Crawl!

No.12: The Luck Issue
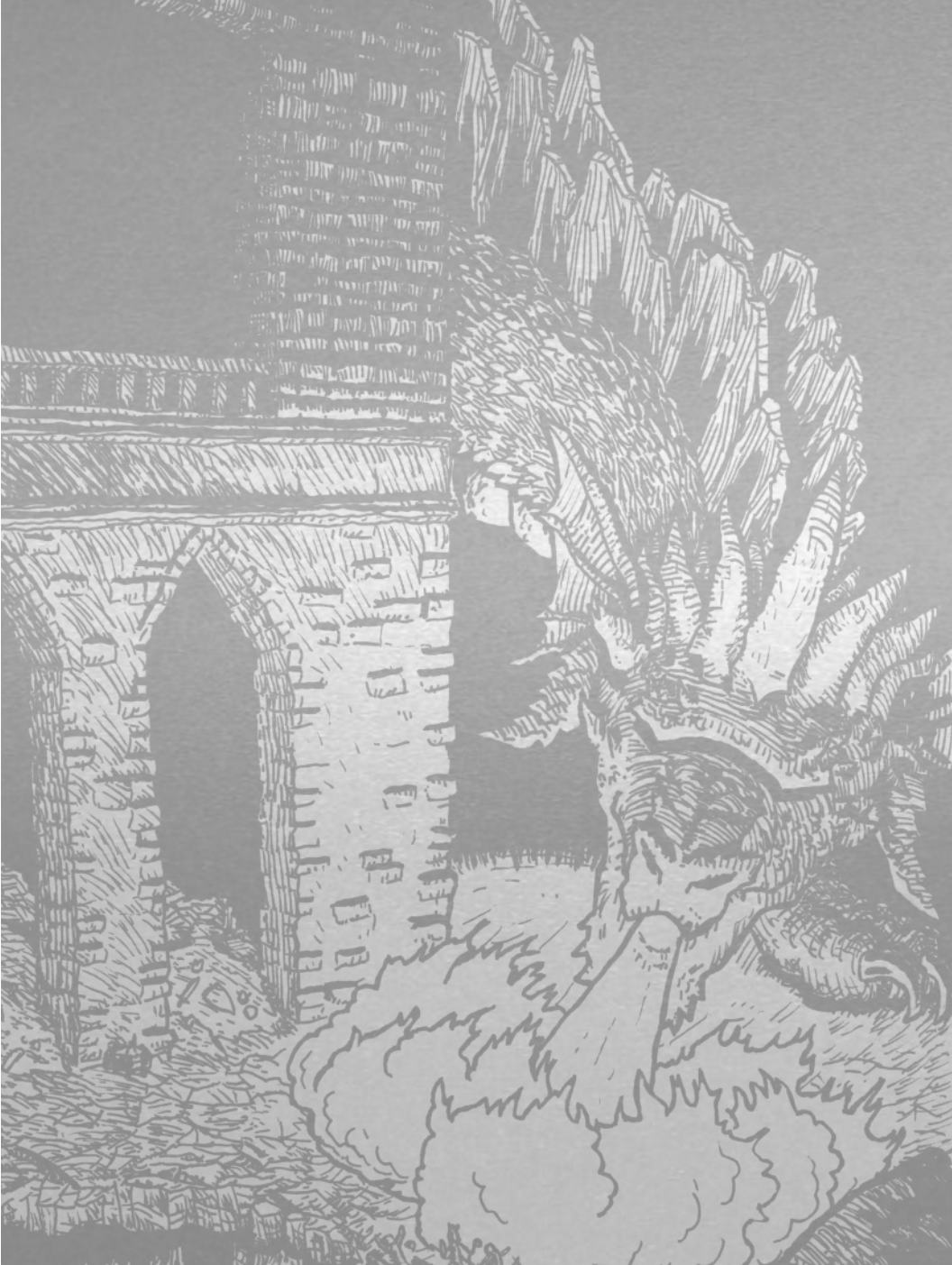
Crawl!fanzine

No. 12
Digital Edition

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COMPATIBLE WITH
DCC RPG

Luck Check!

One of the most confusing rules in DCC RPG has been the Luck check. The problem is that the "roll low" mechanic is inconsistent with the most common dice based checks, which are "roll high", particularly attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws. But as we soon learn by playing the game, some dice rolls are best made low, such as fumbles and deity disapproval. A lot of rules use the Luck modifier to modify rolls, but when some rules call for a Luck check, such as the recover the body rule, it's not always clear what to do. Do you roll under your Luck score, or do you add the Luck modifier to a roll? It's easy enough to work with both rolling high and rolling low, as some rules will emphasize how Luck comes into play, but some rules don't specify at all.

In this issue of Crawl! fanzine, we present helpful tips when dealing with Luck checks. But we also included alternatives to the standard d20 luck based checks and methods to convert "official" rules to the new mechanics. Luck being one of the distinct elements of DCC RPG, especially compared to other "old-school rules", we thought it would be important to include some ideas for rewarding and burning Luck, specifically to perform Mighty Deeds! DCC RPG wouldn't be the game it was if it weren't for its plethora of random tables. In this spirit, we experiment with the idea that all Luck checks should be table based and include as many Luck based tables as we can fit! And finally, a new feature for Crawl! Fanzine, The Dungeon Balladeer, themed bard songs from across the ages.

Good Luck and all that!

Your (Dungeon) Master in Chief,

Rev. Dak J. Ultimak

Contents!

Submissions!

Original submissions are welcome. Everything that gets published will belong to the author, artist and creator. For art submissions, send a link to some samples. We prefer old-school "D&D" style black and white line-art with hatching or halftone. Smaller, incidental fantasy themed pieces are always needed. If you have a brilliant idea or proposal, I want to see it, but make sure you use a short and informative subject line. Include a quick blurb or sample text in the email. Don't send attachments until requested. All contributors will get a free print copy of the zine. Email ***crawl@straycouches.com***.

High or Low?

Tips For Dealing With Standard Luck Checks by Rev. Dak J. Ultimak

Ability checks are pretty much the core mechanic of the basic rules, and one of the commonly called checks is the Luck check. When calling for a typical ability check, judges and players assume a d20 roll then add the appropriate modifier, hoping to match or beat a target DC. But when it comes to a Luck check, it's not so simple. Some official rules, and many modules, will imply a d20 roll of equal or under their current Luck score (aka "roll under"). But some of the rules give a DC, which works like a regular ability check (Luck is an ability score after all). This inconsistency can confuse players, especially those new to the game. A best practice of game design is to maintain consistency across rules. It's easy enough to use the DC if it is stated, and to assume "roll under" if it isn't, but picking one or the other, then sticking to it, is preferred and easiest. Remember Luck modifiers only come into play where the rules, mostly tables, ask for them.

All Luck Checks As Ability Checks

This is easiest to remember as a player, but it can get complicated for the judge. As judges quickly discover, many rules ask for a DC, and many important rules imply (such as Recovering the body) or explicitly (e.g., random mishaps as suggested in the Luck section of the rulebook) call for a "roll under." To maintain consistency, when a DC isn't specified, pick one, and stick with it. Suggested DCs could be DC 10 for a more heroic campaign, or DC 15 for a grittier campaign. For example, some find the recover the body roll to be too generous, so a DC 15 can be declared for the duration of the campaign.

An alternative is to have all Luck check DCs be random. So when a Luck check is called, the judge rolls a d20, 2d10, or 3d6. The result will be the DC for that particular check. See the next chapter, Alternative Luck Checks: Variable Luck Checks to adopt and use with specific DCs.

All Luck Checks As Roll Under Checks

Getting used to Luck checks as **always** being a "roll under" can be easy to remember. But this can get confusing when a published rule states a DC. It's best to simply ignore the DC, and stick to "roll under." Sometimes adventure writers deliberately include DCs as an emphasis of difficulty and risk, the best way to apply this difficulty is to use the dice chain mechanic instead of a standard d20. See the following table for converting Luck check DCs to dice chain bumps/drops. But when in doubt, just roll Luck or under.

Luck check DC	Dice Chain Bump (or die rolled)	
4 or less	-2d	(or d14)
5 to 9	-1d	(or d16)
10 to 14	0	(or d20)
15 to 19	+1d	(or d24)
20 or more	+2d	(or d30)

Group Checks

It's always helpful to figure out which PCs have the highest and lowest Luck. Use d20+Luck modifier rolls to break ties. In beneficial group Luck checks, have the PC with the highest Luck make the check. Have the PC with the lowest Luck roll for unfortunate results.

To determine a lucky and unlucky set of characters, roll 3d6, 2d10, or 1d20, and all PCs with a Luck score equal to or higher than the roll are the lucky ones, the rest are less fortunate.
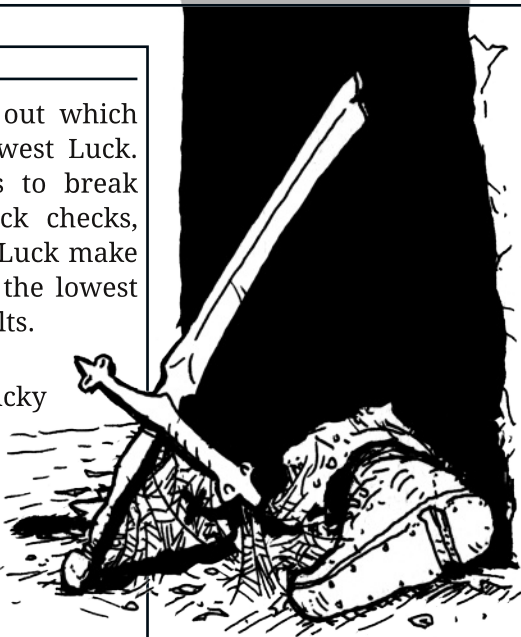
Alternative Luck Checks

Different Luck Mechanics Instead of Luck Checks by Rev. Dak J. Ultimak

As described in the previous chapter, there are two common types of Luck checks: DC based checks, where the player rolls a d20 and adds their PC's Luck modifier then tries to roll equal or higher than a target number. And "Roll Under", where a d20 is rolled, and a roll that's equal or below the Luck ability score is considered a success. Remember, consistent rules are easier to remember and preferred. The following systems are alternatives to the standard rules. For some, a whole different mechanic or system can help keep things consistent. When needed, the new mechanics will include rules to convert specific DCs to work with the new alternative rules (helpful when using published adventures that use DCs to emphasize risk and difficulty).

DCC RPG's strong emphasis on luck separates it from other "Old-School Rules". Turning Luck checks into its own subsystem can enforce this even further. The following rules can replace standard Luck checks, i.e., DC and "roll under" rolls, and turn them into mini-games of their own. Pick one of the following mechanics or rules, and use it in place of all Luck checks.
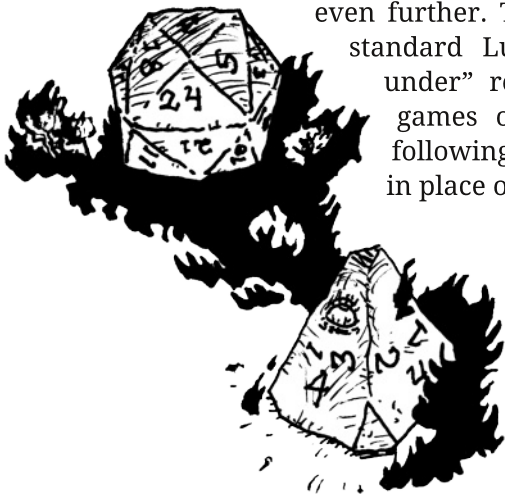
Variable Luck Checks

Roll a d20, modified by Luck. The DC is determined randomly, using 3d6 (or 2d10 or 1d20 for "swingier" DCs). If

used with specific DCs, consult the following optional table:

Luck check DC	Variable DC	Luck check DC	Variable DC
4 or less	1d6	15 to 19	4d6 or 1d24
5 to 9	2d6 or 1d12	20 or more	5d6 or 1d30
10 to 14	3d6 or 1d20		

Traveller Checks

Roll 2d6, modified by Luck. If the roll is 8+, the check succeeds! This mechanic gives more weight to the Luck modifier, and is easy to remember.

If the Luck check has a DC, the consult the following table (again, this is optional):

Luck Check DC	Target Number	Luck Check DC	Target Number
4 or less	4+	15 to 19	10+
5 to 9	6+	20 or more	12+
10 to 14	8+		

Craps

Roll 2d6. If the result totals 7 or 11, the check passes. If the result is a 2, 3 or 12, the check fails. A roll of 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, or 10 becomes a point number. The player must roll again, if they roll that point number again, they pass. If they roll a 7, they fail. If any number except the point number or 7 is rolled, they roll again. If the PC has a positive Luck modifier, they can declare the new number rolled (except 7) as an additional point number. They can claim an additional point number up to their Luck modifier. They must keep rolling until they roll a point number or a 7 (known as craps). If the PC has 0 or less in Luck mods, they can't "afford" to declare any new point numbers.

If the Luck check has a DC, the judge may reward or penalize the number of additional point numbers as follows (their Luck mod will then adjust this number accordingly.):

For example, a PC with a 15 Luck has a Luck mod of +2. That player may add up to 2 additional point numbers if they continue rolling without rolling craps (7). If this Luck check has a DC, let's say DC 15, then the PC will have one less additional point number to claim.

Luck Check DC	Add'l Point Numbers
4 or less	+2
5 to 9	+1
10 to 14	0
15 to 19	-1
20 or more	-2

Push Your Luck (aka Dice or Greed)

Roll 6d6. If the roll shows any 2, 3, 4, or 5's, those dice may be 'banked', and put aside for points. But once they're banked, they aren't rolled again. If any dice shows any 1's or 6's, the check may fail! If that happens the PC may burn Luck to re-roll any dice, including 1's and 6's. If any double 1's or 6's (snake eyes or boxcars) are rolled, they're considered "safe", they can be banked, but for 0 points. The player must re-roll any remaining, un-banked dice. Once all the rolls are finalized, the total must be 15 or more, for the check to pass. If the banked dice total is less than 15, the check fails! Optionally, if the Luck check has a DC, the total must beat that number. Another risky proposition, is if the rolls total 30 or more, the player may earn a Luck point.

Story Mode

Roll 2d6, modified by Luck. If the roll is 10 or more, the check succeeds. If the roll is 7-9, the check succeeds but with a complication or trouble as determined by the judge. If the roll is 6 or less, the check completely fails. Judges familiar with "storygames" will be familiar with this system. The complications can be as simple as half-failure/successes or some other penalty down the line. It's best to ignore any DC based Luck check numbers, and adjust the complications appropriately. For example, rolling a 7-9 on a recovering the body roll, could result in a permanent disability that is much worse than a single -1 Ability score loss. A PC could become blind or suffer the loss of a limb.

Luck as a Guiding Force

Luck as a Motivator by Rev. Dak J. Ultimak

The Luck section (Judge's Rules chapter 7 of the *DCC RPG* rulebook, p. 360) has all the basic rules for using Luck in the game, including rewarding or penalizing Luck, and when to call for Luck checks. The chapter encourages the judge to use luck as a motivating force to guide and give direction, particularly when dealing with alignment, and the de facto "Eternal Struggle". But a gaming group can also use Luck as the tool to focus on the type of game they want to play. They can create their own table of Luck Changes to supplement or replace the official table, and to encourage the style of play and goals of the campaign they want to play. For example, a mercenary company should get Luck for accomplishing assigned missions, a band of self-proclaimed heroes would earn Luck for saving innocent victims and defeating villains. Using custom tables creates built-in motivators, which can be handy for sandbox campaigns and when players are at a loss for what to do next. The following are examples, with spaces to include your own:

Heroic Campaign

The party has committed to living their lives as local heroes.

Prevent/Stop Crime	+1 to +3
Property Destruction	-1
Allow Crime	-1 to -3
_____	_____
_____	_____

Mercenary Campaign

The party are seasoned mercenaries, working for the highest bidder.

Accomplish Paid Mission	+1 to +3
Failing Paid Mission	-1 to -3
Going Beyond The Job	+1
_____	_____
_____	_____

Explorers Campaign

The party is tasked to explore the unexplored.

Discovering New Lands	+1 to +3
Mapping Local Dungeons	+1
Discovering New Peoples	+1
_____	_____
_____	_____

Lucky Strikes of Derring Do

A New Way To Burn Luck by R.S. Tilton

Every judge has had a player describe a cool action and let the non-warrior attempt a Mighty Deed of Arms. Sword & Sorcery prose is rife with Rogues and Priests performing mighty deeds. Bring that cinematic action to the table with this Luck option. Note, even the Wizard can attempt to use Luck Burn for Mighty Deeds, though they might want to save it for spells.

Luck Fueled Mighty Deeds

By using luck to fuel a Mighty Deed you give the thief and halfling another combat option for their regenerating luck. Any character that does not normally have Mighty Deeds, or a character that has deeds with limitations, can burn Luck to attempt any Mighty Deed, as well as burn Luck to roll a higher deed die based upon the dice chain. As with any Mighty Deed, this adds to the attack and damage rolls.

Luck Burned	Deed Die	Die Boost
1	d3	
2	d4	+1
3	d5	
4	d6	+2
5	d7	
6	d8	+3

With thieves and halflings now having an option to perform deeds, below are two new deeds appropriate for those dastardly rogues (or mighty warriors).

Dastardly Deeds of Deceit

Hamstring

You strike for the tendons and muscles of the leg, to hinder your opponent.

| Deed Die	Hamstring Result
3	Opponent is hindered for one round as the strike fails to sever the tendons. -1 AC penalty for the next round.
4	Opponent suffers damage to tendons in one leg, -1 AC Penalty and loses 5 feet of movement until healed
5	Opponent is completely hamstringed on one leg, -2 AC penalty, and loses 10 feet of movement until healed.
6	Both of Opponents legs are hamstringed, -3 AC Penalty and half movement until healed.
7+	Opponent's legs are completely crippled in a brutal attack, unable to move until healed, -4 AC penalty.

Hindering Strike, or Strap Cutter

You strike at your opponent with the intent of hindering their ability to attack and defend to the best of their ability.

3   Opponent is hindered for one round as your throw their hood over their eyes. -1 AC penalty for the next round.

4   Opponent is thrown off balance and staggers into an ally, both opponents are at -1 to their next attack.

5   You cut the straps on the opponent's gear, -1 to attack rolls and AC until the foe spends an action to disentangle the gear.

6   In a lightning strike you cut several straps, making the opponent's armor overly cumbersome. -2 AC until they can remove the armor or gear

7+   You make a mockery of the opponent, knocking them prone and making their armor completely useless.

"Wait, If the Thief can do Mighty Deeds, I want to backstab." Permanently burn 1 point of Luck and make a backstab for 1 attack oh roguish warrior.
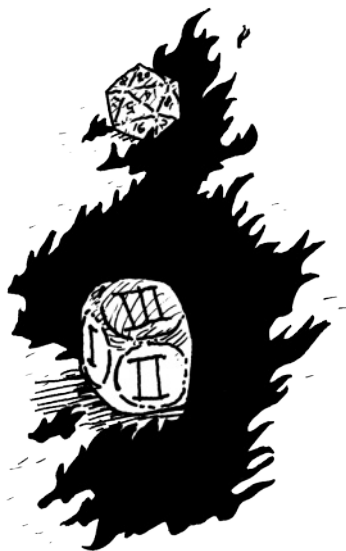
More Options
For Burning Luck

1   **Reroll A Die:** Burn a Luck point to reroll any die roll. You can use this to reroll any roll that isn't an attack, check, or save. If the roll has a permanent effect, such as hit points or damage, the Luck point loss is permanent. For more random rolls, burn as usual.

2   **Not It!:** When a character is subject to a random trap, or effect, due to a random roll or Luck check, the player may burn Luck to negate the original roll or result.

3   **I Got It!:** If a player forgot to buy something for their character, the player may burn a Luck point to "suddenly" have it, given they can afford it of course.

4   **Die Bump!:** A player may burn two (2) Luck points to get a die bump on any die roll, even an attack, check, or save.

5   **I Can Do It, too!:** Permanently burn a Luck point to perform a skill outside the character's occupation (rolling a d20 instead of a d10).

6   **This Is My Lucky Charm:** Permanently burn a Luck point to declare an item Lucky! This item may eventually become a Legendary item. (See Crawl! No.2, the Loot Issue, for more info!)

Luck Tables

The concept is pretty simple, instead of your standard fail/pass Luck check, we roll on tables instead!

Recovering The Body (d20+Luck mod)

Replace the *bleeding out* rule and *recovering the body*'s Luck check with this table instead.

Roll	Result
4 or less	***Dead***
5 to 9	***Brink of death:*** PC has 1 round to be healed or they die. Initial healing will only heal 1 hp. The PC will remain in a coma until hit points are fully healed. PC will suffer 1d3 permanent injuries (each injury reflected as -1d3 to Strength, Agility, or Stamina).
10 to 14	***Bleeding out:*** PC has a number of rounds equal to their class level to be healed or they die. Initial healing will only heal 1 hp per HD healed. The PC will remain unconscious, i.e., can not perform any actions until fully healed. PC will suffer 1d3 permanent injuries (each injury reflected as -1 to Strength, Agility, or Stamina).
15 to 19	***Critical condition:*** PC has 1d3 turns to be healed or they die. Initial healing will only heal 1d3 hp per HD healed. The PC will remain incapacitated, i.e., can not perform any actions until at least half their hit points are healed. PC will suffer 1 permanent injury (reflected as a -1 to Strength, Agility, or Stamina).
20 or more	***Alive, but injured***: (as recovering the body in the *DCC RPG* rulebook).

Hot tip! Instead of the permanent injuries above, check out *It's Only A Flesh Wound by R.S. Tilton* in *Gong Farmers Almanac 2015 Vol. 6* and *Body Recover by Jim Skach* on his blog: *http://myotherswordisvorpal.blogspot.com/2013/07/body-recovery-in-dcc.html.*

A Fortune Told (d20+Luck mod)

Any character that spends 1 turn with a Fortune Teller can learn a thing about their future.

Roll	Result
0 or less	The fortune teller gets a glimpse at the PC's impending doom. The message will disturb the PC, leaving them shaken (-1 to all actions) until the PC makes a DC 15 Will save (once per day). In the future, anytime the character is in a situation related to or similar to the vision will cause the PC to freeze (no actions) until they make a DC 15 Will save. E.g., "PC is stabbed through the heart by a sword," when the PC encounters a threat armed with a sword, the PC will hesitate or freeze.
1 to 9	Nothing... the fortune teller sees nothing, and is bothered.
10 to 14	The vision is useful. When in the situation foretold, the PC gains a +1 to all related checks.
15 to 19	The fortune is undeniably beneficial. When a similar situation occurs, all checks related to the vision will have a +d1 bonus.
20 or more	The fortune is clear and specific. When a similar situation occurs, all checks related to the vision will automatically succeed. E.g., "PC will enter a yellow door," when the PC encounters a set of door, the PC will recognize the beneficial one.

Random Mishap (d20+Luck mod)

As an alternative to the Luck check found in the Luck section (p. 361); once per hour of real time, every PC rolls on this table.

Roll	Result
0 or less	Something horrific happens immediately; e.g., A freak accident (falling rocks, loose boards, run-away horse, etc.), that can do up to 1 HD in damage. DC 20 Ref save for half.
1 to 4	Something terrible happens within the next hour; e.g., A freak accident (as above), that can do up to 1d4 damage. DC 10 Ref save for half.
5 to 9	Something bad happens within the next hour; e.g., equipment malfunction or missing, a minor trip or fall, etc. DC 10 Ref or Will save to avoid.
10 to 14	Something unusual happens within the next hour; e.g., a weird omen, red herring, or random non-malicious encounter.
15 to 19	Nothing Unusual
20 or more	Unusual luck or coincidence that can help with the current mission, or a random item or clue that someone has left behind.

Bad Hair Days (d20+Luck mod)

As with above, but with another ability (determined randomly, or judge's discretion). Examples given below relate to Personality checks, but can be any ability score as determined by the judge. This could be tied to Random Mishaps above, or some other incident.

Roll	Effect
0 or less	Bad hair day: Personality checks are -3 for the day.
1 to 4	Um, did you lose some weight? You look different: Personality checks are -2 for the day.
5 to 9	Fly-away, frizzy hair today: Personality checks are -1d3 for the day.
10 to 14	Did you get a new haircut? Personality checks are +1d3 for the day.
15 to 19	I like what you've done with your hair: Personality checks are +2 for the day.
20 or more	Your hair looks great today: Personality checks are +3 for the day.

Lucky Days (d20+Luck Mod)

First roll 1d30 or pick a Birth Auger/Lucky Roll (*DCC RPG* rulebook, p. 19). That result will represent the current day, and its influence over all those with the corresponding Birth Auger. All PCs with that Birth Auger will then roll on the following table and have their Lucky Rolls affected for that day (in-game time). Then the following day, the next Birth Auger will be influential, and PCs with that Birth Auger will reap the appropriate benefits (or disadvantages).

Roll	Effect
0 or less	The stars frown upon you: Lucky Roll is modified by -3 for the day. Roll for an additional Lucky Roll, and get a -1 on that result for the day.
1 to 4	The stars seem dim: Lucky Roll is modified by -2 for the day.
5 to 9	The stars are flittering: Lucky Roll is modified -1 for the day.
10 to 14	The stars are shining in your direction: Lucky Roll is modified by +1 for the day.
15 to 19	The stars are bright: Lucky Roll is modified by +2 for the day.
20 or more	The stars look up to you today: Lucky Roll is modified by +3 for the day. Roll for an additional Lucky Roll, and gain +1 in that result for the day.

Feeling Lucky? (d20+Luck mod)

This is a generic Luck table, useful when in doubt. Is a PC nearby when a trap is sprung, etc.? Did the PC find something, too? Did the player forget something, that their PC wouldn't of have? Two columns, one for positive/desired effects and another for negative/unfortunate effects.

Roll	Negative/Unfortunate	Positive/Desired
0 or less	Yes, in fact it was that PC's fault in the first place; PC becomes the primary victim or source of problem, etc.	No, PC forgets it, or wasn't even close, etc.
1 to 4	Yes, definitely.	No, not at all.
5 to 9	Maybe so...*	Maybe not...*
10 to 14	Maybe not...*	Maybe so...*
15 to 19	No, not even close.	Yes, PC is party to the plan.
20 or more	No, PC may have seen it coming.	Yes, PC might even get a bit extra.

*Judge's discretion: There may be times where it seems unlikely the PC will get what they want, or what they deserve. Consider the chances or likelihood, the equivalent of a DC 15, etc.

The Dungeon Balladeer

Bard Songs by Mark Bishop

The Dungeon Balladeer is a collection of songs, passed down from town-to-town and generation-to-generation. The bard and the troubadour are the keepers of the land's history, curators of sorts, who remember the legends and the stories through their musical compositions. We look forward to bringing you new songs, culled from the taverns and castle courts, with each and every new issue of Crawl!

Welcome weary traveller to the DCC Tavern! Pull up a chair next to the hearth and rest your weary bones as Helga brings you a frosty pint of our finest dwarven ale. The word on the street is that you and your "ahem... friends" have cleared out the tunnels beneath Master Moorlock's mansion and that the infestation of wolf-spiders is quelled.

Good show! With the labyrinth cleared of danger, perhaps now the village will return to normal. Who are those half-orcs sitting at the corner booth? I don't know... they haven't been here before that I can remember. The surly brutes came in about an hour ago, asking about a

wizard... what was the name... oh well, I'm sure that it's not anyone you know.

You're in luck tonight travelers... we have with us,all the way from the Seventh Moor Taproom a troubadour of great renown. He'll be regaling us with songs and ballads as he strums his lute near the fireplace. And speaking of LUCK, he has a brand new song about one of the luckiest halflings that ever walked the Kingdom's Path.

Listen... he's singing it now...

The Ballad of Pervis Grumcobble

The deep rutted streets on the south side of town
Lead men to the tavern where Grumcobble's found.
The lucky old halfling, one eye, and peg leg
with half his teeth missing will empty his keg.
He spins his tall tales of adventuring days.
But no one believes the poor halfling's malaise.
"I once fell to danger, 'neath thundering hooves,
But good luck was with me and bounced into wolves."
"The wolves were so hungry, they fought for my flesh."
"I rode one to safety, her teeth dripping fresh."
"She lept o're a cliff side, I sprang for a root,
And though my hand missed it, it still caught my boot!"
"The leather was rotten, old shoe it had been,
But luck found a river, that's where I fell in!"
Grumcobble! Grumcobble!
Lucky old bloke!
Anyone else and their neck would be broke!
Grumcobble! Grumcobble!
Cat with nine lives!
No matter what happens, that halfling survives.

Wicked Branches!

O're the Barrier Hills, in the woods to the south,
they tell of a tree with three eyes and a mouth.
It sings through the day and it snores through the night.
It gobbles up children by catching their kites.
Her leaves in the autumn; a fiery blood red,
drawn up from the muscles and limbs of the dead.
So if you find your boots in the woods to the south,
beware of that tree with three eyes and a mouth.
Wicked branches! Wicked branches!
They reach for the moon in the pale of the night!
Wicked branches! Wicked branches!
They say that her bark's not as cruel as her bite.