

## UNKNOWN AGES

Based on mod by Bailiwolf @ RPG.net

Tweaked and playtested by voidstate. Example of play can be found on RPG.net Play By Post forum.

UA recast as a Fantasy game - in this case, a brutal savage Sword and Sorcery prehistory (or perhaps, previous history) in which sly slinky catlike sorceresses utter unspeakable Names in order to beguile the hulking brutes and killers she uses to warm her bed and wet her crimson-stained alter. In which brutish - yet devilish clever - barbarians from the North adventure and whore and kill and steal and live free, despite the so-called laws of civilized man. In which ancient fallen orders of the Elder Races linger at the fringes of the world - a world haunted by demon and fell beats and walking dead. A world teetering on the edge of oblivion, destined to be wiped away and remade, less than dust. Unknown Ages lost in the forgotten murk of deepest time.

## RULES CHANGES

### SKILLS

**STRUGGLE** only allows for unarmed fighting and wielding melee weapons with a damage bonus of +3 or less. Players must buy additional skills to allow the use of other weapons.

**RIDE, CARTER or SAIL** (player's choice) is the default Speed skill rather than Drive.

**LORE** is a default Mind skill rather than Education. Players are encouraged to tailor this skill to their background (farmers have nature lore, mercenaries have military lore, etc.) as few people have broad educations.

New skills which may come in handy:

**ARMOUR (Body)** – know how to don and remove armour & bear the weight of armour without tiring. If you fail a fatigue check you can flip-flop the roll as long as the resulting number is under your Armour skill.

**SHIELD (Speed)** - use a shield (or perhaps, a grabbed opponent) to block attacks. Up to the max of your Shield skill, different size shields impose a negative shift on attacks.

## ARMOUR

Armour is rated based on three questions:

**Is it Rigid?** Is the armour made of an unyielding material such as metal?

**Is it Covering?** Does the armour cover more than half your body area and include a helmet?

**Is it Heavy?** Is the armour thick and sturdy?

Each 'Yes' to an above question adds 3 to this protection, but imposes a -10% shift to all actions involving Speed, including Initiative, all body checks involving movement and all checks to resist fatigue. These penalties increase to -30% each when underwater.

Additionally, helmets add a -10% shift to notice rolls.

For example, a suit of jointed plate armour with all three questions answered YES, would thus stop 9 points of damage per attack while giving -30% to all actions involving Speed, Body checks involving movement and fatigue checks, and a -10% to notice skills.

Donning and removing armour requires one successful Armour check per +3 of protection and each check takes a separate action.

**Fatigue:** Wearing armour is tiring. The GM may call for fatigue checks for armour wearers at intervals dependant on the environment (at least once per 4 hours in perfect conditions).

A fatigue check is a Body roll modified by the character's armour and shield penalties. Each failure imposes a cumulative -5% shift to all Speed, movement and fatigue checks. These penalties return at the rate of 5% per hour once the armour is removed.

Character's whose General Athletics skill is reduced to zero or less can no longer walk due to the weight of their armour. Riding, however, is still a possibility, as the penalty to movement-based Body checks doesn't apply when mounted.

### SHIELDS

The maximum shift a shield can provide depends on it's type.

Small Shield: -10% vs. melee; -5% vs. ranged

Medium Shield: -15% vs. melee; -

10% vs. ranged; -5% to Speed, movement and fatigue checks

Great Shield: -20% vs. melee; -20% vs. ranged; -10% to Speed, movement and fatigue checks

You can also attack with a shield using that skill, adding +0/+3/+6 for damage. Shields never do firearms damage.

### SHIELDS PENALTIES AND ARMOUR

No shield can give a larger shift to opponents' attacks than the wielder's shield skill. However, shield is a Speed skill so is effected by the penalty given by armour, larger shields and fatigue.

Thus, to use a great shield at maximum efficiency, a character wearing articulated plate armour would need a shield skill of 60% (-30% from armour & -10% from the shield reduces their shield skill to 20%). And, as they are at -40% to all fatigue checks, the penalty may well increase the longer they wear the armour (by 5% per failed check), requiring the shield skill to be even higher to remain effective.

### MELEE WEAPONS

Attacks may do rolled damage on a matched success or critical if sufficiently powerful. Melee weapons do rolled damage against opponents whose armour bonus is less than the attacker's weapon's bonus. E.g. An attacker with a club (+3) only does firearms damage to opponents in no armour.

### MISSILE WEAPONS

Bows are Large, Penetrating, and/or Leveraged (+3 damage for each) and arrows can have armour piercing tips (-3 damage, ignore armour).

Reloading (knocking an arrow, balancing a sling bullet, etc.) is a single action and requires a successful Archery check.

Missile weapons do damage equal to the sum of the dice rolled. They automatically kill on a critical (01).

Crossbows have a +6 damage bonus (penetrating and leveraged). Their accuracy allows a +10% shift to hit but they require 2 successful Crossbow skill checks to reload. Heavy crossbows also count as large, giving them a +9 bonus, but require 4 successful checks to reload.

Slings give a +3 damage bonus (their momentum means they count as leveraged).

Cherries: Characters with Archery as an obsession skill may pick cherries. These can be chosen from the Martial Arts list or made up, as usual.

## POWER OF THE GODS

Avatars are basically given god-names for the fantasy setting and used without change. People who channel divine force are considered Clerics, Divine Madmen, Priest-Kings, saints, and holy warriors. The conception (whether right or wrong) isn't that reality is created bottom-up based on patterns of human behaviour, belief, and thought, but human behaviour belief and thought are created top-down by divine beings who capriciously toy with the lives of mortal men. The gods are mostly selfish absentee assholes.

The gods are known by different names in different places. They care little for worship although priests are unlikely to admit that. Priests are generally using religion to further their own power by gaining influence among worshipers and the benefits of following the avatar's path. This leads them to interpret their gods' edicts in as many ways as there are priests. Thus, they are mostly as much selfish assholes as the gods they represent.

## BLACKEST MAGIC

Magic is still based off a Soul skill which must be the Mage's Obsession skill. It still involves charge-building rituals and a body of related effects. The Schools of magic are much less symbolic and post-modern, and don't generally involve a strong internal paradox... here it's more like irony. Here is the basic skinny on some possible schools:

### DIABOLISM

Domain: the summoning and binding of Demons and other Eldritch Horrors from Beyond

Minor Effect: Summon a Minor demon to perform service. Banish a Minor demon.

Minor Charge: Sacrifice food, drink, drugs, and valuables of significant value; make living sacrifices of animals.

Significant Effect: Summon a Significant demon to perform service, or summon half a dozen Minor demons. Banish a Significant demon, or half a dozen Minor demons.

Significant Charge: Make living human sacrifices; sacrifice goods of

unique priceless value.

Major Effect: Summon a Major Demon to perform service, or summon up to half a dozen Significant demons, or a dozen Minor demons. Utterly banish a similar number of demons.

Major Charge: Sacrifice your loved ones or hundreds of other living human beings. Sacrifice artifacts of singular power and magic. Sell your soul to a Demon Kahn. You can only do this last one once... and then you are subject to the Kahn's every command (resisting is a Rank-10 Self and Unnatural check).

Blast Style: None exactly, but Minor demons inflict +3 melee damage, Significant demons inflict rolled value damage, and Major demons pretty much instantly kill people. Being attacked by a demon will often lead to both Unnatural and Violence checks.

Taboo: If you ever break your Contract with one of your demons, all the rest of your bound demons will get testy and try and break their pacts with your (your metaphysical authority is weakened every time you break a Pact). This requires a Magic skill roll vs.. the Demon's Soul stat. If it wins, it'll likely do its damndest to

eat your face off.

Notes: Unlike most schools, Diabolism lets you build the charges needed to work the magic either before or after you actually summon up a demon. If built before, you spend the charges and roll the dice normally, and use this energy to feed the demon and secure the Pact. If you charge up after - essentially summoning on credit - then the Demon (and thus, the GM) gets to specify the charging conditions under which will pay for the spell. This is how most Diabolists get into real trouble (well, this and sacrificing people). The cost of a spell depends on the power of the demon you summon. This also determines the time it takes to summon the demon - generally an hour per charge spent.

Here is the skinny on demon summoning:

Basic Demons: Your basic demon has the following stats, and will perform 1 service with a duration no greater than 1 day. This service can be fairly complex- "Find and slay Agoth the Northman" is just fine. As is "Carry me upon your back to the High Peak of Shelas." You can sometimes bribe a demon to perform services beyond those in the original Pact - but at dou-

ble the normal cost in Charges and a Magic roll. The unnatural effects a demon can produce are one-shot deals. They will one perform a finite number of such magical feats for you, though offering more charges can increase their numbers. They can have Body skills which reflect their demon physiology though - such as Flight or Burrowing.

#### Minor Demons

Stats: 200

Attack: +3 damage

1 Minor unnatural effect.

#### Significant Demons

Stats: 250

Attack: rolled value as damage

1 Significant unnatural.

#### Major Demons

Stats: 300

Attack: instant death

1 Significant unnatural.

+1 Minor Charge: Add 5 Stat points; Add 1 extra Minor unnatural effect; increase duration of service by 1 day; add one command to the pact of a Minor demon.

+1 Significant Charge: Add 15 Stat points; Add 1 extra Significant unnatural effect; increase duration of service by 1 week; add one command

to the pact of a Significant demon.

+1 Major Charge: Add 50 Stat points; add 1 extra Major unnatural effect; increase duration of service by 1 month; add one command to the pact of a Major demon.

## DRUIDISM

Domain: Life and nature, fertility and growth

Minor Effect: command an animal to perform simple service; heal a minor wound, increase fertility; hide easily in natural setting

Minor Charge: Feed blood to the soil and the roots of sacred trees (at least 10 Wound points worth, though it need no be yours)

Significant Effect: command many animals to perform minor service, or one to perform complex service (such as fighting for you). Heal significant wounds, increase fertility dramatically, become one with natural settings.

Significant Charge: Feed great amounts of blood to the soil - at least 100 wound points worth, at least 10 of which MUST be yours.

Major Effect: Cause many animals to perform complex tasks, bring the dying back from the threshold of death, cure any ailment, travel almost instantaneously through a natural setting

Major Charge: Feed the life's blood of one or more beings - at least 300

wound points worth. This leaves the sacrifices dead.

Blast Style: Turn the wilderness against the victim- birds swoop and attack, limbs fall on him, vines trip him, trees fall and crush him. A Druid's Blast doesn't hit immediately, but lingers until he is in a setting where it can do the most good. Such Blasts hang around for as much as a week before hitting, as circumstances dictate.

Taboo: allow harm to come to natural settings under your protection (beyond the normal cycle of tooth and claw and predation). Further, adopting too many of the ways of civilization will cause Taboo- dressing in loom-woven cloth, wielding weapons of steel, or wearing armour made from anything but hide and leather will Taboo a druid. Also note that using natural creatures from your wilderness to Charge is instant Taboo... those civilized men who wander in your wood should beware.

Notes: The magic here is pretty straightforward, but the irony is that the Druid gains power over life by ritually sacrificing life.

## MYSTICISM

Domain: power over thoughts, the mind, and perception

Minor Effect: read surface thoughts, create minor illusions, shock a person's mind, put a person into light hypnosis

Minor Charge: deny the flesh, focusing on the mind (go without food or sleep, or expose yourself to the elements while meditating on the higher mind).

Significant Effect: control thoughts, read secret desires, create fantasy illusion scenarios, travel the astral plane, blast a person's mind to chaos.

Significant Charge: mortify the flesh, ignoring pain and need to invigorate the mind (inflict ritual injuries while meditating for several hours - 10 wounds per charge at least)

Major Effect: transfer your mind to another body; swap minds of two or more subjects, read a person's mind utterly and completely, make someone your total and utter slave, utterly destroy someone's mind.

Major Charge: permanently reduce the flesh- loosing a significant body

part through ritual sacrifice while meditating (self-castration is popular in the East). Deny your body's needs while surrounded by temptation for weeks (starve yourself while sitting at a table loaded with your favourite foods until you are almost dead). Lots of Self and Helplessness checks here.

Blast Style: Mystics reach inside the minds of their victims and scramble their thoughts and fry their nervous systems. A victim blasted by a Mystic has no idea where the attack is coming from, and if slain, leaves an unmarked corpse behind.

Taboo: Indulge the flesh for pleasure (eat more than required to keep you alive and healthy, have sexual relations for a purpose other than to produce an heir, bathe more than basic health demands, or dress in clothing more sumptuous than the needs of climate or modesty).

Notes: Mystics are often these crazy dirty old men living in caves on the top of mountains. They generally have a great deal of insight (from all that mind-reading and astral projection) but are usually in poor health from their self-denial. The other side is the Eastern mystic - the humble-seeming court advisor or minister. Often a Eunuch, this Mystic is a

devilish schemer who uses his powers to further his ambitions.

## NECROMANCY

Domain: power over the dead and undead

Minor Effect: cause minor withering, raise spirits, commune with the dead

Minor Charge: contemplate death and the dead- preferably in particularly morbid environment

Significant Effect: cause significant withering, raise corporeal undead, command spirits to your will, steal life like a vampire

Significant Charge: Ritually enact your own death & burial and spend night sleeping in your own tomb; construct a monument to Death; engage in perverse ritual mockery of life (plant a field with gravel as if it were seed, have sex with a corpse, bind another person's wounds with infected bandages and maggots etc)

Major Effect: raise an undead army; become undead yourself; slay hundreds

Major Charge: die and rise from your own death; celebrate death on a mass scale (on the order of the Pyramids)-turn a society to Death.

Blast Style: Withering Touch. Cheap (1 charge per blast) but requires a touch to work. Causes victim's body to wither and age, bursting open with puss and maggots. Quite nasty.

Taboo: Act in such a way as to celebrate life (have sex, plant crops, tend to another's wounds, etc).

Notes: Necromancy is a great school if you happen to be a Stygian priest-king or something. You can use your power to create a great necropolis, in which people live in tombs and sleep in coffins. Mad charges to be reaped from such an arrangement.

## WIZARDRY

Domain: wizardry is the power of words, spoken or written, and the way words can persuade, awe, or dominate. Words can be used to change a person's whole world view.

Minor Effect: Make a suggestion which the target will accept as reasonable. Curse or bless a target in such a way as to affect his fortunes in a limited way.

Significant Effect: Issue commands which targets will find hard to disobey (Mind check with minimum of the wizard's magic skill and rank-8 Self check if successful). Curse or bless a target in such a way as to affect his fortunes in a broad way.

Major Effect: Utterly entrance targets with your words, altering their core belief systems (you can rewrite their Obsessions and Triggers). Make terrible curses or wondrous blessings.

Blast Style: The Wizardry blast doesn't inflict damage, but it does impose overwhelming awe and majesty. This causes both Fear and Unnatural stress checks in those who the Blast is directed against. Rank-4 for Minor blasts, Rank-8 for Significant blasts. This Awe can affect more than one

person easily if they can clearly see and hear the Wizard who uses it.

Taboo: Wizards must always be careful with what they say - their words carry power even if they don't intend them to. They don't charge up like normal mages, but rather once they have used their words to carry power, they become carriers for accidental magic. Each use of Wizardry CREATES a charge (or charges) which hangs around, waiting to discharge at the GM's discretion based on what the Wizard says. For example, an angry wizard who utters "Damn you eyes, why can't you keep up!" could accidentally Curse one of his companions with blindness (or at least a big negative shift to Notice rolls). These charges work high to low, so Major charges erupt first, then significant, then minor ones. Wizards are known for their taciturn natures and their tendencies to speak in riddles for good reason. To speak too clearly courts disaster.