group for their special goblin buddy, who they haven't seen since their last night partying.
- The goblin smiling and approaching you totally isn't a wizard in disguise. This is going to be great!
- The ghosts of one or more of your dead goblins come back to help. They died because they were clumsy or careless and they're worse when they're dead.

THE TERROR... FROM ANOTHER GAME!

- "And that's when I landed in the Great Battle Camp," narrates the moustachioed Baron, stepping off his floating skyship, and opening another bottle of wine. "Of course, I killed the lot of them."
- A frazzled-looking human in a red jumpsuit staggers out of a whole in the ground, waves a laser pistol at the goblins, and accuses them of being tiny mutant traitors before opening fire.
- Tentacles, pseudopods and other wiggling limbs lash up from the ground as it becomes immediately apparent that a Great Old One has joined the party.
- You stumble onto a crime scene, and the hobgoblin gumshoes investigating come to the conclusion that you're guilty!
- An adventuring party – Cleric, Wizard, Fighter, Rogue, you know the deal – kicks in a door and attacks everyone in sight. Those monsters!
- No one expects the Inquisition! You didn't, anyway, and now here they are, waving around boltguns and shouting about a malfunctioning "Gellar field," whatever that is.

Difficulty Ratings

Once you've worked out the nine stages of your quest, you'll need to assign difficulty ratings. These represent the difficulty of the task at hand, and are eroded by goblins achieving successes in play.

FOR THE FIRST TASK, the difficulty of each stage is equal to the number of players -1.

FOR THE SECOND TASK, the difficulty of each stage is equal to the number of players.

FOR THE THIRD TASK, the difficulty of each stage is equal to the number of players +1.

IF A MISFORTUNE IS ATTACHED TO A STAGE, it increases the difficulty by half the number of players (rounded down).

You're done! You'll need to put someone in charge of handling these difficulty numbers, and informing the rest of the group when a scene is over. (Gamesmaster, this is a great job for you; otherwise, you can take turns doing it.)

These numbers ensure that, even without a Gamesmaster, things tick along at a fair pace. If you feel like scenes are taking a bit too long to resolve, then feel free to shave a couple of points off the difficulty values.

The group have finished their quest and assigned misfortunes and difficulty ratings in brackets after each stage and are ready to begin play. There are three players in the group. Their quest looks like this:

BEAR LARCENY:

STAGE ONE: *Infiltrate the Bear Show without being seen.* (2)

STAGE TWO: *Find the prize-winning bear.* (2)

STAGE THREE: *Abscond with said bear.* **MISFORTUNE:** *A big, over-friendly dog approaches.* (3)

CREATE A FUNCTIONAL BEARSUIT:

STAGE ONE: *Somehow kill a fully-grown bear, and a prize-winning one at that.* (3)

STAGE TWO: *Turn it into a functional bearsuit.* (3)

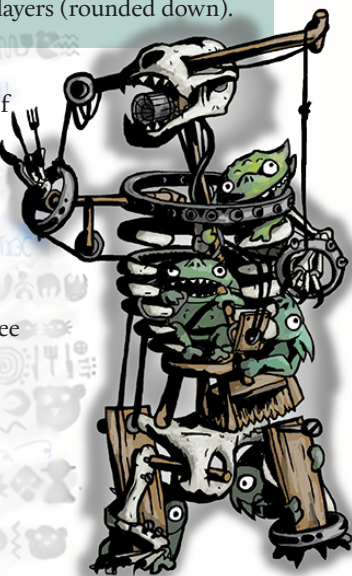
STAGE THREE: *Teach yourselves how to operate the bearsuit.* **MISFORTUNE:** *Ants! Thousands upon thousands of ants!* (4)

DISCOVER THE SECRET OF SNOT:

STAGE ONE: *Infiltrate bear society.* (4)

STAGE TWO: *Defeat the bear guardian of the Snotpool.* **MISFORTUNE:** *An enemy bombardment hits!* (5)

STAGE THREE: *Discover the secret of the Snotpool, and live to tell the tale!* (4)



QUESTION SIX: *What's lucky?*

Before you start play, you need to decide how to get re-rolls. Choose ONE of the methods below; all players use it.



THE LUCKY EAR - Goblins, as unlucky as they are, have one saving grace – a lucky ear. Much like the foot of a rabbit, all of a goblin's luck has been concentrated into their left ear, making it incredibly lucky. Each and every goblin can, once, opt to “use their lucky ear” and re-roll a roll they’ve just made.

The Lucky Ear is great because it's easy to remember.

THE THUMBS UP - This works like the Lucky Ear, but you can only use it on other goblins. (They can refuse, if they want.) You can't ask for a thumbs up, but you can remind other players that it exists by using yours as often as possible. Unlike Lucky Ears, each goblin has two thumbs, and they're both lucky.

The Thumbs Up is great because it encourages players to help each other out.



THE KING STICK - Get an small stick and place it in the centre of the table. If another player makes you laugh out loud or otherwise really entertains you, you can give them the King Stick to hold.

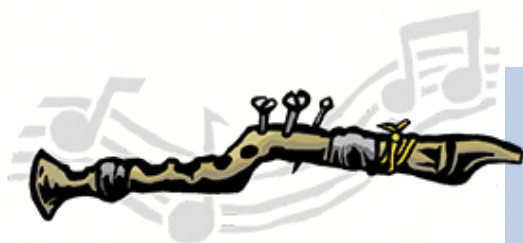
When a player is holding the King Stick, they can choose to discard it to re-roll their dice. (They can also wave it around authoritatively, if that's what they're into.) When the bearer discards the King Stick, they place it in the middle of the table, and it can be given away again.

You can never ask for the King Stick. If you want to remind people it exists, give it to someone else. If your goblin dies whilst holding the King Stick, you lose control of the King Stick. If you've held the King Stick for a while and not used it, you should give it away to the next player who makes you laugh out loud.

The King Stick is great because it encourages players to entertain each other.

THE BOSS HAT - Pretty similar to the King Stick, but it's a hat! So that's fun. You have to wear it if you want to use the re-roll.

The Boss Hat is great because it's a hat, and you get to wear it.



THE MAGIC FLUTE - Functionally identical to the King Stick, but it requires you to play a short burst of notes to “magically summon” a re-roll. Probably better represented with a recorder or, for full comic effect, a kazoo.

The Magic Flute is great because you get to parp on a musical instrument whenever you re-roll.

LOSE THE STRUCTURE

Once you've played *Goblin Quest* a few times, you might find the above quest formula a bit... well, formulaic. So feel free to disregard it. Want to write up a dungeon crawl in the tunnels under the Dun Inn? Go for it. If one of the players wants to write an adventure for the others to play in – with supporting characters, and monsters, and all that jazz – awesome! Make it happen. The three-act structure is there to give a GM-less game some pacing, but once you're all dab hands at it, you probably won't need to use it.

WHAT IF THE QUEST CHANGES?

If you find yourself on a different path from the one originally laid out, don't be afraid to tweak it or change it entirely, if the whole group agrees to it. Try to keep the original ethos in mind, though; if you're investigating snotpools, then the final scene should involve you investigating snotpools, even if you chunked out the bearsuit idea and instead reached the pool via Tactical Catapult Insertion.

JAMES WALLIS' ADVENTURE IDEAS

JAMES WALLIS HAS PUBLISHED MORE BOOKS than you've read. He also designed *Once Upon A Time* and *The Extraordinary Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, which both do interesting things with storytelling and are definitely worth your time.

His adventure ideas are very brief, which gives them the impression that the goblins are shouting them aloud in the back of a pub, which is an image I quite enjoy.

I wanna know who made (makes expansive gesture) ALL THIS. The world. Us. The sky. Stones. Food. Poo. Who done all that? Why they done that? We should find out.

What happens when we die?

Where did the sun go?

Make it stop raining.

Targ and me stole a shiny thing from humans, and then a lizard ate Targ and the thing. We should get it. Maybe Targ too.

The humans are building something big. We must see what it is, and maybe steal it. Or eat it.

The humans have fire! We must steal fire from the humans and bring it to goblins!

The humans make booze! We must make booze too!

*Kathrik, who is as
hungry as she is fighty*



I heard a human tell a story! Goblins need stories too! We must get stories!

So many half-human creatures like satyrs and centaurs and harpies and stuff. Why no half-goblin creatures? We should make some!

Jib ate a fairy. Now the fairies are mad and say we must send a dip-loom-attic ee-mission-ary to be sorry. That's you.

Facial hair. Goblins are falling behind in facial hair. We must get facial hair or people will think we're elves.

It's Wib's birthday! Let's throw her a surprise party!

What does this wand do?

What does this key open?

What can we do with all this poo?

HOW TO PLAY

ONE PLAYER – THE GAMESMASTER, IF YOU’VE GOT ONE, and if you’ve not, use the tallest player instead – sets the scene, and describes the great battle camp. (You can read the opening paragraph of text from the start of the book, if you’d like.) After that, it’s up to the players to propel their goblins through chaos, and achieve their goblin quest.

STEP ONE – *Say what you’re trying to do.*

It doesn’t matter what order you act in – any player can act whenever they want, so long as they’ve got an action token to spend.

Describe what your goblin is trying to do. Remember that you’re a scrawny little goblin, and you’re not too bright either, so that might limit your range of available options. When you describe what you’re doing, feel free to come up with details about the environment – other characters, dangers, and so on.

You can say as much or as little as you want, but once you’re happy with your action, roll one or more dice and consult the table below.

It’s Tom’s turn, and his first goblin is the apprentice wizard Mushroom. The goblins are all stacked up outside the Bear Show; their current task is to infiltrate the building. “Okay,” he says, “I’m going to get things started. I fashion a fake moustache out of bits of mushroom fronds and march up to the hobgoblin on the front desk, posing as a bear inspector.”

This is the first the other players had heard of a hobgoblin being there, but the addition makes sense. Tom rolls a dice.

STEP TWO – *Roll the dice, describe what happens.*

Whenever you act, roll on this table. You’ll always roll at least one dice, but you might have the chance to roll more – see below.



INJURY! The goblin is injured whilst attempting to do the thing. Cross off one of the goblin’s injury boxes and describe the injury. If both of a goblin’s injury boxes are crossed off, they die in some hilarious manner and are replaced by their successor the next time their player acts.



SOMETHING BAD! Something unfortunate occurs: an enemy appears, a goblin is left in a difficult position, an opportunity is lost. Say what happens. The next goblin to act gets -1 on their rolls.



SOMETHING GOOD! Something fortunate occurs: an enemy leaves or is defeated, a goblin gets a lucky break, a new opportunity is revealed. Say what happens. The next goblin to act gets +1 on their rolls.



VICTORY! The goblin succeeds at the task they were attempting, often in some small, barely-noticeable way. Describe what happens and subtract 1 from the Difficulty Rating of the current stage. If the Difficulty Rating reaches 0, you’ve managed to complete that stage.

GO GO HYPER TURBO GOBLIN QUEST

Want to play a game that's a) faster and b) has more goblin death? Try out the following changes to the standard table:

- DEATH! Instant (and lasting) death.
- INJURY!
- SOMETHING BAD!
- SOMETHING GOOD!
- VICTORY!
- ASTONISHING VICTORY! Subtract two from the difficulty rating of the scene.

Tom rolls a 4, which is Something Good.

"Hmm, okay. Upon closer inspection, it turns out that the hobgoblin is asleep, which will make it easier to sneak past him. I probably cast a spell on him when I wasn't looking. I'm really good at spells."

Sarah, who acts next, gets to add 1 to her rolls.

ROLLING MORE THAN ONE DICE

You may add a dice to your roll if any of the following things written on your character sheet could conceivably help you do it:

QUIRK

DREAM

EXPERTISE

ANCESTRAL HEIRLOOM

DEFINING FEATURE

Make sure you describe how they help you! Every dice you roll is counted, so it's possible to get Injured but to have Something Good happen, or to gain a Victory but die in the attempt, or whatever.

If you roll a Good Thing and a Bad Thing, it counts as a Good Thing. If you roll two Bad Things and a Good Thing, it counts as a Bad Thing; three Good Things and two Bad Things is a Good Thing; and so on, and so forth.

No matter how many Good Things and Bad Things you get, though, you'll only ever add or subtract 1 from the next roll.

It's Sarah's turn, and she's adding 1 to her rolls because of Tom's Good Thing the previous round. Her first goblin is Rat-Nose, a grotty wheeler-dealer character.

"Okay," she says, "I'll use my Expertise of Not Being Seen to get really sneaky and lead everyone through the rafters. I'll then use my heirloom, the 'Orrible Club With Nails In, to scrape down the wall and land safely."

Sarah rolls 3 dice, and she gets a 1, a 2, and a 4. She adds 1 to all these, thanks to Tom's Something Good, so her final result is 2, 3, and 5: an Injury, Something Bad, and a Victory.

"Agh! So I scurry through, and it goes pretty well, but my club doesn't stick in the wall! I land hard on my face, and the noise from the club hitting the wall wakes up the hobgoblin!"

She crosses an injury off her goblin, and Victory off the track for the scene. Next up, it's Alex's turn.

WHAT IF I ROLL A 7, OR A -1?

On a roll of less than 1, take two injuries. (And die, presumably.) On a roll of more than 6, take two victories.

I'M NOT HAPPY WITH MY ROLL. CAN I RE-ROLL IT?

Maybe! That depends on the re-roll method you chose when you were making the quest (see p38). If you're entitled to a re-roll, you can use it after you make a roll that you don't like – just pick up all the dice and throw them again. (You can't choose some dice to re-roll and some to leave – it's all or nothing.) The second result stands, even if it's worse than the first.

DO SPARE VICTORIES, OR BAD OR GOOD THINGS, CARRY OVER BETWEEN TASKS?

They do not. Each scene starts anew.

Alex assesses the scene. There's only one Victory left before this task is over. The players are using the Lucky Ear rules.

"Right, seeing as my goblin – Krich the Faceless – has the defining feature Definitely Magic, I'm gonna cast a hot-foot spell to send the hobgoblin running out of the room! I'm gonna use my dream of Warrior and my quirk Weird Goggly Eye, too."

"Weird Goggly Eye?" asks Tom.

"Well, it's more magic than a normal eye," replies Alex.

Alex rolls three dice, and gets a 2, a 3, and a 5. Subtracting 1 from those rolls means the final result is 1, 2, and 4.

"That's two injuries, and that'll kill me. Looks like I'm gonna use my Lucky Ear."

Alex crosses the left ear off their drawing of Krich, grabs the dice, and re-rolls them to get a 4, a 4, and a 6. The -1 from the hobgoblin waking up still counts, so the final roll is 3, 3, 5. That's two Bad Things, and one Victory – which ends the scene. Bad Things don't carry over between scenes, so everyone else is safe. Alex describes what happens.

"Okay – the hobgoblin grabs me by my ear and lifts me off the ground, but on the way up I set his beard on fire with a match," says Alex. "He drops me, and everyone can run past as he rolls around on the floor trying desperately to put out his beard."

Sarah crosses off the second, and final, victory in this scene. They're inside!



STEP THREE – *Hand in your action token.*

Once a player has acted, they put their action token into the central cup. Once all players have acted, their action tokens are returned to them and a new round begins. A player without an action token may not act. (This is to make sure you all get a go. If you're playing with a Gamesmaster, you probably won't need to use action tokens.)

MEGUEY BAKER'S ADVENTURE IDEAS

MEG BAKER WROTE 1,001 NIGHTS AND PSI*RUN, both wonderful indie games designed to be played in a single sitting – and both definitely inspirations for Goblin Quest. Her ideas have a kind of rustic charm to them, which distinguishes them from the normal “fashion a moustache out of explosive snot” kind of thing that goblins normally get up to. They're also proof that, in Goblin Quest, washing a shirt can be as dangerous as fighting a bear.

For this quest, you must milk a cow and deliver the milk to a dairy. Maybe you will be rewarded with cheese!

It's Granny Goblin's birthday! Find her a proper gift. She likes blue.

You brave adventurers have been selected from among all the goblin hordes to retrieve the ancient lost treasure of the Goblin King. He lost it last month in the back garden and reports are that a squirrel has made a nest in it. Don't kill the squirrel.

A troop of human adventurers has been spotted heading toward the goblin bolt-holes. Head them off. Or off their heads.

One of your number is about to be wed. Your betrothed has a final request: wash the shirt she would like to wear at the wedding.

You have found a cute little kitten. Bring it to the Goblin King and ask if you can keep it as a pet.

A local sorceress of great renown is holding a contest to write a song in honour of the new year. Participation is mandatory. So is singing.

Something is stealing your goblin cheese. Set a trap and discover the thief.

On the edge of town, there lies a large chicken farm. In that farm, there is a large hen-house. In that hen-house, there is a single golden egg. In the golden egg, there is a key. Fetch the key.

Things are getting too silly around here. Sneak into the manor house and steal me a baby.

GOBLIN DEATH

IF (WHEN) YOUR GOBLIN DIES, it is replaced with the next goblin on the sheet at the start of the next round. Spare wounds are not carried over between goblins. Work as a group to make deaths as hilarious as possible – and if one of you is the Gamesmaster, most of your job will be describing all sorts of gruesome slapstick. If the next goblin on your list does not have a Name, a Defining Feature and a Portrait, they may not enter play, so get going!

I'M BORED OF MY CURRENT GOBLIN – I WANT TO PLAY MY NEXT ONE!

That's cool! On your turn, describe how your current goblin dies suddenly and violently, then bring in your next one on the following turn. When your new goblin acts for the first time, they add a dice to all their rolls if you can say how the death of their predecessor helps them to achieve their aims.

Rosa is playing Flynn Three-Ears, a goblin with three ears who's convinced that he's a sorcerer of some kind. (Or that he will be.) Rosa wants to skip ahead to her next goblin, so she describes him channelling mighty power from the earth up through his body... but it's too much, and he explodes like a firework made out of giblets. On her next turn, she describes the explosion acting as a cover for her next goblin, Ratchet Three-Ears, as he sneaks into position and adds a dice to Ratchet's actions.



Flynn Three-Ears, who is convinced that his third ear is a sign of sorcery, and that his familiar is “pretending to be dead” for “arcane reasons”



I WANT TO VALIANTLY SACRIFICE MY GOBLIN TO SAVE THE LIFE OF ANOTHER!

How noble of you! If you do this, you can sacrifice your goblin during another player's turn to give another player's goblin a re-roll – and they get to add 1 to all their results, as though Something Good had happened.

Make sure to describe your selfless gesture in exacting detail.

WHAT IF I LOSE ALL MY GOBLINS?

You're not out of the game! If all your goblins have died, you take over the role of a friendly non-goblin NPC – this could be anything from a cheeky magpie to a particularly thick orc the others have roped into helping on the quest to the ghost of one of your previous goblins to a bugbear assassin using the others as a temporary distraction.

NPCs roll one dice when they act, and two dice when they act to their strengths. (An orc rolls two dice when they're being all big and strong, but they roll one dice when they have to use their brains.)

NPCs have two injury boxes, but can't die – if both are ticked off, they're simply out of the current scene and heal back up to full at the end of it.

You can swap to a different NPC at the beginning of any scene, if you want.

If all players have lost all their goblins before the quest is over, the quest is failed and all is lost! But as long as you had fun, it doesn't really matter.

Later on, Ratchet is in trouble, and is getting stomped to death by a whacking great orc who confused him for a gnome after Rosa rolled 1, 2, and 4. Kevin, another player in the game, likes Ratchet and wants to make sure that he survives.

"No! I rush forward," shouts Kevin, taking control of Squit Finganora, his goblin with the ability to stretch out her mouth and stomach like a snake can – "and clamp my entire mouth over the head of the orc, giving Ratchet time to escape. The orc pulls me off and throws me hard against a wall, which kills me."

Kevin moves on to his next goblin, and Rosa re-rolls her dice. She rolls 2, 4 and 5, and she adds 1 to those rolls, meaning she gets 3, 5 and 6 – something bad, and two successes!

"In the confusion, I slip my knife out of my pocket, and hold it against my belly – so when the orc stamps on me, I stab him in the foot! He's mad about that. Really mad."

FINISHING THE QUEST

YOUR QUEST IS GOING TO COME TO A HEAD at the end of stage three – hopefully, by that point, you’ll have achieved everything you set out to do.

(Or, more likely, things will have gotten way out of hand, and – for example – while you set out to bake a cake for your goblin grandma, you find yourself jamming dynamite into a bank vault door whilst under heavy crossbow fire from elven police to source some “cake money”)

When the final victory is scored on the final scene, the quest is over. (Unless you want to keep playing, or you feel there’s more story to tell, in which case do as many more scenes as you want.) As the dust settles, and the authorities arrive, and your goblins run away from the carnage they’ve wrought, you enter the epilogue stage.

EPILOGUE

You’re going to go down in history; no matter what you did, goblins are going to talk about you for weeks to come. (Maybe months.) Yours will be a story of greatness – of creatures that were fed up with their lot in life and decided to strike out to claim their own destinies.

Take it in turns to pick another player’s goblin, dead or alive (probably dead) and say what the other goblins will whisper about them around the trashfires in the coming nights. Go round until every player has had at least one of their goblins passed into legend.

That’s it! The game is over, and you were victorious. (Probably.) Maybe next time you could give one of the rules hacks a shot?

WHY IS THERE AN EPILOGUE?

Roleplaying can be a hectic thing, and it’s hard to break down what happened in the midst of it – so a lot of live-action roleplaying games have a debrief session, or a “froth” session, where players are encouraged to talk about their experiences. This is really useful for LARPs because often they can deal with some pretty stressful stuff, and it’s good to have a de-pressurisation chamber back into the real world.

Goblin Quest doesn’t deal with difficult, real-world issues as standard, but there’s another reason for the epilogue – it’s nice to celebrate each other’s achievements and the story you’ve just created together.



TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS IN THE GREAT BATTLE CAMP

FEAST DAY OF BOG-AL-KURRUK – “And lo,” says the orc holy text *Da Book Wot Tells Ya Wot Ter Do*, “der grate orc god BOG-AL-KURRUK did pull da first orc outta da ground like a turnip, and he sed unto him *You Are An Orrible Little Orc, Now Go And Hit People Until They Give Ya Their Stuff*.”

On the yearly feast day of the **SACRED TURNIP**, orcs eat loads of turnip stew and make a big show of publicly humiliating and kicking parsnips. They also pull things out of the ground in an attempt to find a new messiah, although generally they tend to find turnips, carrots, the occasional badger or fox, and an unsurprisingly high amount of goblins. The “best” messiah is crowned with a big hat and enjoys the finest orc hospitality, a process which is inevitably fatal.

ROLLUP-DAY – On each Rollup-day (there are around six per year) orc recruiters bash the front-line troops of the army into shape and get them fighting fit and ready for combat. As orcs don’t have great eyesight and are very easily fooled, it’s fairly easy for an enterprising young goblin to sneak into the army – so long as they have six mates sitting beneath them to properly fill out the trenchcoat.

HAPPY BATHDAY – Goblins are a filthy lot, so four times a year, the wizards flood the spawning pits with warm(ish) soapy water and rubber ducks and give all the goblins living there what legally amounts to a bath. This tends to drown quite a few goblins, but leaves the survivors squeaky clean and ready for action.

DOGSBLOOD – Bugbears are an insular lot, but once a year they throw open the doors to their inner sanctum in the tunnels underneath the Dun Inn and let the other inhabitants of the camp inside to watch the year’s first dog-fight. To entertain the wizards, they tend to use all kinds of weird and wonderful creatures in the fights – clipped-wing griffons, mad owlbears, drunk land-sharks, weaponised pixie-hives, and so on. Thanks to budget cuts, many of the creatures in recent years have just been goblins in a variety of stupid outfits.



This goblin is trying to start a career as a stage magician

THE WIZARDS' BALL — Wizards are, on the whole, a conservative bunch with a strong sense of tradition – and, seeing as wizards in olden times had grand galas and fancy balls, they feel that it's their duty to do the same. Sadly, there aren't many female wizards in the camp, so the balls end up as rather stilted affairs with everyone hanging out on the edges of the dancefloor while a kidnapped band plays last decade's hottest dance hits.

EVERYTHING IS IN ORDER, DO NOT BE ALARMED DAY — The wizards are not extra-dimensional creatures artlessly crammed into unconvincing disguises, and any extra limbs or tentacles you might see are merely tricks of the light. In order to prove how normal they are, the wizards allocate one day a year to doing Normal Things like eating in front of people, playing football with the orcs, drinking a pint in the Dun Inn, and definitely not leeching the soul-essence from herds of sentient three-eyed goats that they store in secret pits all over the camp, good heavens no.

ALL HOBS' EVE — Having fled the lands of the fey to be petty bureaucrats, hobgoblins spend most of their days triple-stamping forms and making sure that no-one gets what they want in time to do anything useful with it. But on one night a year, the faerie realm and the mortal realm come close together, and the hobgoblins revert to their original trickster states – magic and shapeshifting and japes abound from sun-down to sun-up, after which the hobs all straighten their robes and get on with the business of writing formal letters of apology.

NAOMI ALDERMAN'S ADVENTURE IDEAS

NAOMI IS A CELEBRATED AUTHOR and lead writer on both *Perplex City* and *Zombies, Run!*. She was the *Times* Young Novelist of the year in 2007, chosen as one of *Granta's* 20 best young writers in 2013, and is an Actual Professor of Creative Writing.

She's great. Here are some ideas she wants you to read, and they're all wonderful, as you'd expect:

HATEY PLOPKINS – You've heard - somewhere, somehow - that the big thing these days is to be famous. And that the best way to do that is to say really mean things about people. So you're going to have to find some kind of stage to stand on, and some way to broadcast your voice. And once you've insulted everyone you can think of... you're going to need to at least attempt to escape their wrath.

LIVE IN IDLENESS – Listen, sometimes wizards brew potions in cauldrons they bought slightly too cheap from a dodgy peddler. And sometimes those cauldrons of potions explode. And sometimes you happen to have been standing right there when a cauldron of potion exploded all over you. This one was a love potion. You've fallen in love with the first thing you saw after you woke up, whether man, goblin, chicken or table. Your goal is to win some expression of their affection in return. Good luck with that.

YOU'RE DICEY – There was this goblin, right? They were your sibling in the goblin-vats. Grew up together (for about 20 minutes). You guys were like that. And then they got killed in the war. Well, that's what you're for. The only issue is that you heard some bard singing a song about someone who went back to the underworld to try to get their friend back. So that's what you're going to try. You never know, if you're particularly unlucky, you might even find a mage or a demon who could actually send you to the underworld. Or maybe somewhere that just feels like it.

THREE GOBLINS AND A BABY HUMAN – One of these orcs has sired offspring on a demon from the ninth realm. He couldn't really help it, it's not like there are perfectly effective contraceptive charms available practically for nothing from any hedge witch or anything. It's not completely clear he knew the demon was female though, so I guess that's something. Anyway, the demon dropped the baby off with him and he's dropped it off with you. Your major goal is: keep this demi-orc, demi-demon warrior-spawned baby alive until the guy with the big muscles gets back from the battle. Although, given the really weird thing its eyes do when it gets cross, it might be best to also think about how you are going to survive this.

THE DAILY GOBBIN' – You heard a herald arriving from a distant land with news of how the battle fares on far shores. Man, was that dame ever treated nicely! They gave her a whole roast chicken, let her sit on something soft, got her mead and all sorts of things. Just imagine what would happen if you started some kind of enterprise to discover and announce new things that have happened. First you'll have to find out some of these 'news' - you might start by listening at doors, stealing some interesting stuff - and then announce what you've found to anyone who seems interested. It can't fail!

WHAT LIES BENEATH (THE MUD) – One of the great warriors dropped a very valuable amulet in the midst of the battle the other week. It's fine. They go out to battle draped in those things. But there's a reward for finding this one. And if you keep on digging you'll probably find some other stuff. Or you might find some other way to find out where it is. Can't someone do a spell to find metal on a battlefield? And maybe draw it all toward you? Is there any way this could go wrong? I can't think of one.

THE TASTIEST GAME – Serving at those Great Banquets is something, huh? All those amazing jellied knibs and roasted squarls and enormous piles of chocolate buttons. Incredible. You've conceived the ambition to host a banquet like this yourself. You'll have to find some of the raw ingredients – the more raw the better, really – and then find some way to cook them, and some instructions about how you're supposed to cook. And what 'cooking' is.

I SOLEMNLY SWEAR THAT I DO NOT KNOW WHAT I'M DOING – You found a weird nose ring. When you put it in, you go invisible. Now this you could have some fun with. You can steal stuff, you can sneak into places, you can overhear conversations, you can look at strange things that no one gets to look at. I mean, is it going to wear away your very soul the more you use it, and put all of the nine realms in dangers from the powers you'll unleash across all of reality? Probably, but you'd be dead anyway by then. More to the point, the owner is going to come back looking for it. So you'd better have a plan.

I LIKE TO BOGIE – There's this troubador. And he's sent you to find him some backing dancers for his next performance before the King. They really give the place some atmosphere, he says. Except, you can't find any. So you goblins are going to have to find costumes and firework effects, and plan and rehearse a spectacular dance sequence for a party this evening. Go.

THE TIME TRAVELLER'S STRIFE – So there was this wizard (again. There are always wizards). And you only had a tiny sip of her time-travelling potion before she beat you on the head with her magical staff and chased you out of her workshop. And now every time you burp you travel backwards five minutes in time. I mean, you'll barely notice it, except if you're called on to serve at the Great Banquet and keep dropping things because you've travelled backwards in time. I mean if you work it out right you might be able to warn yourself not to drink the potion in the first place, assuming you don't burp yourself to death trying to do so. Or you might just see what else you can do with this interesting 'power'.

PLAYING WITH A GAMESMASTER

ALTHOUGH GOBLIN QUEST IS DESIGNED TO BE PLAYED without a Gamesmaster – that's someone who doesn't play goblins, and instead takes control of the world and everyone else in it - it can be played with one as well. Here are a few roles that you might consider when playing the game:

Gamesmaster

The Gamesmaster does everything they would do in a normal RPG, aside from making up the plot. (For a better guide to being a gamesmaster than I can fit in here, Google “How to be a Gamesmaster” and work outwards from there.)

They are in charge of describing and voicing Non-Player Characters, taking control of the world and setting scenes. As the GM, you'll be instrumental in guiding players through the process of making their quest, and helping them to collate them into something that'll fit into two hours of play.

Quite often, players will say things like: “I'm going to do this!” and then roll their dice and look up at you, expectantly, as though you have something relevant to say as to the outcome; work with them to interpret dice results and form a narrative. You also get to be in charge of goblin deaths, which is always fun.



Rat-Nose Hogan, who is trying to distract you from something so he can clobber you with his club

If you're playing with younger players, having a Gamesmaster on hand to guide them through the world can really help them enjoy the game. It also lets you play a Straight Man to their wacky adventures, which underlines how funny they are.

Facilitator

"Facilitator" is a fancy word for "person who makes stuff happen." Every game of Goblin Quest will need a facilitator to learn the rules and keep the game ticking along – if you own this book, odds are it'll be you. Make sure you get to play your own goblins, too, if that's a thing you want to do!

Cartographer

Drawing on the map can be tricky to do well, and it's often expensive or awkward to print out a separate map for each player. If you'd like, elect a willing artist to take on the role of Cartographer and do all the sketching.

Questmaster

Keeping track of the progress on the quest can be a bit dull, so if one person agrees to always do it they become the Questmaster. It's their responsibility to mark down successes when they're earned and inform the group when their tasks succeed. Be nice to the Questmaster. Give them biscuits.



*Krich the Faceless,
so called because he
accidentally burnt it off*

EXAMPLES OF EVERYTHING IN THE CHARACTER CREATION SECTION

First Names

Gob	Rippit	Bingo
Fink	Ankle	Finger
Jank	Hole	Hax
Wink	Killy	Moppet
Slack	Vex	Plop
Zip	Draggit	Split
What?	Puff	Kanker
Who?	Likkitt	Mudder
Plink	Kutt	Moley
Snot	Yank	Scratchy
Lax	Red	Hatey
Spit	Swish	
Klack-o	Parp	



Surnames

Many-teeth	of the Bit Out Back of	the Not-Supposed-To-
Bloodpaw	The Pub	Be-Here
Razormouth	of the Badger-Killers	the Short
Scratch-scratch	of the Two Fingered	who Smells Bad
Quick-finger	Salute	who is Ugly
Red-eye	of the Mudborn	who said That Thing
You Git	Avengers	About Our Rippit
of the Black Pit	of the Useless Idiots	with the Face
of the Grey Mist	the Keg Killer	
	the Cowardly	

Expertises

Brewers	Food	Creating Distractions
Brawler's	Burrowing	Absorbing Enemy Fire
Thieves	Hiding	Not Blending In
Trappers	Destroying Evidence	Making Loud Noises to
Artists	Lying	Draw Attention
Entertainers	Breaking stuff	
Furniture	Making It Look Like You	
Cooks	Can Read and Write	

Heirlooms

The Half-A-Sword	The Crossbow of Occasional Function	The Bit of Wood That Totally Came Off a Wizard's Staff, Honest
The Badger Whistle	The Dented Brass Tankard That Once Held Beer	The Book of Writing (Contains Actual Words)
The Bag o' Screws	The Eyeglasses of Seeing (Things That Are Close To You)	The Banana Skin of Falling Over With Hilarious Consequences
The Orc's Helmet	The Bucket of Holes That Doubles as a Hat	The Box of Concealment
The Hobgoblin's Pen	The Vorpall Nail-Scissors	
The Bugbear's Tattered Cloak		
The Boot of Humankind		
The Roll-ups of Smoking		
The Pool-Ball in a Sock of Destiny		

Quirks/Defining Characteristics

Fat	Loves animals (unrequited)	Convinced They Can See Ghosts
Short	Under the Impression they have Magical Powers	Liar
Tall (For a Goblin)	Dreams of a Better Life	Double-jointed
Skinny	Athletic	One arm
Big Eyes	Sneaky	Noteworthy Hat
Big Nose	Colourful	Strange Piercings
Delicious-Smelling	Obvious	Covered in (Stolen) Feathers
Wears improvised armour	Amphibious	Vibrates, Constantly
Shifty-looking		
Hates animals		

FROG CROAKLEY'S ADVENTURE IDEAS AND GOBLIN CLASSES

FROG CROAKLEY (NOT HIS REAL NAME) IS A GUY I met on Twitter. He's really funny, and he offered to write some stuff for me, so I took him up on it and here we are. It's really wonderful stuff, especially the character classes:

Ten Adventures!

SPYING ON BEARS — Bears from the nearby woods have been blundering into the camp and pushing over all the bins. This won't do. Time to sneak in amongst them and take out their leader. The method of infiltration? Loads of goblins inside a dead bear, operating it with sticks and ropes like a sort of furry, rotting tank. What could possibly go wrong?

ORC LIFE COACHING — A mighty orc chieftain has lost his nerve and gone to hide in a cave after a particularly harrowing day in The War. Without him, the Army of Evil is suffering even more horrendous losses than usual, and he's just too tough to be convinced back to the front with punching. Do you have what it takes to give him the confidence and self-belief he needs to stop his relentless introspection and get back to the fight?

THE FOREVER HORN — A magical drinking horn has fallen from the Black Tower into the Bin District, and whatever the goblins do to drain it, it won't empty — the drink inside just grows more potent. You're going to show the camp that there's a limit to the horn's magic — or die of massive organ failure while trying.

BENCHPRESSING A HORSE — Hearing the orcs boast about the livestock they can lift into the air has finally made you snap. You don't care what they say. With the right nutrition, training and sheer determination, a goblin can match even the most gruesome displays of orcish strength. You're going to benchpress a horse.

ANCIENT GREASE — The wizards have a problem. The great vault of boiling fat under the Black Tower where the army's daily fry-ups are prepared has been infested with gribby centipede demon things, and the kitchen schedule is being severely disrupted. Take up the task of ridding the vault of pests - while secretly scheming to steal as much meat as possible before the wizards twig that you're doing nothing to address the infestation.



OBJECTION! — Tired of being constantly booted around and trodden underfoot by the orcs, you hatch a plan to sneak a stack of fancy legal textbooks from the hobgoblins, learn to read, and become the finest legal minds of your generation. The end goal? Sue every orc in the camp for Being Bad and secure a mountain of gold in compensation.

BEETLE BATTLES — It's a dull week at the Dun Inn, and you've decided to use your collection of revolting insects to become a kingpin sports promoter. Win round the bugbears, run a series of thrilling invertebrate deathmatches, and make dizzying profits from illicit betting operations.

DUTY AND THE FEAST — The wizards have expended considerable energy in fashioning a golem from the stolen bones of famous chefs, in order to cook them a relentless stream of perfect haute cuisine. And you've accidentally boiled its bits to make a foul goblin soup. Barricaded in the kitchens of the Black Tower, how long can you fool the wizards into thinking their masterpiece is still functioning before they work out what's going on and turn you into hors d'oeuvres?

A LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVES — Tired of the reeking claustrophobia of the Green Pits, you've decided to get together a greasy crew of restless adventure types and set sail for a nautical life. Unfortunately, you're going to have to build a boat out of filthy rubbish and scrounged scrap, and all you have to sail it on is the festering swamp that borders the western wall of the Great Battle Camp.

BUSINESS TIME — Having found a ragged, sweat-drenched pinstripe suit in the waste mounds out the back of the Grey Wards, you have decided to make a name for yourself as the shrewdest, most savvy monstrepreneur in the whole camp. Whether by selling cleverly labelled urine to the bugbears, charging orcs to throw your mates into a hole, or providing strategic consultancy to the hobgoblins, you're going to make enough money to buy... another pinstripe suit to wear on top of the first one.

Ten Character Classes

RUMMAGER — You are an expert in frantically, messily looking for things. Sometimes you even find them. No matter how much cursing, fumbling and hurling things over your shoulder into a fire is required, you won't give up the search until you've got whatever wossname, wuzzit or fing you set out to find.

PEE CHAMP — As a result of a hammered orc having a majestically long wee right into the spawning pits on the day you were made, you came into the world with limited and haphazard elemental control over urine. You can make it fly through the air, float around in clouds, and even pool into semi-recognisable animal shapes – sometimes. Usually it just goes all over everything, making comedy slide whistle noises in the process.

REVERSE BEASTMASTER — In an unfortunate inversion of the more familiar skill, you find yourself unable to resist the whims of animals. As a result, your day-to-day activities are repeatedly interrupted as you rush to obey the commands of birds, or start smashing your head into a boulder because “you're pretty sure a bee said to do it.”

GHOST ROARER — When the going gets tough, you draw on the spiritual strength of your greasy ancestors, and roar up a ghost. This is a lot like being protractedly and violently sick, only loads of mist comes out instead of vomit, and it starts moaning weakly at people.

HAMMERMANCER — You make animals into hammers. While they're still alive. It's utterly harrowing, and everyone wishes you would stop. But you don't listen. You're too busy merrily smashing nails into a wall with a sledgehammer made out of two despairing foxes and a pigeon.





MEAT THIEF — Stealing steaks, purloining loins, pilfering poultry. Appropriating roasts. Borrowing beef. Rustling ribs and pinching pork. Butchers beware: no matter the cut, you'll do whatever it takes to get it into your gristly hands and squirrelled away in an 'orrible pocket.

CRUSTACEAN SHEPHERD — Born with an affinity for what you lovingly refer to as "the old snipple snapple", you devote your life to coercing a growing swarm of clickety-clackety arthropods into following you wherever you go. Capering on bandy legs and blowing on a hopelessly bent tin flute, you are loyally followed by a carpet of woodlice, crayfish, crabs and copepods like a sort of rubbish pied piper.

CATERPILLAR RIDER — "Giddy up, grubbles!" you cry, tugging the reins to convince your larval steed into a steady canter. But it's no use — he has pupated and won't be doing anything until he turns into a moth in a couple of weeks. (You cannot ride moths.)

BIN LUNGER — Sometimes, the difference between life and death is being able to lunge really, really hard into a bin, and that's what has kept you in one piece until now. So long as there's a waste receptacle handy, there's something for you to leap headlong into and lurk inside until the danger has passed.

PRETEND VAMPIRE — An ancient curse that gives you the strength of ten goblins and an undying thirst for blood, or just a sodden black sheet, two fairly pointy carrots, and a bag of hastily applied chalk dust? In a dark enough alley, with a drunk enough opponent, and with little enough time in which to make a decision, there is a very thin line between the two. That's been enough to keep you alive so far. With a little luck, you could keep the pretence up for another few hours

PLAYER NAME: _____

CLUTCH

Honorific: _____

Expertise: _____

Quirk: _____

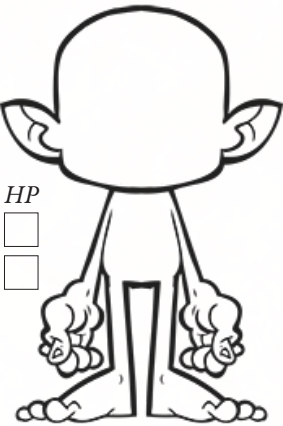
Dream: _____

Ancestral Heirloom:
The _____

GOBLIN

Name: _____

Defining Feature: _____



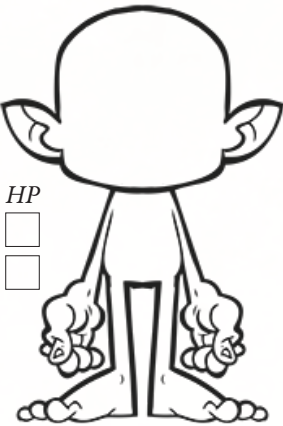
HP
☐
☐

Means of Death: _____

GOBLIN

Name: _____

Defining Feature: _____



HP
☐
☐

Means of Death: _____

QUEST:

TASK ONE

Stage 1: ☐

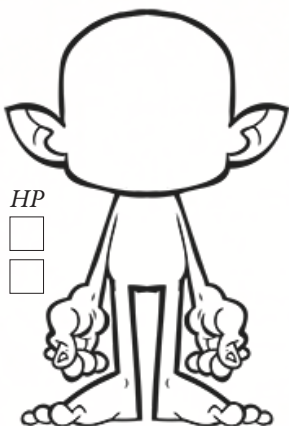
Stage 2: ☐

Stage 3: ☐

GOBLIN

Name: _____

Defining Feature: _____

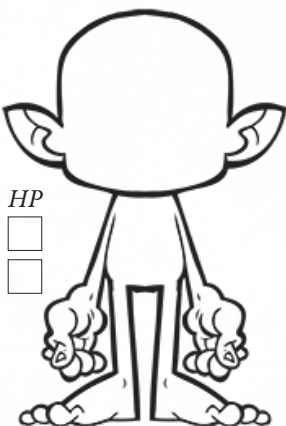


Means of Death: _____

GOBLIN

Name: _____

Defining Feature: _____

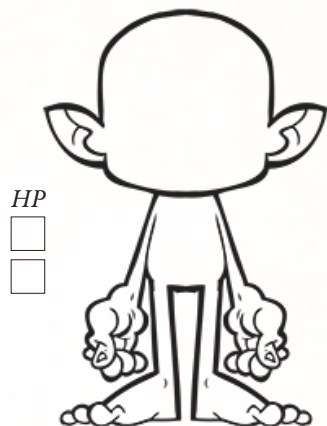


Means of Death: _____

GOBLIN

Name: _____

Defining Feature: _____



Means of Death: _____

TASK TWO

Stage 1: _____

☐

Stage 2: _____

☐

Stage 3: _____

☐

TASK THREE

Stage 1: _____

☐

Stage 2: _____

☐

Stage 3: _____

☐



RULES HACKS

WHAT FOLLOWS NOW – taking up slightly more space than the core rules themselves, thanks to my wildly enthusiastic Kickstarter backers – are the rules hacks, a series of tweaks and twists to the main game that let you use it to tell different stories. While I’ve done my best to make these as accessible and playable as possible, I’ve tried not to repeat rules to save on space – so you might have to flick back and forth a bit.

Unless a game says differently, assume that it uses the basic rules of *Goblin Quest*. If that doesn’t make sense, make something up, or drop me a message through my website to clarify.

RULES HACK: KOBOLD QUEST

KOBOLD QUEST FOLLOWS A LOT OF THE SAME THEMES as Goblin Quest – small creatures failing miserably to achieve their aims thanks to over-complicated solutions. It should play out a little faster than standard Goblin Quest. You'll need some index cards to play, or at least some regularly-sized pieces of paper, so you can build your contraptions. Post-it notes work pretty well too. Other characters that fit well into the Kobold Quest rules are: gnomes, ratmen, dwarven engineers, and the lackeys of mad scientists.

You might find the game works better with groups of four or five players, for the eventual contraption payoff gag to really work – with two or three players, you might want to increase the number of pieces of equipment each gang gets their hands on to three.

You are a kobold, a scaly lizard beast of a thing, a scrawny runt with wicked little glinting eyes. Imagine a dragon crossed with a rat crossed with a feral child, and you're not far off. Your talents are: ganging up on things, building elaborate contraptions that often just injure the user, and weaselling your way out of trouble.

You are in a gang with your brothers, sisters, cousins, half-cousins, cronies, half-cronies, lackeys, rivals, and possibly your mum. You

Step One: Name your gang. Things like “The Scale Boys” and “Johnny Tooth and the Scratchers” and “The Red Talons” and “The Egg Smashers” are good. Something cool and draconic and mean-sounding.

Step Two: As in Goblin Quest, come up with an Expertise and Distinguishing Feature for your gang. Also, pick one of the following Specialities for your gang of builders. Every gang must have a different speciality because of ancient labour laws.

When you construct part of a Contraption that makes the correct noise, add 1 dice when you use it.

Kobolds don't get Dreams or Ancestral Heirlooms. (They have pockets full of junk, like string and cogs and little pots of glue, instead of Heirlooms. And instead of Dreams they all adore the Mighty Dragon King and want to please him.)

Step Three: Decide what's lucky, as normal.

Step Four: Name and describe your first Kobold, and give them a quirk. Kobold names tend towards the dragon worshipping end of the spectrum, so “Yellow-eye” or “Wingmonster” or “Tailslap” or “Firebreath” or “Scaly” or “Roary” are acceptable names. Some kobolds use human names, because they think it makes them sound taller, so things “Paul” and “Jerome” and “Sandra Higginsbotham” are also popular.

Do the same for your other four kobolds.

SPECIALITIES:

Things That Go Whirr

Things That Go Brum

Things That Go Bzzzzt

Things That Go Boom

Things That Go Grrrrr

Things That Go Squawk

Things That Go Toot

Things That Go Splat

Things That Go -Sound
Of Decapitation -

Step Five: Practice your kobold voice. Imagine that a small yappy dog had learned to speak, and that it's got you cornered in a dark alleyway, and is now attempting to persuade you to hand over your wallet. That sort of thing. Go "yip!" a lot.

Optional Step Six: You want to draw your kobolds? That's a thing you can do. I'd encourage that. But you've got a lot of drawing to do in this game, so don't use up all your creativity just yet.

Welcome to the Underdungeon

You live in the Underdungeon, a sprawling network of disused mines, mysterious tunnels, natural caves, and underground seas. (There's a map at the end of this hack.) At the centre of it all is the Mighty Dragon King, sitting on his pile of gold, with legions of kobolds under his direct command. An uneasy truce keeps the various denizens of the Underdungeon – the gruff dwarfs, mysterious fishmen, and flighty drow – from killing each other, but they certainly don't like each other.

The Mighty Dragon King Delivers A Terrible Proclamation

Your lord and master The Mighty Dragon King has called upon your collected gangs to undertake a dangerous mission. It's fun to have one player play the Mighty Dragon King – if you have a GM, use the GM. If not, the player with the most teeth should be the Mighty Dragon King for the start of the game, and they get to choose the mission. They also have to talk in a silly, haughty voice. Here are ten suitable decrees for the Mighty Dragon King to issue – pick one you like the sound of:

"I'M HUNGRY FOR **PRINCESSES**. BRING ME BREAKFAST, LUNCH, AND DINNER!"

"MY BACK ITCHES **ALL THE TIME**. FIX THAT FOR ME!"

"SOME **ADVENTURERS** ARE GETTING DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO MY GLITTERING HOARD – STOP THEM!"

"I CAN'T GET THIS BLASTED **SHOE** OFF! SERIOUSLY, IT'S REALLY STUCK ON THERE."

"THE DWARVES HAVE A BIG VAULT FULL OF **GOLD** IN THEIR TERRITORY. BRING THE GOLD TO ME!"

"I THINK THOSE FISHMEN ARE LAUGHING AT ME BEHIND MY BACK. **HUMILIATE** THEM IN PUBLIC!"

"I WANT A PONY. FIND ONE. FIND A **NICE** ONE."

"I ATE A GNOME LAST NIGHT AND NOW I'VE GOT TERRIBLE, FIERY INDIGESTION. **URRRP**. SOLVE THIS!"

"THE DROW ARE PERFORMING AN OPERA TONIGHT. I WANT AN OPERA. CONVINCE THE DROW SINGERS TO COME AND PERFORM FOR ME. MAKE SURE THE PLAY IS ABOUT **ME** AND HOW GREAT I AM."

"I'VE GOT ANOTHER DRAGON KING POPPING OVER FOR DINNER, AND I NEED YOU TO MAKE A TRAP THAT'LL KILL HIM **STONE DEAD** BEFORE WE GET TO DESERT BECAUSE IT'S TRIFLE AND I WANT ALL OF IT."

The Mighty Dragon King can answer three questions about his decree (make up the answers, try to be as awkward as possible) before he gets bored. On the fourth question, instead of answering it, he immediately eats a kobold, and repeats this for the fifth and any subsequent questions.

If you're feeling adventurous, pick two at random and combine the decrees – so the Mighty Dragon King wants an opera, for example, but it has to star a pony. Or he's embarrassed at the fishmen for mocking his explosive burps. You get the idea.

Our Brave Kobolds Design A Marvellous Contraption

Once you've received your royal decree from the Mighty Dragon King you must set out to please your master at once. Of course, the best solution to any problem (as all kobolds know) is to build an over-complicated contraption to solve it for you. You'll all work together to build a Contraption, then push the big red button(s) and watch everything go swimmingly.

Contraptions are multi-part OK-GO/Rube Goldberg-style, Mousetrap-lookin', semi-functional machines that operate on kobold logic, which is to say, not much logic at all. Any machine made up of less than four distinct parts is, in kobold eyes, inferior.

Write down two things that you believe are vital to the Contraption on index cards. You can discuss this as a group, or you can keep it secret, or some players can do one and some do the other – it's up to you.

Here are some ideas for useful things: a bucket, a battery, a trumpet, a cage, a realistic dummy, soup, a wet fish, a dog on a string, a basket of chickens, a dwarven pistol, a vial of dark elf poison, fishmen breathing apparatus, a treadmill, landmines, smoke bombs, a pot of very sticky glue, a beehive, official princess disguise (requires four spare kobolds to operate), a boot on a stick, and one of those nodding bird things that pretends to sip water. Don't worry about how it will fit in now – just go with your vision.

The Kobolds Stage a Heist

Reveal your required apparatus to the rest of the kobolds. Now, working as a team, all the kobolds are going to work together to try and steal the items they need – the Mighty Dragon King has deep coffers, but he prefers it when his subjects find their own supplies.

Shuffle the cards face-down, then flip them over one at a time. When you reveal a piece of equipment, pick a player to point on the map where it's located. The player sitting to their right says what kind of threats they're likely to find there.

Play out the heists as you would Stages of the plan in Goblin Quest with the following changes:

Each heist has a "difficulty rating" equal to the number of players.

You only get one turn to complete your heist – after that, you have to bug out of there. If you don't get enough victories to complete your heist, look at the section below.

Once all the heists are complete – for better or worse – move on to the Assembly stage.

Keith, Hannah, and Leigh are playing Kobold Quest. Keith flips over a card, and it reads "A bear." He points at Hannah and asks: "Okay, where's the bear?" Hannah points at the dwarven section on the map. "The dwarves have it in a sort of circus." Keith looks to Leigh, who's sat on Hannah's right, and says "What are the threats?" "Aside from the fact that it's a bear," says Leigh, "it's being guarded by dwarven acrobats, who are grumpy because dwarves aren't very good at acrobatics."

The Kobolds Are Disappointed But Strive On Regardless

Kobolds are under a lot of time pressure from the Mighty Dragon King, so they often have to make do with inferior materials. After a heist, work out what you earned by consulting the table below, where N is the number of players. (For our examples, we'll assume that the player wanted to find "a big scary bear.")

$N+1$ or more victories:

You get a BETTER version of what you want. Ask another player what it is that you get in addition. (*Not only is it a scary bear, but it's a scary bear trained in the ancient art of chainsaw juggling!*)

N victories: You got what you set out to find. (*A big scary bear!*)

$N-1$ victories: You get what you want, but there's something wrong with it. Ask another player what's wrong. (*There's a bear, but it's sleepy, and really heavy.*)

$N-2$ victories: You an inferior version of what you wanted. Ask another player what you get. (*Okay, so this cat is pretty mean, but it's no bear.*)

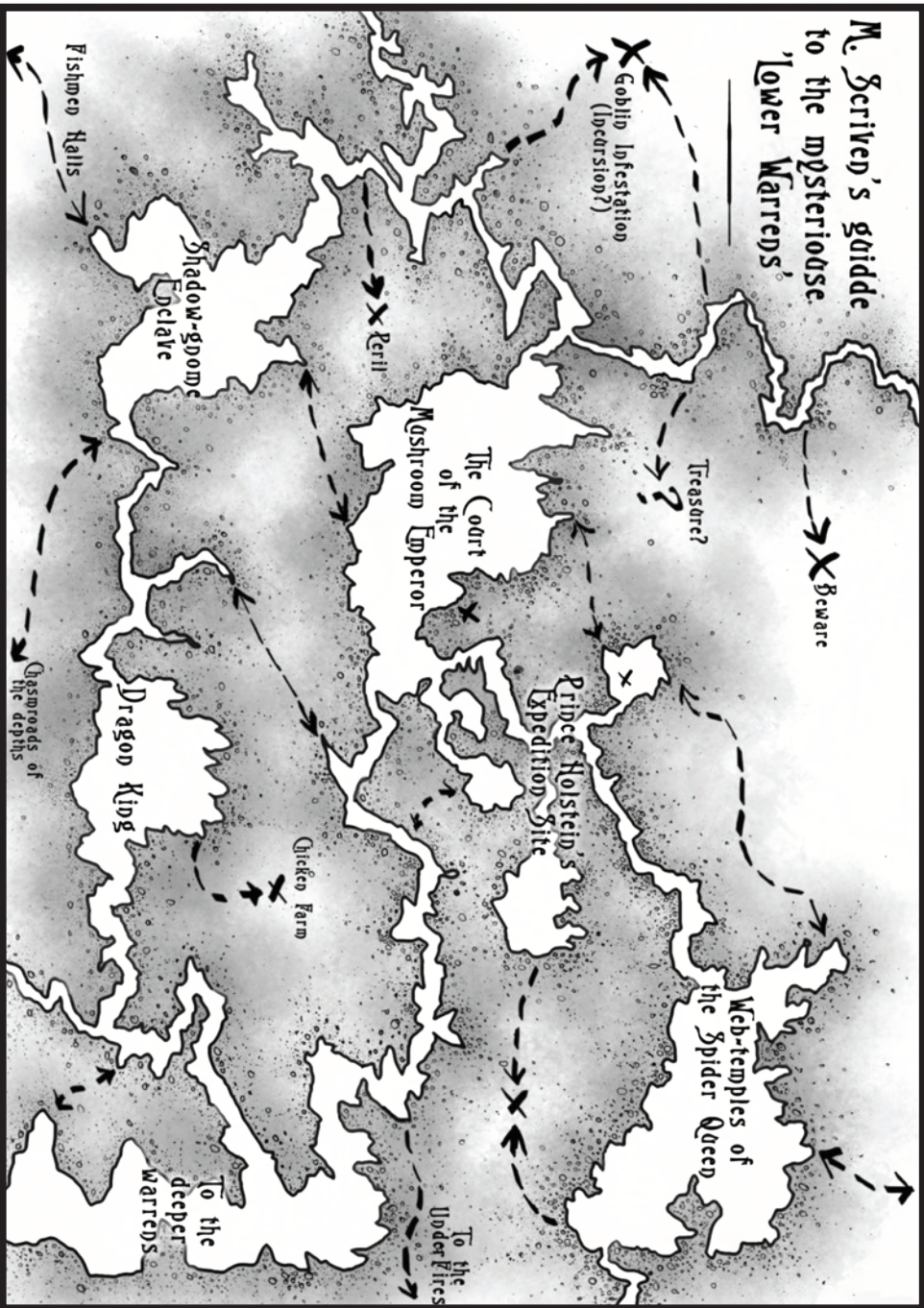
$N-3$ or fewer: You get a completely useless version of the thing you wanted. Ask another player to describe what it is. (*This bear is tiny and fluffy and adorable. Bah!*)

Draw your equipment on one of your index cards, and put two arrows on it – one for input, that goes in, and for for output, that goes out. Put input on the left of the card and output on the right. (Don't worry about the particulars, if you can't think of what the input or output is – just draw two arrows on it.) Somewhere on the card, mark an X for each victory the team got in the heist that acquired it – that'll show how useful it is in the final scene.

Feel free to embellish your equipment with cogs, pulleys, levers, spinning things, ropes, swinging weights, electrical sockets, and so on.



M. Scriver's guide to the mysterious 'Lower Warrens'



The Kobolds Build The Contraption By Committee

It's showtime. Decide, as a group, where you're building the contraption on the world map. Starting with the shortest player, go round the table anti-clockwise place your equipment face-up to build a contraption. Aside from the first card, here are the rules on placing cards:

Each card must touch at least one other card. (You can overlap if you want.)

A card's input must align with an already-placed card's output or its output must align with an already-placed card's input unless it would be funnier if you put it somewhere else.

Once all the cards are in play, the contraption – the squeaking, whirring, buzzing, humming, creaking, wobbly contraption – is complete. It should go (roughly) from right to left, although the path might well bend a bit to take account of table space and unruly output arrows. Time to solve the problem. Time to please the Mighty Dragon King

Throwing Caution to the Wind, Our Heroes Push the Big Red Button

Once the machine starts, you can't turn it off – but, hopefully, it'll solve the problem! Or, you know. Kill you. At which point you don't have to worry about the problem! The final scene has a difficulty of the Number of players $\times 3$, with the following special rule:

EXPLOSIVE SIXES. Someone's rigged these sixes to blow! How unsafe.

Anyway, if you roll a 6, claim a victory and roll another dice immediately.

Work out which is the leftmost piece of the machine – i.e. the bit that feeds into everything else. The player that constructed it describes what happens when it activates and rolls a number of dice equal to the number of X's marked on the card. If they make the noise that matches their expertise as part of their description, they add another dice to their pool.

Resolve the roll as normal; your kobolds are scampering around, making sure the machine works, and inevitably getting caught in the workings and dying horribly.

Move on to the next section of contraption, and repeat the process with the player who contributed that piece. If you have a piece of equipment that doesn't follow the input/output rules, use your common sense on when to resolve it.

The End

If you exceed the total difficulty rating of the scene before you run out of machine, congrats! You've solved the problem, and the Mighty Dragon King is pleased with you! Run through the rest of the machine without rolling dice and describe the outcome. Go around the table and each describe one lavish gift he bequeaths to you as thanks.

If you *don't* succeed before you run out of machine, bad news. Your contraption goes spectacularly wrong – work out exactly how, and what it does as a result, by going around the table and each adding a detail to the chaos. (Go twice, if you want to.) The Mighty Dragon King is displeased, and measures out punishment on each of you – punishment fitting to your crime!

When you're done, take a photo of your machine. If you want. I'd want to.

RULES HACK: MY NAME IS INIGO MONTOKA JR

THIS IS A STRUCTURED, GM-LESS GAME for around five players. It's a silly action romp with a strong focus on revenge, so you could use it to represent pulp adventure, Three-Musketeers-style derring-do, duelling samurai, hong kong action theatre, wild-west gunslingers, or drama on the high seas. If you're not convinced that having your characters die over and over is relevant for a story about revenge (which is fair) then you could simply have a single character with 10 wounds.

You're a 18th-century swordfighter. Someone killed your father. Or your mother. Or your brother. Your teacher, maybe? They were important to you, anyway, and some scoundrel has killed them, and you've sworn revenge.

Setting Up

AS A GROUP, PICK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING NAMES. This is who you are ALL avenging: the Deceased. Write it down in big letters on a sheet of paper and stick it in the centre of the table. **NEXT, WORK OUT THE IDENTITY OF THE VILLAIN.** Take it in turn to write down one fact each that you know about the murderer – something that will help you track them down. A few suggestions:

They have a shock of bright red hair

They have a penchant for wearing elaborate ballgowns

They wield two rapiers simultaneously, in the French style

Wherever they go, fire follows close

They employ trained animals as spies, retainers and bodyguards

They smoke a silly-looking pipe filled with pungent tobacco

They wear a distinctive wig

The Deceased

Roderigo Dominguez
Ferreira

Freda Del Almazzar

Jacques Montague

Helena April Cooper

Hans Bergmann

Masamune Shihiro







Write these all down on a sheet of paper and leave it in the centre of the table.

WRITE DOWN THE NAME OF YOUR FIRST SWORDFIGHTER. Have a think about what they look like and who they are.

DETERMINE WHERE THEIR ENTHUSIASM LIES. You can choose to be enthusiastic about either Swordfighting or Everything Else. When you act in accordance with your enthusiasm, you add an extra dice to your roll. (It's assumed that Swordfighting covers all combat actions, because swordfighting is the best kind of fighting.)

DETERMINE HOW YOU WERE CONNECTED TO THE DECEASED by rolling on the table below. Alternatively, if you have a great idea for a connection, just use that instead. (If you want to connect your swordfighter to another player's character, go for it. That's good. That's a thing you should be doing. Roll on the table if you want.)

They were your...

-  Spouse (or lover)
-  Parent (or step-parent, or legal guardian)
-  Teacher
-  Rival
-  Sibling (or half-sibling, or cousin)
-  Best friend

You have five swordfighters each; if they all die, use the standard NPC rules from *Goblin Quest* (see p47).

Rolling Dice

Play as you would *Goblin Quest* – announce actions, roll dice, and interpret the results.

When you act, roll two dice and interpret both results.

When you act in accordance with your enthusiasm, roll three dice and interpret all three.

When you give The Speech, add a dice to your roll for every character preceding you in your quest for revenge. You may only do this once per character.

When you take advantage of your sword school training, you may re-roll your dice. You may only do this once per scene.



When Your Character Dies, Do The Following

Roll a relationship to tie your next character to the one that just died. If this doesn't make any sense, work at it until it does.

Name your new character.

Determine where their enthusiasm lies – Sword-fighting or Everything Else.

Create a new sword school for them, if you want..

Introduce your new character in a spectacular style.

If your fifth character dies, you are out of characters. Use the NPC rules from *Goblin Quest*.

If everyone's fifth character dies, the game is over, and you have failed. Start a fresh quest for revenge.



INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CHARACTER

Your swordfighter is going to die. When they do, it's up to you to introduce your next character as soon as possible. Here are some sample ways of introducing your character:

Jumping in through a window

Kicking in the door

Riding a horse in a place that horses shouldn't go

Emerging from a side-door, having been listening all along

Tearing open the painting with the eyes cut out that they were hiding behind

Throwing off their disguise as one of the villain's henchmen

Seeing the actions of their master, the Villain, they form a new allegiance with the party

They were disguised as the previous character, and now throw off that false identity

Descending from the rafters on a rope

Rescued from prison

Blowing up the wall and emerging from the smoke and debris

Something involving a chandelier

Your character will generally know what's going on; they're here to avenge some deaths, after all. But how do they know what's going on? Here are a few ideas:

- Extensive correspondence with previous character
- Not-quite-psyhic link with previous character
- Has been spying on previous character for quite a while
- Has been with the party all along, in disguise
- Has been with the party all along, but didn't want to speak up until just now
- Hunting the previous character to bring them to justice, but now wishes to avenge them
- Takes a wild guess at what's going on, is surprisingly correct
- Is a wizard

Introduce your new character. Make it dramatic. Other players – welcome the new character into the group, even if it's with a measure of distrust.

The Speech

We all know the speech. (*You don't know the speech? Good heavens, go and watch The Princess Bride immediately.*) You want to give the speech. I want to give the speech. That's understandable. Who wouldn't want to give the speech? Here's the problem – listening to other people give the speech all night is going to be very boring.

So here's a rule: every character can, **once**, give The Speech. (*The speech is: "My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die," but you replace the names and relationships with appropriate ones for your story.*)

When you give The Speech, you add a dice to your roll for every other dead character preceding you in your elaborate quest for revenge, **including the deceased**, that you mention in the speech. You can only mention your own dead characters, not those of other players. (*Inigo would add a single dice. If he were to die and his friend to carry on his quest for revenge, they'd add two.*)

DO I HAVE TO DELIVER THE SPEECH DIRECTLY TO THE VILLAIN?

You do not. (Inigo doesn't, more often than not.) Instead, think of the speech as you steeling yourself against difficult tasks, or a threat; say it to yourself, or to another character, or to a horse, or whatever.

Alex's character's name is Francine LaFayette; she's their third character, the previous two being Jean LaFayette (her brother) and Luc Montague, his lover. The Deceased's name is Jacques Montague, who was Luc's Father, and he was killed by a shadowy figure known only as The Duke.

Francine kicks in a door to discover that she's surrounded by the Duke's guards. She draws her sabre, and says, in an unconvincing French accent: "I am here to kill The Duke. He killed Jacques Montague, father of Luc Montague, who was lover to my brother Jean LaFayette – and I will have my revenge. En garde!"

That's four people, in total, which adds four dice to the roll. Seeing as Francine's expertise is in Sword-Fighting, that's seven dice overall.

There's one problem – if you get it **wrong** – you stumble over pronunciation, get the names or relationships wrong, pause for too long, or whatever – **your character is immediately and messily killed**. So for the love of God, get it right.

Once you've given your speech, you can't give it again until you get a new character.

The Plot

As this is a GMless game, the plot follows an ordered structure to keep things on an even keel.

THE KILLING

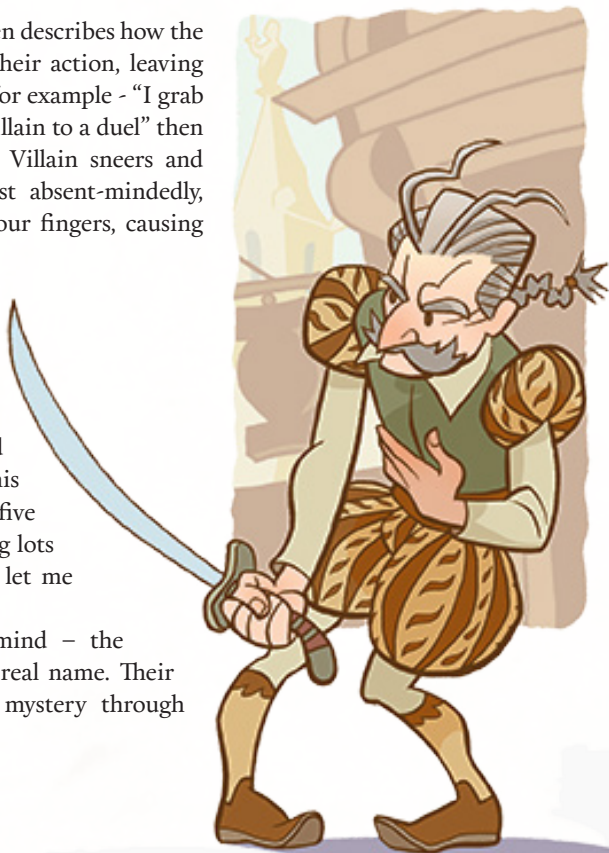
In the first scene, the characters witness the murder of the deceased, and are rebuffed by the Villain. Go around the table and take it in turns to establish a fact about the scene – *“We are in a communal dining hall,” “We are travelling through the countryside,” “It is the height of summer and we are baking hot,” “the Villain approaches and orders us to be silent,”* etc.

Go back to the first player who established a fact. They describe an action their character performs – *“I rush up and grab a sword from the rack,” “I cry out for the Villain to take me instead,” “I leap on a horse and rush to warn the guard,” “I try to get the townsfolk to safety,”* etc.

The player to their left then describes how the Villain completely negates their action, leaving them powerless. If they say, for example - “I grab a sword and challenge the Villain to a duel” then the response might be “The Villain sneers and slashes at your hand almost absent-mindedly, opening up a gash across your fingers, causing you to drop the weapon.”

Go around the table and repeat this process until the Villain has killed the Deceased and gone about their business, leaving you battered and bruised but ready for revenge. (This shouldn't take longer than five minutes. Unless you're having lots of fun, in which case don't let me stop you.)

One thing to bear in mind – the Villain NEVER states their real name. Their identity should be kept a mystery through whatever means possible.



THE TRAINING

Next, of course, embittered, you will train for many years to become a swordfighter. That's just the sort of person you are.

Create your sword school. Describe the Swordmaster who taught you; chip in a sentence or two about your training. Name the style which you've learned. Here are some examples: Cape-and-Rapier, Flashing Saber Style, Rolling Wave, Way of 10,000 Cuts, Drunken Fencing, The Off-Hand Cannon Gambit, Zweihander Über Alles, etc.

You can change your sword school between characters, if you fancy it. In fact, that sounds like fun. Do that.

THE INVESTIGATION

Remember those facts you established about the Villain right at the start of the game? It's time for them to come into play, as they'll form the basis for the bulk of the story.

Your swordfighters gather together after years of training and swear revenge. Look at the first fact written down – the player who came up with it leads this scene. They ask the following questions to players of their choosing, or answer them themselves aloud:

How has this fact helped us trace the villain?

To what location does this information lead us?

What dangers await us there?

Once these questions have been answered, they set the scene – and generally make the first action. They're then in charge of keeping track of the difficulty of the scene.

Each scene has a difficulty value of double the number of players, and a tipping point that's outlined in the next section.

Alex is playing My Name is Inigo Montoya Jr.

Their Deceased is Jacques Montague. After the killing and the training, their first character looks like this:

*Name: Francine Lafayette
Deceased was: My Father
Enthusiasm: Sword-fighting
School: Pouncing Lioness*

Alex is leading the first scene which is based around: "The Villain rides everywhere in a hot air balloon." The other players are Theo, Frances and James.

Alex asks Theo: "How has this fact helped us trace the Villain?"

Theo responds. "We've found a hot air balloon race that we're pretty sure the Villain is attending."

"Cool, okay." Alex looks at Frances. "Where does this take us?"

"To a balloon race, obviously," says Frances, "perhaps one over... Paris?"

"Sounds good. What dangers await us here, James?"

"I'd like to think that the Villain has rigged the race, so there are spies and henchmen everywhere in the other balloons."

"Perfect," says Alex. "Okay, the scene starts with the balloons seconds from ascending, and we need to steal one..."

TIPPING POINT

Unlike normal *Goblin Quest* scenes, all the scenes in *My Name is Inigo Montoya Jr* have a Tipping Point. Once half the Victories needed to complete a scene have been achieved, the Tipping Point kicks in. This is when something exciting happens, or something changes to keep everyone on their toes – here are some examples:

A henchman reveals themselves

A fire breaks out

A chase kicks off

Horses, right up in everyone's business

The characters are discovered

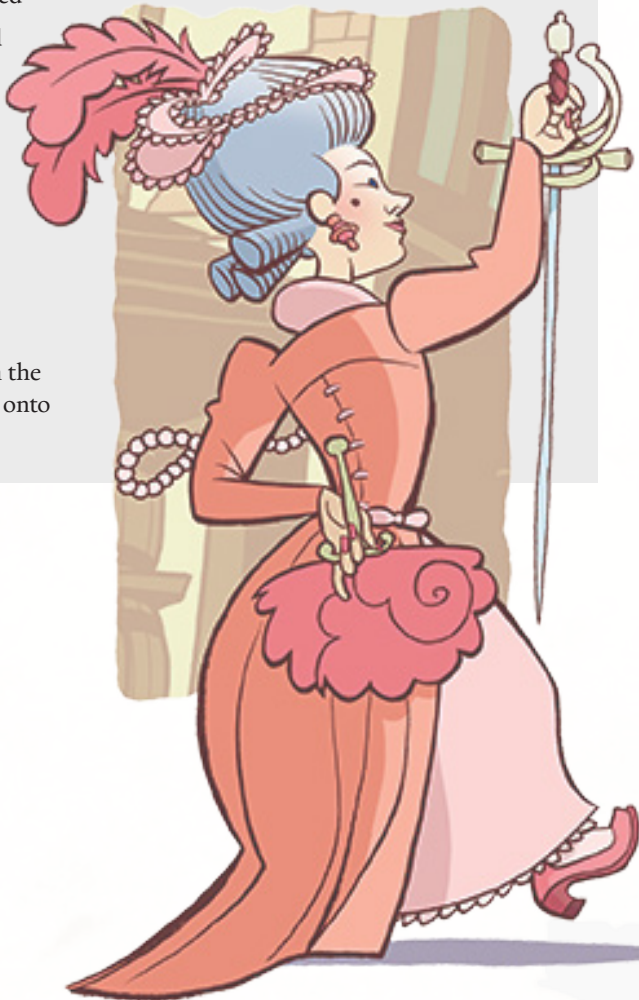
The characters hide, or find suitable disguises

Overwhelming force requires the characters to use stealth and subterfuge

The fight spills through into a ballroom dance

There's a sudden wedding

The villain gets the drop on the characters and forces them onto the defensive



Take the tempo of the scene and turn it on its head. If it's been slow up until now, make it fast. If it's been loud, make it quiet. If it's been violent, make it romantic. If it's been stupid, make it serious.

Whatever happens, the players won't catch the Villain – whether they're present in the scene or not – until they've hounded them for as many scenes as there are clues. They might well learn their name, or even catch a glimpse of them a couple of times, both of which are fine.

THE EVIL SCHEME

Once the players have worked their way through the list of facts, the Villain's evil scheme is clear to them; this isn't a simple mission of revenge, but one of great importance to the whole country. (Maybe even the world!) Go around the table and work out how the Villain is using their peculiar mannerisms to set up a plot that will cause great wrack and ruin to befall the nation.

THE FOILING

Time to get your revenge on. Infiltrate the Villain's lair and take them down! This scene has a difficulty rating of three times the number of players, and TWO tipping points – one at each third of the Victories needed. Instead of having a scene leader, the player who rolls the dice that takes the scene over the tipping point establishes what changes.

Congratulations! You've bested your nemesis, and all it took was the deaths of almost everyone you know.

Alex is still leading the scene, and the team have just rolled their fourth victory. Up until now, the scene has been fairly subtle – the swordfighters leapt on board a balloon, knocked out the occupants, and are flying close to the city to try and stay out of the way of the other racers.

Alex introduces a tipping point. "We're just inches away from the spire of the Notre Dame Cathedral when a rooftop cannon – operated by a moustachioed henchman – fires a round into our balloon, and we start losing hot air fast!"

RULES HACK: SEAN BEAN QUEST

YOU MIGHT THINK SEAN BEAN is just an actor; you're wrong. He is much more than that. A being from another dimension, Sean Bean is a mind-linked hive of individual consciousnesses, a swarm of individuals spread across reality.

And there is more. All those films, those TV programmes he's in? Those are documentaries. Those are actually happening. He exists throughout space, throughout time, throughout realities, stepping through the cracks between universes to be where he needs to be.

This is Sean Bean's curse; he is doomed to die a thousand times over, a million times perhaps, and we see his efforts as entertainment. The cosmic demon witch that cursed him when our earth was still hot to the touch decreed that if he should ever survive for the length of an entire story, then he will be freed from his torment. So far, he has yet to do so; but today, after a thousand lifetimes of misery, he will liberate himself. He will take control of his own destiny. He will die, finally, beautifully, on his own terms.

There is a mysterious portal somewhere that dispenses Sean Beans and chill northern winds, and around this now – this skyward rift, housed in an ancient citadel of bone-white marble – the Sean Beans gather. They will work together, now. They will focus their efforts. They will protect each other. One will die, and another will take his place.

They forge an Amulet of Undoing from their angst, their vitriol, and place it around the neck of one of their number. He will be The Chosen One, and he will star in a story so beautiful it makes men weep – and when he dies, his brothers will rise up and take the amulet, and become The Chosen One, and when he dies another will rise, and another, and another, until they reach the end of the story.

HEY, SEAN BEAN DOESN'T DIE IN EVERY FILM HE'S IN!

You're right. He survives to the end of *Silent Hill*. *Sharpe* still lives, although at time of writing it's been six years since he last fought. In *Ronin*, he just walks off after Bobby De Niro gets some coffee on him, and is never again referenced.

In fact – whisper it – Sean Bean has survived more films than he's not. That's the sort of thing you learn after you say you're going to write an entire game about him always dying.

All in all, the very premise of the Legend of Sean Bean seems flawed, but who are we to question the actions of the Cosmic Demon Witch, and her playthings, a mind-linked swarm of immortal consciousnesses all called Sean Bean? We are weak humans all, and our minds are not meant to plunge too deeply into such dark waters, lest they drown.

Creating Your Sean Beans

You, as a player, are in charge of five Sean Beans each. Like goblins, each Sean Bean has two wounds. When a Sean Bean loses both of his wounds, he dies.

NAME YOUR FIRST SEAN BEAN. This is easy, as his name is Sean Bean. All other Sean Beans are also called Sean Bean.

DECIDE WHAT CLASS OF SEAN BEAN YOUR SEAN BEAN IS GOING TO BE. Over the millennia, Sean Bean has developed into several distinct classes of Sean Bean. Roll an eight-sided dice to work out which one you are (or just pick one) and write it down. If you roll the same result as another player, re-roll until you get a different one.

ARE YOU SURE IT'S "SEAN BEANS?" SHOULDN'T IT BE "SEANS BEAN?"

I'm not sure, but I like "Sean Beans," and I'm writing this ridiculous game, so what I say goes. When you write a roleplaying game about a swarm of a single celebrity being played by all the players simultaneously, you can choose whatever naming convention you like.







- 1 **SHAKESPEARIAN BEAN:** He amongst all the Sean Beans is the most keenly aware of his curse. His strengths are his pride, his conviction, and his willingness to walk into dangerous situations.
- 2 **SHARPE BEAN:** A dashing warrior with no respect for the status quo. His strengths are his combat experience, toughness, and an ability to upset others.
- 3 **STARK BEAN:** A noble leader, if one a little behind the times. His strengths are honesty, tradition, and Doing The Right Thing.
- 4 **SPY BEAN:** A cunning man, if one hampered by hubris. His strengths are tenacity, ruthlessness, and ingenuity.
- 5 **SHOOTY BEAN:** A man of action, not words. His strengths are punching, shooting, and not talking.
- 6 **SCARY BEAN:** He's in charge, and you don't want him to be, because he's a Bad Man. His strengths are subterfuge, authority, and callousness.
- 7 **SEXY BEAN:** Ooh, what a hunk. His strengths are jawline, charm, and carrying you away from all this in his big strong arms.
- 8 **SEAN BEAN:** Does voiceovers, appears in public, takes part in the occasional interview show. His strengths are his looks, his gravelly voice, and his no-nonsense attitude.

(If you want to play a Sean Bean not represented in the roles below, feel free to make one up. Boromir is a good one, but it doesn't start with an S. Also, Mr Bean is good for comedy value.) When you play to your strengths, add a dice to your roll. All subsequent Sean Beans you play will be of the same type, unless you get bored and decide to change it.

AN EIGHT-SIDED DICE? WITCHCRAFT!

Goblin Quest and its many derivatives have, up to now at least, used only six-sided dice – or D6s, as we call them in the tabletop gaming biz. (“The biz” is what we in the biz say instead of “the business.”) If you don't have a D8 to hand, you can use one of many dice-rollers on the internet, or a mobile phone app, or just pick out whichever Sean Bean you want to be.

YOUR SEAN BEAN WILL, HOWEVER, DIE. Roll on the following table to determine how he dies, and write it down.

-  Impaled on something sharp
-  Massive head or neck injury
-  Something involving animals
-  Hung from the neck until dead
-  Crushed by something heavy
-  Shot, probably unceremoniously

The multiverse wants Sean Bean to die, but he can draw power from that death energy. When you act in a way that's likely to bring you towards your tragic demise, add a dice to your roll.

SHOULD WE USE RE-ROLLS IN SEAN BEAN QUEST?

You definitely should. I recommend using the King Stick rules, or adapting the Lucky Ear rules to represent each Sean Bean pulling something into the plot from his “home world;” so Stark Bean unsheathes a greatsword, or Scary Bean puts on a pair of scary spectacles, and so on.

ROLL DEATHS FOR YOUR OTHER SEAN BEANS.

PRACTICE YOUR SEAN BEAN VOICE. When you're The Chosen One, you should always speak in a Sean Bean voice. Be as gruff and northern as you like – brisk, but then warm and reassuring, like an open fire in a country pub after a February walk on the moors. Like a man who'd hold you tightly as the world burned.

The Story That Will End The Curse

The Sean Beans are gathered, waiting in the wings of reality, looking to end their turmoil, when they set a course for a film that's just about to start filming. (The process of "signing" Sean Bean to perform in a film is very similar to summoning a Goetian demon, and known only to Casting Agents.)

Roll on the following charts, or make up your own film, or do a remake of a well-known film which features Sean Bean, or a remake of a film which doesn't star him but now does - that's fun too. (One of the playtest groups shot a budget remake of *Serenity* with Sexy Bean playing Inara.)

GENRE:	OUR HERO, A:	MUST:
• Fantasy	• Warrior	• Avenge the death of someone important to him
• Sci-Fi	• Spy or Agent	• Take one big score that'll set him up for life
• Action	• Struggling father	• Lust for power, but overreaches himself
• Thriller	• Criminal	• Betray someone important to get what he wants
• Historical	• Lord or Ruler	• Lead a team on a difficult mission of vital importance
• Horror	• Manservant	• Put on a musical!

Put it all together to get something like – “In this horror film, a manservant (Sean Bean) lusts for power but overreaches himself” or “In this fantasy film, a struggling father (Sean Bean) must take one big score that'll set him up for life.” If you get an element that doesn't quite make sense, pick another.

Name the film. Name the main character, too, as he's going to be in every scene.

Shooting The Film

The Sean Beans are going to help each other out. They've infiltrated the set. They're playing the extras – the bit parts – the sidekicks – the love interests – all in a series of wigs and disguises. They're working the camera. They're in charge of the special effects. They're part of the catering team. They're not in positions of authority, but they're working behind the scenes to keep their dream alive.

The film is nine scenes long, and broken up into three acts of three scenes each. (It might be longer when viewed in the cinema, but those “scenes” probably don't contain Sean Bean, so they're not really worthy of the name.)

These scenes work identically to the Stages in *Goblin Quest*. Scenes in the first act have a difficulty equal to the number of players -1; scenes in the second act have a difficulty equal to the number of players; and scenes in the third act have a difficulty equal to the number of players +1. If you have a lot of players (five or six) you might find that the game takes a while to resolve; feel free to shave a couple of points off later scenes if you want to. (I do!)

If at least a single Sean Bean makes it to the end of the movie, their *Quest* is successful, and Sean Bean is freed from his curse.

SCENE ONE

Give one player the Amulet of Undoing – this should be the player whose first Sean Bean would best fit into the plot. (This can be represented by a necklace; make it a loose one, though, because it's going to be changing hands (or... necks?) a lot. You can also represent it with a hat, or a scarf, or anything that marks out the wearer as something different.) They are The Chosen One, as in the one that's starring in the film, so long as they wear it.

The Chosen One should ask these questions of the other players at the table:

Where is the first scene set?

What challenges do I face?

What other characters are present in this scene?

Don't worry too much about coming up with something brilliant; use the first idea that pops into your head. Once you've established the first scene, the players who aren't the Chosen One should describe how they're blending into the set, and you should get to playing.

THE SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT SCENES

At the end of a scene, The Chosen One should ask these questions of the other players at the table:

What happens next?

How does this present a challenge for my character?

What other characters are present in this scene?

Again, use the first answer that pops into your head. If you want to re-use characters and locations, that's fine, and is in fact encouraged for the sake of continuity and speed of play.

Repeat this process until you run out of scenes. If you feel the film isn't over and you've run through all nine scenes, add a tenth. If you're ready to pack it in at eight, stop it there.

Sean Bean is playing a warrior on a mission of vital importance, and the last scene ended with him and his commandos escaping an enemy bombardment. The Chosen One asks the player on her left:

"What happens next?"

"Um – you spot a secret tunnel that'll lead into the enemy complex."

"Cool," she writes it down and turns to the player sitting opposite her, and says "How does this present a challenge for my character?"

"You're deathly afraid of tunnels, after you spent your childhood down t' mines!"

SO IS THIS FILM ACTUALLY HAPPENING, OR IS IT JUST A FILM?

Yes. Both. It is a film, and it is actually happening to Sean Bean. If Sean Bean dies in the film's story, he dies in real life (and is stuck with his curse).

Sean Bean operates in a strange segment of space and time, and the laws of narrative bend around him. If a Sean Bean sneaks up on an actor playing his murderer and kills him before he shanks the Chosen One in the ribs, is that actor actually dead – or can he wash the fake blood off and go back to his trailer?

Sean Bean doesn't know. More importantly, by now, Sean Bean doesn't care.

"I, uh. Okay." She writes it down and turns to the player on her right. "What other character is present in this scene?"

"All the other commandos are here, but I think that your cockney mate Boxer is going to help you."

"Or hinder me!" She writes it down.

"Yeah, or that."

They play through the scene. It's a given that Sean Bean will get through the tunnels; the question is how many of him will survive, and how



Surviving To The End Of The Film

The players have two responsibilities:

ONE, ensure that the film's plot continues, and to act as hard as possible to resolve it, and

TWO, defend The Chosen One from incoming danger, and cover up evidence of his inevitable death before seamlessly replacing him.

WHEN THE CHOSEN ONE DIES

In the very likely event that the Chosen One dies, it's up to the surviving Sean Beans to cover up the death in some way. Any player can now grab the amulet and become the new Chosen One.

WHEN ALL YOUR SEAN BEANS DIE

If you run out of Sean Beans, you become part of the Sean Bean Revenge Squad: a ghostly legion of Sean Beans that protect Sean Bean from beyond the grave. You roll two dice for all of your actions, but you can never be The Chosen One again. You also get to pass through walls, spook horses, possess people, and generally do all sorts of ghost stuff.

IF EVERYONE'S SEAN BEANS DIE

If all the Sean Beans at the table die, the quest is failed! And at such great cost to the hive; perhaps they will never be able to forge another Amulet of Undoing. Perhaps their curse is truly eternal.

IF YOU MANAGE TO MAKE IT THE WHOLE WAY THROUGH THE FILM

You have succeeded! Sean Bean is free from the cosmic demon witch curse. The universe is his oyster; go, live lives of joyous celebration, and then die on your own terms, forever.

FINAL SCENE VARIANT – COSMIC DEMON WITCH BATTLE

If you want to spice things up in the final scene, then you have my express permission to introduce the Cosmic Demon Witch herself in it. As Sean Bean manages to survive through an entire film, he draws the attention of the beast – and she arrives, ripping the stars asunder and wearing them like a cloak in the form of a great and terrible Otherwolf, a creature that hunts vagabond gods in the dark between the stars. Filled with power, the Sean Beans ascend into mighty godlike forms, and crash into her with the force of a thousand suns exploding.

This will be the fight that makes the world end, and Sean Bean is at the centre of it. Go hog wild.

TEN SEAN BEAN MOVIE PITCHES BY KEN HITE

KEN HITE WRITES INCREDIBLE ROLEPLAYING GAMES, and many of them focus around Cthulhu. When he agreed to write material for this book, I sent him over the manuscript and he said he'd send me back a mix of Goblin and Cthulhu plots. He got back to me later the same day and said:

"Grant,

I lied. Please find attached instead Ten Sean Bean Movie Pitches.

Best,

Ken"

So, here we are.

SEAN OF THE ANTARCTIC — Sean Bean stars as Robert Falcon Scott, in a gigantic historical bio-pic spectacle filmed on location in Antarctica with a £200 million budget and a Climate Change Consultant and a Penguin Wrangler and ... very few co-stars. Like just the four guys with him out on the ice, all Name Actors and Not (Necessarily) Sean Bean. Many of the other Sean Beans will have to play sled dogs. Or starvation-induced hallucinations. Maybe a Sean Bean script doctor can add some flashbacks to the Royal Geographical Society and lots of extras in epaulettes or something.

SEAN, ACTUALLY – A hilarious yet touching yet wry yet beautiful yet understanding yet sick-making montage of moments in the lives of very attractive ladies and weirdly chinless men in London among whom Sean Bean stands out like a glorious chin-ful beacon. Can Sean Bean invade all the other parallel story lines to save the very attractive ladies, the movie ... and perhaps himself?

TO LIVE AND DIE IN SEAN BEAN – A team of hard-bitten thieves shrinks themselves down to miniature size and gets themselves covertly injected into Sean Bean in order to pull off the greatest heist ever: a sample of Sean Bean's liver worth billions on the Djakarta cloning/hangover cure/gruff masculinity black market. The plot thickens when one of the thieves turns out to be Sean Bean and betrays the others of course you saw it coming genius it's called foreshadowing read a book sometime

SEAN/OFF — Sean Bean's cosmic foe deploys one of her corrupted servants, Nicolas Cage, to dilute Sean's powers with his own dark version of them. One of the players plays the five Nicolas Cages, working to destroy and replace Sean Bean. When that Nicolas Cage dies, the player to her left takes over the remaining Nicolas Cages — who have absorbed their fallen brother's power! Each time Nicolas Cage dies, the next one adds a dice until the Final Cage rolls five dice! Also each time Nicolas Cage dies, play of Nicolas Cage passes to the left. The plot oh yeah something about spies or wizards or elves who steal each others' faces a lot.

SEANFORGIVEN — It's a Western, a lament for a vanished genre and a vanished world. Sean Bean plays a deadly gunfighter who hangs up his gun belt to tread the boards as second lead in a touring Shakespeare company. But when the corrupt sheriff of Ironie Virtue, Nevada launches his own theatre devoted to the theory that Francis Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays, Sean Bean must gun down everyone involved before a heretical (and cowboy-themed) production of *The Tempest* can poison the new century.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S BEAN — Speaking of Shakespeare. Cast Sean Bean in all the parts and go. This play is so whack with the mistaken identities and the turning into a donkey and a fairy named Puck and the rest of it that I did all the hard bit coming up with the title. How to kill off Sean Beans in a romantic comedy? I don't know, maybe the love potion is actually a hallucinogenic poison. Maybe he dies of a broken heart when Helena rejects him. Maybe the lion from *Pyramus and Thisbe* gets loose and eats people. Happy now? *You people.*

SEANDAY BLOODY SEANDAY — This is a serious political film you guys about Palestine Ireland which is why the British film company hired a Northern English actor to play Michael Collins, the leader of the IRA. (This movie is about the Bloody Sunday in 1920 when the IRA killed a bunch of British spies and the British lackeys killed innocent people in reprisal, not the Bloody Sunday in 1972 when the British killed innocent people for no reason at all.) Of course we know that Sean Bean is perfect for any role that combines gunplay and plotting someone's death, but certain extreme film-critical elements in Ireland are less happy about it. In addition to all the dying Sean Bean might be doing as part of the movie, he might be killed by off-screen enemies as well!

THE BEAN COMPANY — Sean Bean plays a hard-bitten magical mercenary captain in a war-torn and also hard-bitten fantasy world where eerie sorcerous wizards manipulate the plot through various ever-bleaker apocalypses to keep the series going. But he soldiers on despite the increasing amount of decorator grime on him. He does it for his grizzled men (and equally grizzled women) and for the silver and arbitrary nudity his eerie sorcerous patroness The Skirt provides them. But can he survive the legions of black-armored foes with spiky polearms set against him? Or the hard-bitten magical landmines left all over the CGI landscape by millennia of hard-bitten magical war? Or the inevitable betrayal by his eerie sorcerous patroness who seems more than a little bit cosmic-demony now that you mention it?

THE SEANINVITED — Sean Bean plays a man who moves his family to a house in the country to get away from his problems and discovers that it's haunted — by himself! The ghosts of all the dead, betrayed, and decapitated Sean Beans have curdled and turned evil: no longer the Sean Bean Revenge Squad, they are the Sean Bean Betrayal (of Sean Bean) Squad! Any other player may decide in any scene to roll two dice as a curdled ghost of Sean Bean — and if he kills the Chosen One, he loses that Sean Bean but his new Sean Bean immediately becomes the Chosen One and continues the film. The last Sean Bean standing wins if he's not a ghost — OR IS HE?

THE BEAN ULTIMATUM — Sean Bean plays a grizzled spy accused of treason in the field by his corrupt handlers. He wants to come in and clear his name but trained super-spies and femmes fatales and those Albanian terrorists he didn't kill all of yet and track-suited Russians all want him dead instead. The only person he can trust is his old mentor ... Gene Hackman. (This can't end well.) After the failure of her Nicolas Cage gambit, the cosmic demon whatever witch has inserted her most puissant and weaselly servant, Gene Hackman, into Sean Bean's film. Any time a Sean Bean rolls a 3 on any of his dice, he is revealed as secretly having been Gene Hackman in disguise all along. Gene Hackman uses one dice plus dice equal to the number of 3s showing. The next Sean Bean to the right becomes the Chosen One (probably very briefly) and you pick up the scene from there. Figure out how Gene Hackman has just betrayed Sean Bean and move along.

RULES HACK: THE CTHULHU FILES

THIS HACK IS DIFFERENT TO ALL THE OTHERS. It's not a comedy game, by default. It's not a structured one-shot system. It needs a Gamesmaster to work. If you want to experience a game where all the characters go mad and die very quickly, then this is the game for you.

You could also use it to tell other depressing stories with at least a hint of action: spies operating in post-war Berlin, US soldiers in Vietnam, boltgun-toting agents of the Inquisition in the Grim Darkness of the Far Future, mad-eyed modern gutter wizards dealing in power and consequences, honest cops in a corrupt New York city, and so on.

I've not got space, time, or the required copyrights to detail the Cthulhu Mythos in great detail in this book. I would recommend turning to the nearest copy of *Trail of Cthulhu*, *Call of Cthulhu*, or *Delta Green* and cribbing the setting information from that.

The World of Cthulhu

The epoch of man is fleeting; there are old gods, strange monsters eons old, that dwell in the darkness between the stars – in the bowels of the earth – in a mirror's reflection – in the dreams of madmen – everywhere, just out of sight. Some intrepid souls choose, wisely or not, to tread out of the light and into the shadows, and seek the truth behind the lie that is our world.

They all go mad. They all die. This is their story.

CHARACTERS

Players: you're all 1920's Investigators. Come up with a name for your investigator.

Come up with a profession. Here's a few ideas: private detective, journalist, gangster, occultist, academic, adventurer, librarian, archaeologist, military officer, researcher, explorer, hobo, police officer, scientist, anthropologist, government agent, secret society member, man in black.

Write one word that describes your character. For example: wise, savvy, strong, quick, book-smart, careful, handsome, angry, brutal, devious, resourceful, world-weary, lucky, quiet, knowing, cold-hearted.

Create an advantage that the character relies on. For example: a camera, a car, police contacts, a gun, a killer reputation, a bloodstained penknife, a shifty-eyed stoolie, a billy-club, access to a private library, a steady supply of drugs, a judge who owes you a favour, a sacred relic, a steel jaw.

Pick one of the following motives:

Discover the unknown.

Destroy the unnatural.

Protect the innocent.

Live life to the fullest.

Hide the horrible truth.

(If you can come up with a better dream for yourself, go for it.)

Every time you use your profession, your descriptor, or follow your motive, add an extra dice to your roll – *if you want to*.

Every time you use your advantage, you can re-roll dice – but you lose your advantage if you roll any 1's. More on that later.

Your character will have history with at least one other player character – say who, and what happened.

My character is Solomon Pyre, a jaded occultist who wants to hide the horrible truth. His advantage is a key to a well-stocked Esoteric Library at the city's premier library.

Another player character is Martha Stone, a sneaky journalist who wants to protect the innocent. One time, Martha broke into Solomon's office to try and secure info for a big scoop... but she knew that what she found there, amidst the spells and scrawled notes, wasn't suitable for publication



THE GRADUAL DESCENT INTO MADNESS

Cthulhu Files characters have three loss boxes – these work a little like injury boxes in basic Goblin Quest. Whenever a character crosses off all three boxes, they descend into madness, injury and instability and move one step down the following chart. They start at Healthy, and go down from there:

HEALTHY

More or less, anyway. You're in control of your life, but it's a dangerous one.

  Loss

  Something Good

  Something Bad

  Victory

SHAKEN

You're not at your best, and things get out of control more than you'd like.


  Loss


  Something Bad

  Victory

UNSTABLE

You're a danger to yourself and others.

 Loss, plus another character in the scene suffers loss (GM picks)

 Loss

 Something Bad

  Something Good

  Victory

DOOMED

You're at the edge of mental and physical collapse. It's given you a madman's fervour; maybe you can do one last thing before you crash and burn.

   Loss

   Victory

LOST

You're dead, or utterly insane, or you're stuck wandering some distant dimension, or the corruption of the darkness between the stars has left you inhuman and hollow-eyed and riddled with twisted desires. Retire your character and make a new one.

(It's a good idea to make a note of your dice table every time you move down a level.)

Crossing off all their current loss boxes takes the character out of a scene; explain why, working between the GM and the player to reach a conclusion. (Some ideas: shocked, terrified, loss of vital equipment, disheartened, coerced, persuaded, blocked, driven off, injured, possessed.) If all of the characters are driven out of a scene, or they choose to leave, the scene ends and the characters suffer an appropriate narrative setback.

Loss doesn't carry over between levels, so a character at Healthy who (somehow) suffered six Losses wouldn't go straight down to Unstable, but instead go to Shaken. Every time a character shifts down the scale, write down what pushed them over the edge next to it.

THIS IS NOT A JOKE; INJURY AND LOSS

Unlike every other setting in the book, The Cthulhu Files doesn't do slapstick comedy. This is mainly because of loss; characters don't suffer injuries in The Cthulhu Files, but instead suffer loss.

Every time they suffer a loss, they come closer to a crucial setback – a grievous wound, a permanent mental condition, the loss of a family member, a vital piece of equipment breaking, running out of resources, and so on. When they suffer three losses and move down a step on the chart above, something serious happens.

Sometimes it doesn't make sense to lose anything on a particular action. That's okay – mark off the boxes, then play out the loss later. Or use it to foreshadow future losses – maybe a player's weapon jams in the middle of a fight but doesn't break, or their informant starts to mistrust them, or they reach for that bottle one too many times tonight, etc.

Players, put yourself at risk. You'll never roll the dice unless you're at risk – and unless you risk something, you won't get anything back. That's just not how this world works. Whenever you act, figure out what you're risking to do it.

Here is a (not complete) selection of things that characters can lose:

Friends	Stability	Property	Blood
Family	Honour	Willpower	Bones
Contacts	Respect	Face (as in “reputation”)	Fingers
Faith	Innocence		Eyes
Money	Memories	Face (as in their actual face, whole or in part)	
Sanity	Equipment		



Playing The Game

SCENES

Much like *Goblin Quest*, play proceeds in scenes that are rated with a particular difficulty number - “Escape the burning building, difficulty 5” or “Swim down to the bottom of the lake to investigate the sunken ship, difficulty 4” and so on. It’s up to the GM to set up challenges and difficulties for scenes and for the players to attempt to overcome them.

RECUPERATION, RESUPPLY, AND GETTING BETTER

Should they wish to, characters can try to stabilise themselves and go back up the scale. If a character gets a chance to rest, resupply, heal up and generally not investigate the terrifying unknown for a while – if they’re on a slow boat to Dar Es Salaam, for example, or they spend a month in the Cotswolds drinking tea and taking Invigorating Walks – then roll a dice for every level of health/sanity that they have remaining. If any of these dice show 5 or 6, they can regain one level.

If there are plots afoot, then these will continue while the character attempts to heal, and generally get much worse as a result.

RISKING ADVANTAGES

Each character can support three advantages at once – things that give them an edge in their quest for the truth. Advantages can be risked to re-roll a dice pool so long as it makes narrative sense to do so.

If the player rolls any 1’s on that re-roll, the advantage is ruined, lost, suddenly useless or otherwise stops functioning as intended. A player can never re-roll a re-roll.

GM, give players advantages as a reward for when they investigate or roleplay well. There’s no hard and fast rule for how many advantages players should have, but try to make sure each character has one or two and replace them if they’re lost.

CASTING SPELLS

Spells, on the whole, make life more interesting for the user. They’re graded in terms of one to five; when you cast a spell, add that many dice to the relevant roll. (And cross your fingers, because things are probably going to get messy.) Gamesmaster, give out spells as rare treasure – but if it fits the tone of your game, definitely try to squeeze at least one in there.

Some ideas for spells:

Withering Curse

Conjure Nightgaunt

Storm of Crows

Scar the Mind’s Eye

Von Kline’s Waking Nightmare

Enchant Weapon

Summon Deluge

Immune to Flames

Elder Sign

Seal of the Ancients

Degrave’s Transformative Crucible

Gamesmastering Section

What follows is a grab-bag of advice for running *The Cthulhu Files*. Use what you will.

BUILDING SCENES

It's up to you to build scenes. You do this by defining a goal that the characters are looking to achieve ("Get into the haunted graveyard," "Avoid the maddening pipes of the carnival cultists") and a difficulty. If a scene has a difficulty of 1, that's fine; feel free to start slow and ramp it up. Get a handle on what works for your group. (1.5 difficulty per player, rounding up, should give you a solid scene.)

When a player acts in the scene, they can do anything they want (within reason!) to resolve the problem the scene poses – so don't be afraid of having different approaches to the same challenge run simultaneously.

For example: say that the challenge is "Get into the basement underneath the museum." One character is sneaking around like a cat burglar – that works fine. Perhaps another isn't so great at sneaking and strikes up a conversation with the guards in the lobby to act as a distraction. Maybe a third doesn't like the idea of getting involved at all, but we flash back to watch him grease some palms to get the floorplans of the museum from his crooked contact at the planning office. These are all actions geared towards the goal of getting into that basement, so they all roll against that same challenge.

It is entirely possible that the investigators fail, or hit a barrier that seems impassable – and that's fine! This is a game about futility and loss. You will need to get a handle on what constitutes an interesting number of difficulty points for a scene and what works for your group.

If the players abandon a goal, make them feel it – write it down and come back to it later.

Not every goal has to be active, although most will be. "Escape the burning ship" is a good example of a thing which is being done to the players, rather than something that they're choosing to do.

SOMETHING GOOD, SOMETHING BAD

You're in charge of the game, so you get veto over the something good and something bad descriptions that the players make. It's good to get them to contribute, but you're responsible for maintaining the flow and tone of the game. So if one of them rolls something bad and says "Oh no, Cthulhu pops up from the ocean!" in the first scene of the game, then maybe tell 'em to reign it in a little.

HIT THE STREETS

There are no right and wrong approaches in *The Cthulhu Files*, so if players don't know what's going on, they can always hit the streets and start asking around. There's every chance that they'll get hurt doing so, of course, which just leads to more excitement – but they'll generally find something. Let your players know that this is an option if they get stuck.

GRAHAM WALMSLEY'S CTHULHU ADVENTURE IDEAS

GRAHAM'S A DAB HAND AT THE OLD CTHULHU, so rather than get him to write about goblins, I asked him to outline some sample adventures for The Cthulhu Files instead – use them as a jumping-off point for your own games.

THE MERCILESS RAILROAD – In Victorian England, the Investigators are workmen, building a railway through the countryside. Something stalks them and their coworkers: regularly, in the night, someone will mysteriously disappear. And the railway drives mercilessly on, with a supernatural force preventing them from doing anything but continuing onward. Where does the railroad lead? What is at the end?

Scenes:

SOMETHING WATCHES FROM THE WOODS (DIFFICULTY 3)

A WORKER IS SNATCHED, LATE AT NIGHT (DIFFICULTY 5)

SOMETHING WHISPERS TO THE INVESTIGATORS (DIFFICULTY 3)

BUILDING THE WOODHEAD TUNNEL (DIFFICULTY 5)

THE CREATURE IN THE DARKNESS (DIFFICULTY 6)

THE LAST SPARTAN – In 1920s New York, dead bodies appear in alleyways, beaten to death. When the Investigators pursue the trail, they find the murderer: a Greek man, who believes he is the last of the Spartan warriors, fighting against unnatural forces. Indeed, the victims all have connections to a bizarre sorcerous ritual at the heart of Manhattan. Can the Investigators stop it?

Scenes:

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL FROM THE BODY TO QUEENS (DIFFICULTY 3)

FINDING THE LAST SPARTAN IN QUEENS (DIFFICULTY 4)

UNCOVERING THE RITUAL (DIFFICULTY 4)

FINDING THE SORCERERS (DIFFICULTY 6)

STOPPING THE RITUAL (DIFFICULTY 6)

THE FOLK FROM THE HILL – Travelling through New England, the Investigators stay in a strange town in the hills. Yet something is wrong: the townspeople are constantly overcome by unexplained waves of emotion, unable to complete the simplest tasks. As the night draws on, the Investigators feel emotions rising within them and are unable to leave. They must find out what is bewitching the town.

Scenes:

FINDING THE HOUSE, WHERE THE BEWITCHMENT IS COMING FROM (DIFFICULTY 3)

DISCOVERING THE SEWERS BENEATH (DIFFICULTY 2)

FINDING THE CREATURES THAT BEWITCH THE TOWN (DIFFICULTY 4)

ESCAPING THE TOWN (DIFFICULTY 8)

APOCALYPTICA — When the Investigators wake, they find themselves in a devastated world. As they explore, they meet tribes of survivors – but they are wild and bestial. What has happened to the world the Investigators went to sleep in? Which alien race took it away? How can the Investigators get it back?

Scenes:

GAIN THE TRUST OF THE SURVIVORS (DIFFICULTY 5)

DISCOVERING WHAT CAUSED THE APOCALYPSE (DIFFICULTY 3)

FINDING THE WOMAN WHO BELIEVES IT CAN BE PUT RIGHT (DIFFICULTY 2)

REACHING THE MYSTERIOUS STONE ON THE HILL, WHICH LEADS TO THE CITY OF THE GREAT RACE (DIFFICULTY 3)

GETTING THE WORLD BACK (DIFFICULTY 8)

STILETTO — On a botched jewellery store raid, the investigators, who are small-time criminals, get only one item: a peculiar thin dagger. From then on, the dagger destroys their lives, causing an unending stream of bad luck and destroying their relationships. They must investigate to find what the dagger is and how to destroy it.

Scenes:

ESCAPING THE JEWELLERY STORE AFTER THE COPS SHOW UP (DIFFICULTY 5)

THE NEXT RAID, THAT ALSO THAT GOES WRONG (DIFFICULTY 6)

INVESTIGATING THE DAGGER, AND STRUGGLING WITH THE REALISATION THAT THEY'RE CURSED (DIFFICULTY 4)

KILLING THE CREATURE THAT ENCHANTED IT (DIFFICULTY 5)

USING ITS DARK, STICKY BLOOD TO DESTROY THE DAGGER IN A WEIRD RITUAL (DIFFICULTY 4)

RULES HACK: NEITHER SUPER NOR HEROIC

THIS RULES-HACK SIMULATES COMIC-BOOK ACTION STORIES, and I'm keen not to say "superhero" stories because, well, look at the title. The core mechanic of setbacks – in that it's possible to make problems worse by merely standing nearby – can be adapted to other genres.

If you strip out the super-powered elements, you could use it to run an *Expendables*-style action flick game; and if you really work at it, I mean really really, you could probably get it to run a *Carry On*-style farce. Best of luck to you if you try that.

Like *The Cthulhu Files*, it needs a Gamesmaster to run properly.

So here's the deal: superheroes are real. They've got great teeth, perfect hair, and natty costumes. They protect our borders, fight crime, and have high-flying relationships and beautiful superchildren together.

Here's the other deal: you're not one of them. Neither are any of your friends.

You're a curiosity. Maybe you have super powers, but you always struggled with that "hero" bit, and you could never do the right thing in time to save anyone. Maybe your heart is in the right place, but a lack of powers has made you useless in more situations than not.

Maybe you have neither powers nor gumption and you just ticked the wrong box on a job application form. Maybe you got an awful power and you're resentful of that. Maybe you have the sort of power that leads to scorched earth and lots and lots of letters of apology.

But – good news! (Kind of.) There's a problem. A big problem, that conventional forces can't deal with. Normally the superheroes would deal with it, but they're busy – or dead – and the government has, as a last resort, called on you.

Time to shine, kid. Just try not to make everything worse.

Creating Your Team

You're going to play a team of "superheroes." First off, **name and describe your team.** This'll give you a theme to stick to and mess around with when you're recruiting members. Your members are a bit tougher than goblins – they have 3 injury boxes each. They're also rarer than goblins, so you only get three each, rather than five.

If you want a starting point when coming up with a concept, roll on the tables, or pick results that you like:

POWER SOURCE:

- Magic
- Super-science
- Mutant or alien abilities
- A higher power or patron
- Sheer bloody-mindedness
- Roll twice, combine somehow

POWER FOCUS:

- Shapeshifting and mutation
- Mighty strength and combat ability
- Explosive ranged fighting
- Incredible speed, or flight
- Elemental mastery (fire, acid, cold, thunder, etc)
- Telepathy, mind-reading and suggestion

THEME:

- Brash young punks
- All part of the same military unit
- A family, of sorts
- A really messy love triangle
- Washed-up has-beens
- An entire team of sidekicks

DON'T BE TOO WACKY!

You're playing a comedy superhero game. You want to have fun. You think, for example – "What if all my team are based around sweets?" That's a fun idea, surely. That's not something superheroes are normally associated with. That's COMEDY GOLD.

Except: it's not. I'd like to suggest that ordinary people in extraordinary situations is funnier and more interesting than, say, an animated candy cane trying to throw a bonbon grenade into a Zeppelin to take it down. If you get wacky too fast, too soon, then you run out of steam. The absurd is hard to sustain. Start normal – that is, normal for a comic book story – and build.

Thirdly, roll to see why your member hasn't been hired by any conventional superhero teams, and to work out when they trigger Setbacks. For each of your team members, roll on the I WASN'T HIRED UNTIL NOW BECAUSE I'M table below and note down the results.

I WASN'T HIRED UNTIL NOW BECAUSE I'M:

<div> <div></div> <div></div> </div>	Dangerous (Setback on a 6)
<div> <div></div> <div></div> </div>	Incompetent (Setback on a 1)
<div> <div></div> <div></div> </div>	Dangerously Incompetent (Setback on a 1 or a 6)

COMPETENCY TABLES

<p>DANGEROUS</p>	<p>INCOMPETENT</p>	<p>DANGEROUSLY INCOMPETENT</p>
<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Injury</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Injury, Setback</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Injury, Setback</p>
<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Injury</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Injury</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Injury</p>
<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Something Bad</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Something Bad</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Something Bad</p>
<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Something Good</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Something Good</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Something Good</p>
<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Victory</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Victory</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Victory</p>
<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Victory, Setback</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Victory</p>	<div> <div></div> </div> <p>Victory, Setback</p>



Finally, draw your superhero, if you want. Goblins are easy to draw; people are difficult. If you draw your superhero, give them an extra wound box. (Two if you use more than four different colours in the drawing.)

Like Goblin Quest, you'll be playing these characters one at a time. Unlike Goblin Quest, you can "borrow" characters that you haven't played yet to earn rerolls, which is detailed below.

Playing The Game

Neither Super Nor Heroic plays out pretty similarly to Goblin Quest, with the following tweaks:

When you act, roll two dice and interpret both of them.

When you use your superpower, roll four dice and interpret all of them. (If you don't have a power, like Batman or The Punisher, then you roll four dice whenever you do whatever it is that you have instead.)

Once per scene, **when you team up with another member of your team**, re-roll your dice. Talk about how you avert disaster by helping each other out, even if you trigger a worse disaster thanks to your actions. (If you don't have any team-mates left, you can flash-back to a time when they taught you something relevant, or use someone else's team member.)

STABILITY

When you engage in Super-Heroism, there's always something at risk. Things never go smooth, and you never have only one problem to solve at once. Maybe those terrorists have taken hostages and are threatening to execute them, one by one. Maybe the warp drive on the alien spacecraft about to crash into the city is dangerously close to "going nova," whatever *that* means. Maybe those thugs you're shooting at inside the bank have nearly got the vault door open and are about to blow through into the sewers to make their escape.

Whatever happens, every important scene has something that's going to go wrong unless you fix it *fast* – it's measured with stability.

Here's the rub, though: *you're going to make it worse*.

Depending on your character type, you inflict Setbacks when you roll a certain number – either 1, 6, or both 1 and 6. When you inflict a setback, you make the situation worse – describe how, and subtract 1 from the scene's stability.

The lower Stability rating a Risk has, the more likely it is to go wrong. A situation at stability 1 is seconds away from utter calamity, whereas one at stability 8 is much calmer.

It's up to the gamesmaster to decide what's unstable in each scene, and they're under no obligation to tell the players in absolute terms what the stability of the scene is at any time – but they *should* describe it in narrative terms.

FALLOUT

If a scene reaches stability 0, it's over. You've failed. Bad things are going to happen. The GM should reflect that in the story. (If you clear the scene and ruin it in the same action, you still win, but not in the way you wanted.)

If it's the climactic scene, or if the GM thinks it's appropriate – you're in a big, climactic battle, say – then you can fight on, but it'll be a bittersweet victory, if a victory at all.

If it's appropriate, each team member active in the scene takes D3 injuries. (Roll a dice, then halve the result, rounding up.) This can happen as a sudden explosion, a long tumbling fall, the slow realisation that you're outnumbered and outgunned, massive amounts of very public shame, crushing guilt, terrible sadness, or whatever.

INJURY AND DEATH

Action-packed comic books tend to treat death with a little more reverence than *Goblin Quest* – at least, the death of the protagonists – so your character won't die unless you want them to. They can get knocked out, crippled, kidnapped, stunned, turned, lost, buried in concrete for centuries, etc – but they only die if you think it'd be more interesting.

They're still out of the game, though, unless you can come up with an excellent excuse why that isn't true.

Gamesmaster Section

Gamesmaster, it's up to you to determine what the emergencies of the day are and divide them up into scenes.

Standard *Goblin Quest* rules assume that you've got 9 Victories per player before the game is over, but you can afford to play around with that number a bit. Use it as a benchmark, but don't be afraid to go over or under if you want the game to run longer or shorter. (Obviously.)

Think like a comic book writer. Be fast and punchy – what's happening in this scene? What's the danger? What's at stake? If there's no danger and nothing at stake, don't bother rolling dice; just say yes and move on. Otherwise, pick a difficulty rating and stability rating from the list below, and go for it.

If you're finding that players are taking too long to succeed (and they start getting bored) or they're failing too much (and they start getting disheartened), then add or subtract numbers until it feels right for your group. Do this on the fly, during scenes, if you want.

DIFFICULTY:

1 - 3 SHORT SCENES. These aren't very important, but it's nice to drop them in between larger events to vary the pace.

Tracking down a goon to a hideout. Roughing up a mook for information. Chasing someone down on foot. Talking your way into an office building. Distracting a police officer while you hide the bodies.

4-6: MEATY SCENES. These are your main events. This is where you can deliver exciting plot developments. (You've planned those, right?) These will tick on a bit, and chances are that someone's going to get hurt in the process.

Catching the crooks after they take off in a sports car. Beating up a gang of armed thugs. Sneaking into a protected building without getting caught. Ganging up on a proper superhero.

8-9: EPIC SCENES. These should be held back unless you absolutely need them, because they're long – but sometimes you need to put the players through hell.

Fighting an actual superhero on their own turf, and they know you're coming. Stopping an alien invasion. Closing the dimensional breach.

STABILITY:

2: REALLY RISKY. This is best used if you're really interested in seeing what happens when everything goes wrong. Don't overdo it.

There's a bomb with a timer showing 15 seconds. The fire has nearly reached the armoury. The bus driver is seconds away from slamming into the office block.

4: KINDA RISKY. This is the standard fit for most scenes; something could go wrong, but it might not if the characters play it smart. (They won't.)

The terrorists drag the hostages onto the roof and start waving guns. The bank robbers drag their vault-cutting torch into place and fire it up. The supervillain dispatches a squad of goons to the fight to help out.

8: STABLE. For now, things are... safe. (Kind of.) Use this when you're not interested in seeing what happens if the characters fail.

The news crew are stuck in traffic and can't get footage of your reckless actions. The tank that's going to crash through the wall is foreshadowed, but not yet in range. The scientist chuckles to herself and remembers to lock up the cage of experimental rage-monkeys.

FAILING FORWARD

Unlike most roleplaying games, Neither Super, Nor Heroic comes with the understanding that the players are probably going to catastrophically fail at least once during play. How can you deal with this?

There's a principle known as Failing Forward, and it's super important to grasp if you're going to run a good game. When the players fail, the story doesn't stop – it changes direction. Imagine the players are sneaking into a military base to steal a secret project, and they get discovered. Is that the end of the mission?

No way! It changes the next scene from “abscond with the project scot-free” to “somehow break out of military jail.” Or maybe “flee through the jungle, pursued by military jeeps.” Or “convince the one superhero we know to come and break us out.”

Failure is impossible. That's a strange way of thinking about it, because right at the start of this section I said that the players are going to fail. But instead of failure as The End, as a block, think of it as a branch. There are consequences, obviously. If they were supposed to save the life of the President and they fail, then the rest of the story is going to at least mention that.

Maybe the next scene is a protection detail for the funeral. Maybe they end up taking cover behind the coffin, falling into the grave, using mourners as human shields. Who knows. If the Administration wanted good PR, they should have hired the good guys.

Just remember that the story doesn't stop unless you, or the players, want it to.

MATT FORBECK'S ADVENTURE IDEAS

Matt Forbeck has written a frankly ludicrous amount of novels, roleplaying games, card games, miniatures wargames, and board games. He's been freelancing since 1991, and worked on 15 Origins Award-winning projects. He is, to put it mildly, a Big Deal. Here are his ideas for fun times in Neither Super, Nor Heroic:

POWERS RE-LIMITED — The radioactive creature whose bite turned a high-school loser into a superhero is back from the dead, and it's biting everything it can see. You need to stop it before it gives half the city barely controllable powers — although if it happens to give you a little nibble first, maybe that wouldn't be so bad?

SUPER SITTER! — The greatest superhero in the world left you in charge of her pet, which also happens to have super powers. You just don't know which ones. Now, did she run off, or is she just invisible?

DOCTOR WHO? — You might have just blabbed the secret identity of the world's greatest sorcerer on national TV, and once it hits Twitter, it's FOREVER! There's only one way to solve this problem: Steal a time machine to go back and stop yourself from being so stupid!

PARTY LINE — What's wrong with having a few friends over when you're housesitting for a friend? Even if that friend is the greatest caped crimefighter of all time? And you woke up the next morning with a hangover and most of the man's trophies missing?

HALL MONITOR — When they put you in charge of monitoring the world for disasters and emergencies, you didn't want to tell them you can't even operate a freeze-ray without causing a five-alarm fire. Can you help it if you broke it the moment you tried to answer the first call with your feet?



INFINITE MONKEYS — You stumbled across an alternate dimension in which you and your pals really are the most powerful people in the world — and also gigantic cyborg apes. They assure you their only intention is to serve humans — for dinner?

MISTER-UNDERSTOOD — The playboy villain who's always hitting up the super-ladies for a date begs you to help him out. If one of those women doesn't voluntarily kiss him before midnight, a witch's curse will turn him normal, and who wants that?

MINI-MINIONS — The League of Child Terrors is recruiting minions to handle their low-end bidding, and you've been ordered to infiltrate them by using a shrink ray to bring yourself down to their size. It doesn't make you any younger, mind you, just smaller, so let's hope that's enough to fool those grade-school geniuses.

LAB BRATS — The only way you're going to get yourself some world-class powers is by borrowing them from the skyscraper laboratory of the smartest family in the world. To get in, you sign up for a continuing-education class run on Saturday mornings (as part of a community service sentence) by the most spoiled set of super-twins you've ever seen.

SECRET CIVIL WAR — The biggest heroes in the world have all disappeared, and you're convinced it's so they can finally duke it out over which team is the best. Your invitation must have gotten trapped in your spam filter, but you're determined to join in — just as soon as you can figure out where everyone is!

RULES-HACK: SPACE INTERNS

THIS HACK IS DESIGNED TO TELL THE STORIES of those poor chumps who get beamed down to the planet's surface alongside Kirk, Spock, etc and never make it back alive – the original title of the game was “Redshirts.”

You could also use it to spin tales of other underlings: a gaggle of steampunk butlers and engineers, a squad of beleaguered hireling dungeoneers, gung-ho colonial marines getting picked off by xenomorphs, clueless gangsters and their clueless molls, and so on. Maybe you could use it to replicate horror films, thanks to the gradual increase in competency as the lower ranks die off in the early scenes.

The speciality mechanic lets you establish facts about the world, then have them work for you. This level of improvisation can prove difficult for inexperienced players, so feel free to help them out if they need it.

Unlike other games in this book, you don't play through your characters in order; you flip back and forth between the Supervisor and the lowest-ranked surviving intern.

Because of the theme of exploration, Space Interns needs a GM at the helm to describe events and act with authority. They can also play the Captain, if the need for such a thing crops up.

Congratulations! You've been slaving away on the research ship HMS Behemoth for months – maybe years, now – but you've finally made it to the orbit of a exotic alien world. Not only that, but you've been chosen to make planetfall and speak to the natives! What an exciting time to be alive.

You walk into the teleporter room and grin at your Supervisor, who doesn't look as happy as you are, and he outfits you with your communicator and your phaser pistol. “Don't worry, sir,” you say, with the enthusiasm only an unpaid part-time intern can muster, “if things go wrong, they can always beam us right back up, can't they?”

Your Supervisor, unbeknownst to you, thinks about how expensive it is to run the teleporters, and how far over-budget the ship was last quarter. He smiles at you and says: “Sure, kid. Sure.” Gosh, what an adventure!

Join the

SPACE INTERNS

aboard the HMS Behemoth

for a lifetime of ADVENTURE!



Joining the Space Intern program is done at the participant's own risk. The Space Intern program is unpaid. Neither HMS Behemoth nor The Explore Corporation accept responsibility for misfortune suffered as part of the program, including but not limited to: loss of life, loss of limbs, loss of eyes, addition of limbs, addition of eyes, void sickness, timetheft, culture shock, electric shock, or spaceghosts.

Making Your Crew

Each player in Space Interns takes on the role of five different crewmembers of the HMS Behemoth exploring an alien world. Because of the dangers involved in this process, the lower ranks of the crew have been sent down first to test the waters. Your character ranks, and appropriate expertise levels (we'll explain what those are later), are:

EXPERTISE 4: Supervisor

EXPERTISE 3: Permanent Intern

EXPERTISE 2: Intern

EXPERTISE 1: Sub-Intern

EXPERTISE 0: Part-time Intern

Write down names for your characters and a quirk for each – the quirk can represent personality or physical traits, but it could also be a special alien ability that they have if they're non-human. When they use their quirk as part of an action, roll an extra dice.

Write down what colour your team's jumpsuits are. (Red is traditional; it hides the blood.)

SPECIALITY

Pick one of the following specialities for your whole team – most of them have degrees in their chosen field, although how much attention they paid during that degree is another matter. Once per character, you can establish useful facts using your speciality, which we'll go into in more detail soon.

You also get a suitable piece of equipment which adds a dice to your rolls when you use it.

SECURITY

Knowledges: Weaponry, Military, Weaknesses.

Equipment: A variety of grenades.

DIPLOMATIC

Knowledges: Culture, Phobias, Behaviour.

Equipment: A holographic projector.

SCIENTIFIC

Knowledges: Flora and fauna, Weather, Biology.

Equipment: A handheld scanner.

ENGINEERING

Knowledges: Machinery, Buildings, Infrastructure.

Equipment: A multi-tool unit.

YOUR EQUIPMENT

In addition to your speciality equipment, you're also given a Communicator and a phaser pistol. These don't add dice to your rolls when you use them.

Your phaser pistol can be set to Stun or Kill; official regulations say that Kill is only to be used in emergencies. Your supervisor told you that Stunned enemies always recover faster than you'd like them to.

Your Communicator allows you to chat to the rest of the Away Team on the planet, but not the Behemoth – unless you're the Supervisor, whose unit allows them to send video and audio back up to the bridge.

Dying In The Correct Order

It's generally assumed that the Supervisors will stick around near the teleport site and send out the interns on dangerous missions. Traditionally, they start from the bottom and work up (because good interns are hard to find), all the way up to the point when all the interns are dead and they realise that they have to solve the problem themselves.

As such, you'll find yourself switching between your Supervisor character and your lowest-ranking surviving intern fairly often. This is fine. Issuing orders to yourself might feel strange at first, but you should get used to it fairly quickly – or, if you'd like, you can play *each other's* supervisors instead.

If everyone dies in a scene and there are no suitable replacements nearby, feel free to abandon that scene and start a new one, wrapping the failure of the previous characters into the storyline.

“Wait, I Read About This In Training!”

You can use your speciality once per character to establish a fact about the alien planet that you're on. When you establish a fact, write it down on an index card and place it on the table, then place a number of dice on it equal to your expertise. (If you don't have enough spare dice, draw circles or squares equal to the number of dice you'd place, then cross them off when used.)

Once a fact has been established, players can use it and take dice off it to add to their own rolls – so long as they explain why the fact helps them. Players can use as many facts as they want, but only one dice per fact. Once a fact has run out of dice, it's no longer useful to the mission – but it's still true.

When you establish a fact, try to be sensible.

HANG ON, PART-TIME INTERNS HAVE EXPERTISE O!

That's right – so they can't mention anything of use. Luckily they won't live for long.

Yannick is a member of the Diplomatic team (Expertise 3), and the crew are investigating an alien outpost. He wants to establish a fact about the aliens on this planet, the Xanticons. “Xanticons are least active at this part of the day,” he says, squinting up at the twin suns in the sky, “on account of their prayers and observances to their god Kolash.” He writes down “Prayers to Kolash” on a card and puts three dice on it.

Facts don't have to be culture-wide. Dorn is a member of the Engineering Team (Expertise 2) and the players are trapped in a gunfight in an alien palace. “That pipe over there, if I'm not mistaken, is full of high-pressure steam!” She writes “pressurised steam pipe” on a card and puts two dice on it.

Something like “the aliens here are allergic to *custard!*” might *sound* funny, but it’s easy to get absurd too quickly, and that can’t sustain itself. Take your cues from the source material – if they’d shout it out in *Star Trek*, you’re probably fine to shout it here.

Also, respect other people’s facts; once something’s on the table, it’s true, so don’t counteract it with new facts. (Or write it off as a wrinkle in space-time.)

The Planet

GM, roll on the following tables to determine what kind of planet you’re investigating. Give it a name, and name the race (or races) that dwell here.

TERRAIN (OF THE BIT YOU LAND ON, ANYWAY):

- Desert
- Snowy
- Mountainous
- Polluted and dead
- Urban
- Forest, hills, plains

ONE WEIRD THING:

- There are two suns.
- Where our plants are green, theirs are white.
- Bodies of water are replaced with liquid metal.
- Strange floating creatures scud through the sky.
- Spires of crystal jut out of the landscape.
- The days (and nights) last for weeks.

THE ALIENS HERE ARE:

- Primitive and angry.
- Militaristic and furious.
- Caste-based, and unhappy to see you.
- Graceful and cruel.
- Distrustful and dangerous.
- Charming, and excellent liars.

THE ATMOSPHERE IS:

- • • • • Breathable, conveniently
- • • Not breathable, but when you’re indoors you should be okay

The Mission

Your mission, as written in your day one orientation holoslide presentation, is a simple one – go boldly to places no man has gone before.

Your actual mission is as a sort of interstellar vigilante brigade, rocking up to places where you're not welcome and your authority is not recognised, and solving whatever “problems” that the Captain feels you should solve. The Federation used to handle all this, but then they privatised the Vigil Fleets and now your Captain answers to The Explore Corporation, and they want results.

Here are your directives, in order:

PRIMARY: Defend the Federation's democracy. You're the first line of defence against insurrection, war, terrorism, and other things that people do when they hate the Freedom that the Federation brings to them. This supersedes all other directives.

SECONDARY: Engage in diplomacy. The Explore Corporation is keen to encourage discourse and open conversation, as it's good for PR.

TERTIARY: Always use acceptable force. You are responsible for gauging what “acceptable” means in any given situation.

You will be given a mission briefing before planetfall which will give you enough information to get you into trouble, but probably not enough to get out of it.

The Three Act Structure

Each mission will play out similarly to a normal game of *Goblin Quest*. You should keep the standard spread of scenes and difficulties from the core book, but the themes of the tasks – the acts, here – will change.

As the game starts, the Captain should appear via vid-link and explain, in broad (and actually pretty cagey) terms, what the mission is.

In the first act (scene difficulty equals number of players minus 1) the crew will spread out and find what's going wrong with the world, usually by dying. There are any number of things that can kill an unprotected intern on a hostile alien world. Be creative.

In the second act (scene difficulty equals number of players), whatever's wrong with the planet will be clear, and the players will need to shift themselves into position to deal with it. Much of the second act will cover logistics and acquisitions.

In the third act (scene difficulty equals number of players plus 1) they'll have to enact their solution to the problem and restore order, balance, and Federation dominance to the world – but something surprising comes up that throws them a curveball. Can they still succeed?

Extraction

Once everything's safe, the Captain generally shows up and takes the credit. What a jerk. Anyway, you've done your job, some of you are alive – hopefully – and maybe the aliens from this world would be interested in joining up to the Space Interns program for your next mission? You'll need some replacements, I imagine.

Optional Rule – Nuke The Site From Orbit

Supervisors can, at their discretion, radio back to the bridge to order the application of a Neo-Uranium Kinetic Energy-burst, or NUKE for short, or to put it in layman's terms: a whacking great explosion. To ensure that NUKES are not misused, The Explore Corporation only allows their use perilously close to employees.

If all Supervisors agree, a NUKE can be dropped once per session anywhere that a player character can see – for the remainder of the scene, all characters acting use the following method to resolve their actions.

Roll three dice and interpret all three. “Victory” is used pretty loosely, and assumes that the victory you had in mind is the sort of victory where most of the people present are dead.



DEATH. Instant fiery death.



INJURY.



VICTORY!



ASTOUNDING VICTORY! Counts as two victories.

Six Sample Mission Ideas

CIVIL BLOOD – The aliens here are massing huge armies in secret to launch a civil war and then set their sights on taking over nearby systems. You'll have to identify the leaders and neutralise their plans. **ACT THREE TWIST:** The Federation are unwittingly funding the rebels. Skirt around the PR nightmare before it's too late.

GASEOUS EMISSIONS – A strange gas is permeating this world and making the inhabitants do some pretty weird things. What sort of weird things? And how do you stop it? **ACT THREE TWIST:** The gas is the byproduct of the planet's reproductive system, and it's about to shear in half to create two new planets.

PARTY POOPER – The Federation Ambassador is holding a party here, and has drafted the Interns as protection detail. Shame she's continually under assault from hostile alien forces, eh? **ACT THREE TWIST:** The Ambassador is an alien in disguise, looking to stir up trouble with the natives and push them towards all-out conflict with the Federation.

NEWS AT 11 – A rescue mission on a Federation War World leads the players deep into an ancient alien arcology to extract a famed reporter. (In fact, they've probably seen her reports on holo vid.) **ACT THREE TWIST:** She's defected to the aliens' side, and needs to be persuaded of the Federation's appeal – or forcibly extracted.

MURDER ON THE COSMIC EXPRESS – It's time to collect the tithe from this world – a land-train filled with rare metals and extracted gasses that are vital in continuing the Federation's technological superiority over the galaxy. However, every bandit on the planet wants to get their hands on that tithe. **ACT THREE TWIST:** After repairing the motors, it's clear that **SOMEONE** on board is a traitor. Find out who before they get you all killed.

BIG GAME – The Planetary Governor is dead – killed on a hunting expedition. It's up to you to investigate the case then find out who did it and deal with them appropriately. You've got a holo vid crew with you, working to document your project for a training video. Good luck! **ACT THREE TWIST:** The Governor's not actually dead – he faked the whole thing. Why? And what are you going to do with all these suspects, now?

Space Interns Character Sheet

Speciality:

Designated Equipment:

SUPERVISOR (Expertise 4)

Name:

Quirk:

Wounds: ☐ ☐ ☐

Special: Trigger NUKE (see rules)

PERMANENT INTERN (Expertise 3)

Name:

Quirk:

Wounds: ☐ ☐

INTERN (Expertise 2)

Name:

Quirk:

Wounds: ☐ ☐

SUB-INTERN (Expertise 1)

Name:

Quirk:

Wounds: ☐ ☐

PART-TIME INTERN (Expertise 0)

Name:

Quirk:

Wounds: ☐

REGENCY LADIES THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

I WASN'T SURE HOW TO WRITE THIS GAME; most of my work is about jumping off things, explosions, shotguns, and the like, so writing a genre piece about feelings was a real challenge. After a few unsuccessful attempts, I eventually decided to stop trying to strongarm *Goblin Quest* into running a game about searching for marriage and write something entirely different instead. So here you go. I hope you enjoy it.

(You could also, if you'd like, just use the standard *Goblin Quest* rules with the quest "Marry Mr Darcy" and see where that takes you. That could be fun. Especially when you're trying to cram 20 goblins into a dress.)

With some adaptation, you could maybe use it to tell other stories about love, status and manipulation: goth princes and princesses, highschool drama, Shakespearean romance, *Love Actually: The Roleplaying Game*, or *Immortal Vampires In Love Forever*.

Character Generation

You're going to make a man and a woman. They are young(ish) and unmarried.

STATS

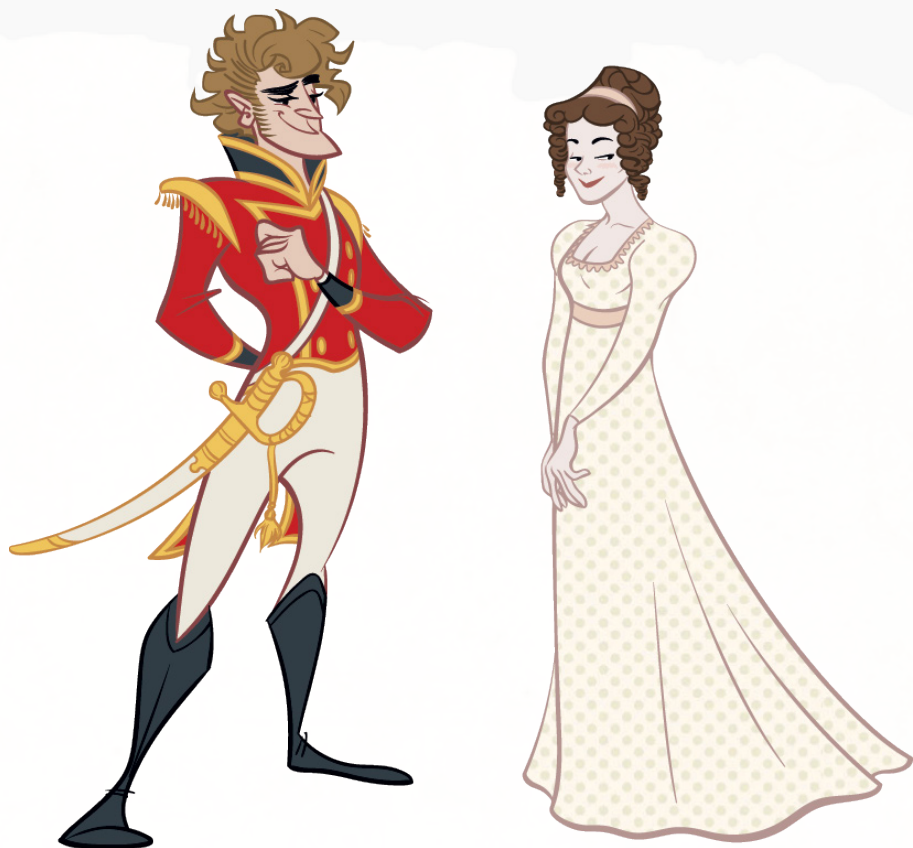
Roll a D6; assign that to the Charm score for your female character. Assign the inverse score (the inverse of 1 is 6, 5 is 2, 3 is 4 and vice-versa) to your male character's Charm. Repeat for Standing and Means.

If you roll a 1 or a 6, you may choose to re-roll the dice; a character with a 1 in any of their stats may find themselves unable to take part in normal society thanks to their ugliness, poverty or general lack of good manners.

CHARM: Your raw force of personality, likeability, and physical attraction. Charming characters make connections to other characters more easily. Charm 6 characters are very attractive (not necessarily beautiful or handsome) – the talk of local society, and likely London too. Charm 1 characters are, for whatever reason, unable to make much of a splash in social situations.

STANDING: Your social standing, class, and connections. The higher your standing, the easier you'll find it to maintain your composure. Standing 6 characters are of very good stock – Lords and Ladies, that sort of thing. Standing 1 characters are of low breeding – maybe their father was a successful lawyer in Cheapside and managed to purchase a house in the country, or maybe they're a governess.

MEANS: Your money and raw influence. Means lets you break the rules of the game and steamroller your way through social situations. Means 6 characters are very well off, looking at thousands of pounds a year and holding a grand estate somewhere; Means 1 characters are on the verge of destitution, and desperately looking for a way to scrape through to the next season.



ARCHETYPE

Have a think about an archetype for your character – penniless aristocrat, up-and-coming lawyer, dashing military man, chilly heiress, cheeky middle daughter – and write it down. It should give you something to refer to during roleplay.

FLAWS







Each character also has a flaw. These are of different flavours for your male and female characters.

Male characters get the start of a sentence that reflects upon their troubled past. Roll a D6 and write down the result:

- During the war, I shamefully...
- ◻ I am afraid I was married once before, to...
- ◻◻ My fortunes are tied up indefinitely, thanks to...
- ◻◻◻ Thanks to my wild passion, once I...
- ◻◻◻ I killed a man in a duel, but...
- ◻◻◻◻ I have a child, far from here, because...

If you feel the result doesn't make sense, pick a different one.

Female characters get a phrase that reflects upon their internal conflict. Roll a D6 and write down the result:

-  Too prideful.
-  Too prejudiced.
-  Too sensible.
-  Too caught up in sensibility.
-  Too rash.
-  Too manipulative.

If everything goes to plan, this will come out during play.

Write down everyone else's names on your character sheet – you're going to make bonds with them during play.

ESTABLISH RANDOM BOND

Randomly select another character. (Roll a dice for it.) You have a bond at rank 1 with this character, and they have a similar bond with you, meaning that you know them from the past. Say how – they're probably a blood relative of some kind.

The aim of the game is to find a Good Match for each of your characters. Each year has four scenes – one tied to each season. At the end of the second year, the game is over.

A GOOD MATCH

Ideally, you want someone with good looks, money, and class; but if you can't get that, two out of three ain't bad. (Money and Class are the two.) If you only get to pick one, money is preferable – you've got to eat somehow.

If BOTH of your characters marry well, consider yourself a smart player. If one marries well, that's not bad! If neither marry well... looks like you weren't the protagonists after all.

WHAT IF MY CHARACTER IS GAY?

Well, it's not exactly in line with the genre, but who am I to stop young love? If the storyline takes that twist and two characters of the same gender fall for each other, go for it. Run away somewhere, or get married to other people and secretly pine over your forbidden love. Make it happen.

How To Play The Game

There are four scenes per year and two years in which to play. Below is a summary; below that is the explanation.







- 1: Determine whether you're playing your male or female character.
- 2: Roll for scene type. Add 1 if you've not had a Ball this year (cumulative, per season).
- 3: Determine controller by bidding standing, swap characters if required.
- 4: Declare intentions to propose (if any).
- 5: Controller frames the scene. Other players describe what their characters are doing.
- 6: Roll charm. Sort dice so everyone can tell what you've got.
- 7: Starting with lowest means, adjust dice (not your own) on a one-for-one basis, spending means to bump the face value up or down. Adjust one dice per turn. You can cancel an adjustment (on your own dice or anyone else's) by spending an equal amount of standing. Give everyone a go, then continue going around until the controller decides to stop.
- 8: Spend bonds to modify other people's dice.
- 9: Compare dice to determine new bonds. Roleplay this out. End the scene.

1: PICK YOUR CHARACTER

You can choose to play either your male or female character before the scene is created.

2: ROLL FOR SCENE TYPE

Roll on the following table. Add 1 to your roll for each season already completed this year that did not contain a ball.

-  Chance meeting in town
-  Walking home after church
-  Picnic
-  Taking tea of an afternoon
-  Dinner
-  Ball

3: ROLL TO CONTROL THE SCENE AND SWAP CHARACTERS

All players roll a dice; the highest roller gets to control the scene. Their character is, in some way, in charge of events – so maybe they've orchestrated the planning, or they spy the other characters in town and seek them out for a meeting, or what have you.

You can spend Standing to increase your roll – 1 point of Standing increases your result by 1 – but you can't spend it in the subsequent scene if you do so.

When you control a scene, you get to do the following:

- 1: Pick one player to swap out their chosen character to their alternate character, as you manipulate the invites.
- 2: Frame and describe the scene.
- 3: Determine when to stop spending Means and Bonds.

4: DECLARE PROPOSALS

Male characters can propose to female characters once the bond between them is ranked 2 or higher; roll a D6 before the scene in which you wish to propose.

If you roll equal to or under your bond rating, you can propose; if not, such a thing would be inopportune, or your fear gets the better of you. Keep the dice result a secret, so to keep everyone's excitement up. During the scene, you should propose at an appropriate juncture, if you are able.

A female character can always refuse marriage.

5: FRAME A SCENE

Describe what's going on – the weather, the sights, the smells, the surroundings, the general feel of the place. Where's it set? If you're the controller, odds are it's in somewhere that you control.

Once you've framed a scene, go around the table and get each player in turn to describe what their character is doing.

6: ROLL FOR FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Every character present rolls a number of dice equal to their Charm stat – this represents their presence in the situation. At the end of the scene, any characters with dice that match each other will have a Bond with one another. If your own dice show matching numbers, mark off a point on your Flaw for each matching dice.

7: THROW YOUR MONEY AROUND

Next, starting with the character with the lowest Means and progressing up to the character with the highest, adjust the dice of others by spending Means on a one-for-one basis. (So if you want to change a 3 to a 5, you must spend two points of Means.) You can only adjust one dice per turn.

You can spend your Standing to resist this change, also on a one-for-one basis, as you don't let the extravagance get the better of you thanks to your superior breeding. If you don't have enough Standing to resist the entire change, you can't resist it. You can resist the change to any dice, not only your own. If you resist the change, the points of Means are still spent.

Roleplay this all out. How are you interacting with other characters? Are you attempting to bring them to your own side, or are you being cutting and trying to remove them from the situation? The player who spends resources is generally in charge of framing the interaction.

Once everyone has spent Means once, continue changing dice until the controller says that it's time to stop.

8: EXPLOIT BONDS

Starting with the character with the lowest Charm, spend Bonds to adjust dice in the same way as you spent Means in the previous round – but you can only spend Bonds on the character that you're bound to. You can't resist adjustments made by Bonds with Standing; passions win out over manners. Adjust one dice per round until the controller says that it's time to stop.

Again, how are you doing this? What are you getting up to? Are you being charming, or flirty, or are you being cruel and manipulative?

9: COMPARE DICE

The scene is almost over. If your dice match the dice of another character, gain one point of Bond with them for each dice that matches – and they gain the same with you.

If any of your dice match your own dice, mark off a point towards your revelation for each dice that does. (If you have a Charm of 1, your dice will never match your own dice, which means you're just not cut out to be a main character.)

Men! Once you hit *three* marks, your Flaw comes to the surface – finish the sentence, and roleplay what happens when it comes out. If your revelation hits six marks, you can undo it – it turns out that you were actually a really nice guy, and you had totally valid reasons for doing whatever it was you wanted to do.

Women! Once you hit *three* marks, your Flaw kicks in and, if applicable, you royally mess up whatever you were trying to achieve thanks to your Internal Conflict. If it hits *six*, you have a sudden change of heart and overcome whatever it was that's kept you from getting married up to now. Cross out your Internal Conflict. It's no longer a barrier to you. Good luck!

Once you've resolved the Bonds and Flaws, get ready to start the next scene. If you've triggered a flaw, it will come up in the next scene.

The Story Is Over

That's it! Did you find love? Did you marry well? Who were the protagonists, and who was relegated to some footnote on page 89? Have a chat about it over a cup of tea.

Regency Ladies Character Sheet

FEMALE CHARACTER NAME:

MALE CHARACTER NAME:

Quirk:

Quirk:

Charm

Means

Standing

Internal Conflict

Troubled Past

BONDS

Player Name

Character Name

Bond Rating



*Squit Finganora, who enjoys pies
and pighats in equal measure*

JON

SPECIAL THANKS TO

My partner Mary, for her endless support, expertise, and love.

Chris Taylor, for playing three tiny Kenku crow-men trying to fire a human-sized bow in a 1st-level Pathfinder adventure and making me think how appealing it is when small stupid creatures try to achieve simple goals ineffectually, and subsequently write the first draft of this game back in 2013.

All the artists, designers and writers involved in this ridiculous project; especially Jon Morris, for sending me a picture of a goblin playing a lute all those months ago, and kicking off this whole project.

Goblins, for their stupid faces, and being just the right blend of horrible and adorable to base an entire game around.

Sean Bean, for being the sort of actor that you can write a roleplaying game about; I'm sorry that I didn't ask you first, Sean, please don't sue me.

My first group of playtesters: Martin, Pedro, Sotiros, Andy, Will and some guy whose name I can't remember, sorry about that. We sat in a pub near London Bridge and drank overpriced pints and played a game I'd written a full two hours previously, and I realised that I was maybe on to something kind of cool.

The other playtesters: Andy Moore, Colin Northway, Sarah Northway, Peter Bothwick, Stephanie Bryant, Joey Romanous, Alexander Tucker, Sarah Foster, Julia M., Hayle W., Brendan Neeland, Chad Bothwick, Meg Jayanth, Rob Morgan, Mary Hamilton, Michael Brunton-Spall, Liam Pudwell, Magnus Nordstrand, Ivar Wedøe, Erik Holten, Alex Winfield, Sarah McCracken, Skylar Woodies, Andrew Levad, Joe Deignan Stephen Rhodes, Will Blackstock, Ibar Murphy, Paul Kerrison, Sean Smith, Andrew "Plan B" Harvey, Alan Cooke, Megan Miller, Morten Brattbakk, Nick Carruthers, Jemma Marriage, Michael Voss, Raymond Fowkes, Alicia Cantrell, Jonathon Fowkes, Grace Fowkes, Arianna Cantrell, Jacob Wood, Joel Huff, Robert Fernandes, Charlie Triplett, Zach Soja, Heather Bragg, Micah Swanson, Jen Bishop, Andrea Wintrow, Kevin Wintrow, Victoria Haddow, James, Jarval, Ellie... and I'm sure a few people who I've missed! I'm sorry if your name's not here; thank you, anyway, for your feedback. What we're learning is that I need to take better care of my playtest reports in case something I do ends up as a Kickstarter.

You, the reader of this book - I hope you like the game, and I hope you play it, and I especially hope you use it to bring younger, or newer, players into our glorious hobby. And if this is your first RPG, congratulations! Now go and buy some others and start telling stories with your friends.

THE KICKSTARTER BACKERS

None of this would be possible without the kind folk who threw money at me to make it. Thank you, all, for your enthusiasm, support, love and cash. Here you are, in all your glory:

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I love hearing from people who've played my games, so if you want to send me an email about your quest, or some pictures of your goblins, do so! You can reach me at gshowitt@gmail.com.

More Games By Me

If you liked *Goblin Quest* and you want more rules-light, fun-heavy games, then take a look at my website at lookrobot.co.uk where you can download them all (and pay as much as you want for them). My other games include:

HAVOC BRIGADE. Play a mob of elite orcish operatives on an “infiltration” mission through a human city, making as much noise as inhumanly possible as you go. One of the characters is just a stack of six goblins.

ONE LAST JOB. You were the best, once upon a time, but now you're old, and worn out, and down on your luck. You get the chance to pull off one last job that'll set you up for life; will you take it? Your character is entirely created by other players through a series of reminiscences and insults during play.

WARRIOR-POET. The Warrior-Poets are heartbreakingly beautiful artists, lovers and mages that live their lives across the crumbling Empire of the Moon. Take on their roles as they bloom for a year, and find out whether they'll burn brightly or fade into an unremarkable end.

THE HOMECOMING COLLECTION. Four small daft games I wrote as, essentially, part of a bet. Includes *WIZARD BATTLE HATS* (in which you must wear multiple hats to gain power), *THICKER THAN WATER* (in which you play criminal vampires), *CULT OF OSIRIS* (in which you must cover yourself in loo roll to heal injuries) and *DOCTOR MAGNETHANDS' GRAND CARDVALCADE* (in which you must go through all your other card games like a drunk through a liquor cabinet).

And, coming soon...

FALLEN. A worldbuilding game where you craft a pantheon of gods, build a world in your image, tear it to pieces and then spend an afternoon clawing your way back into heaven. Keep your eye on Kickstarter Autumn 2015 for more info!

