



SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

When vicious bandits waylay a caravan bound for an outpost on the edge of civilization, the player characters are the only survivors, trapped and lost in a hostile wilderness. If they would live to see another day, they must learn to work together and discover the people they might one day become. This adventure is designed for a group of starting characters and is especially suited to new players.

This adventure happened thanks to an outstanding show of support for the *Shadow of the Demon Lord*™ Kickstarter campaign. In addition to pledging funds, backers could also complete achievements: weird, fun things that kept people talking about and engaged in the campaign. Achievements included getting a shout out from a black metal band, making videos, liking and following Schwalb Entertainment on various social media sites, and more. It was a great experiment and made the campaign a lot more fun. This adventure is my thanks to everyone who pitched in and made the campaign a great success.

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ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Here are some things you need to know before you run the adventure.

What Happened: A gang of bandits attacked a caravan bound for Fletcher's Rest, a tiny settlement on the western edges of the Old Wood. The forest has a dark reputation because of an ancient protector who slew many of the woodcutters working here long ago.

The Situation: The characters were traveling with the caravan and escaped by fleeing into the forest. They don't know if they are the only survivors or if they are being pursued—but even if they aren't, the Old Wood is a dangerous place. Their best chance at living through this ordeal is to get to Fletcher's Rest and warn the people living there about the rapacious killers haunting the woods.

The End: The adventure ends when the characters reach a settlement, most likely Fletcher's Rest, or when they are all killed. Characters who survive to the end might form a group and, if so, advance to level 1. See **chapter 1** in the *Shadow of the Demon Lord* rulebook for rules about group advancement.

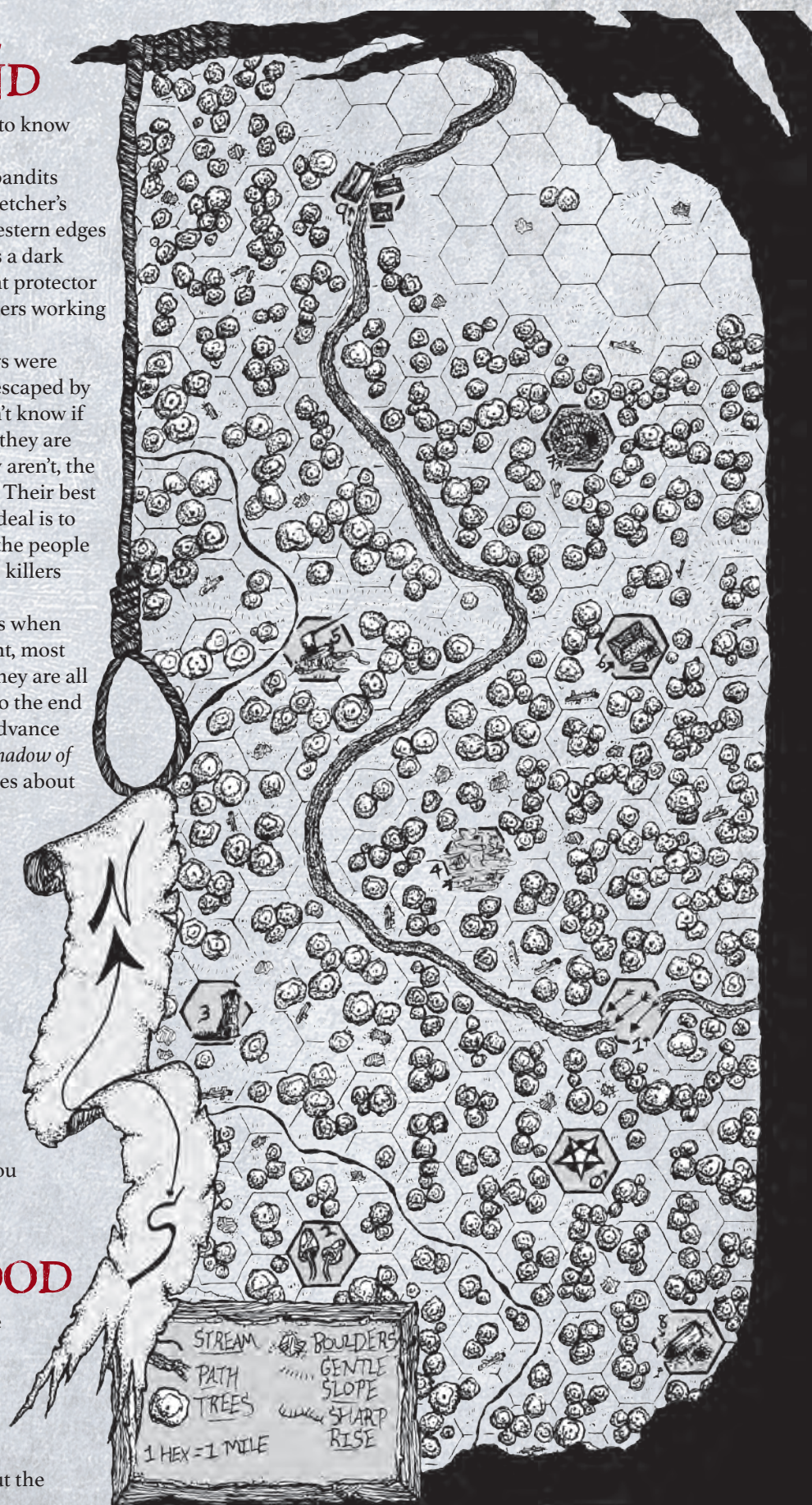
GETTING STARTED

Once you set up the situation, have the players introduce their characters and their reasons for being part of the caravan. Character professions and background elements are good sources of inspiration.

You can find statistics for creatures the group encounters at the end of this adventure if you don't have the *Shadow of the Demon Lord* rulebook.

THE OLD WOOD

The Old Wood is a dense tangle of oaks, maples, and elms that covers a considerable area west of the Black Hills, a rolling landscape from which miners extract coal. Once the wood was a prime timber resource, but the



woodcutters ceased their operations after being driven out by its enraged guardian, a mythical being known as a leshy. Since then, the wood has reclaimed much of its lost territory, swallowing up several tiny villages and the roads connecting them.

The hexagonal grid map shows the area where the adventure takes place. Each hex is 1 mile across.

EXPLORING THE WOOD

The density of the wood, combined with uneven terrain, makes travel slow. It takes 1 hour to cross from one side of a hex to the other.

When the adventure begins, the characters have become lost in their flight from the ambush. Have the players choose one member of the group to take point. At the end of each hour the group travels in a particular direction, have that character make an Intellect challenge roll with 2 banes, reducing the number of banes by 1 for each wilderness profession he or she has. On a success, the group exits the hex in the intended direction. On a failure, the group exits the hex one step to the left or right; for example, a group that was traveling north would exit to the northeast or northwest. If the total of the roll is 0 or less, the group gets turned around and doesn't leave the hex at all.

The characters aren't likely to be in the wood long enough to suffer the effects of deprivation. There's plenty of water, so even if they run out they can find more. Should they run out of food, they can forage by spending 1 hour searching their hex. Each foraging character must make a Perception challenge roll. On a success, the character finds enough food to sustain himself or herself for the rest of the day. If the total of the roll is 20 or higher, the character finds food for up to 1d3 other characters.

PERILS

The Old Wood is as dangerous as its reputation suggests. Some hexes contain keyed locations labeled with numbers, which are described in the following section. The group must stop when it enters a labeled hex that has not been cleared and encounters the challenge there. For each hour the group spends in an unlabeled hex, roll a d6. On a roll of 2 or higher, the hex is empty and remains so until after the group completes a rest. On a 1, something significant happens. Roll a d20 and consult the "Old Wood Perils" table to find out what.

Creatures encountered in the hex remain until slain or driven off, or until after the group completes a rest, at which point the hex becomes empty once more.

Traveling the Forest Path: If the characters manage to find the road again, they can move along it at about 3 miles (3 hexes) per hour. The bandits are watching, however. Each time the group enters a hex using the road, it triggers a peril on a roll of 4 or lower on the d6 instead of on a 1.

OLD WOOD PERILS

d20	Peril
1	A medium monster, all eyes and tentacles, lumbers out of the deep forest. Once it has been defeated, replace this result with 1 ghoul.
2-3	1d3 - 1 large spiders (minimum 1) descend from the canopy to feed.
4-7	A team of 1d3 + 2 bandits finds the group.*
8-13	A sickly wolf springs out to attack.
14-17	A bandit who was separated from the gang stumbles out from the trees.*
18-19	It rains for 1d3 hours in the group's hex and 2 hexes out from it. The area of rain is partially obscured and slows the group's rate of travel to 2 miles per hour. The center of the rain moves 1 hex to the west each hour until it stops.
20	Deer, squirrels, a raccoon, or some other harmless wildlife is spotted in the distance.

* Deduct slain bandits from the total in the camp (area 8). If that number drops to zero, the group encounters no more bandits.

FOREST COMBAT

The Old Wood can be of great aid to the characters or a complication that must be overcome in a fight.

The forest canopy blocks out the sky, though during the day enough light passes through the leaves and branches for characters to see normally. At night, the wood is dark.

The trees are fairly dense. Targets beyond an attacker's reach but within short range have half cover, while targets beyond short range have three-quarters cover. Such cover counts as being from an object for the purpose of attempting to hide.

Hostile creatures typically start combat 2d6 yards away from the group. You decide whether or not they attempt to sneak up and surprise the characters.

KEYED LOCATIONS

The following hexes are labeled with numbers, indicating that they have interesting features or dangerous creatures, or otherwise challenge the group. Defeating hostile creatures in the hex changes its status to unlabeled for the purpose of exploration if the characters come back later.

o. Start: The adventure begins here, in the middle of the forest, about 2 hours after the attack on the caravan. Until the characters complete a rest, this hex is considered safe. Afterward it becomes potentially dangerous, like all other unlabeled hexes.

1. Ambush Site: This is where the bandits attacked the caravan with which the characters were traveling. Two of the wagons caught fire and continue to burn for 1d3 hours after the adventure begins. During this time, any character who gets above the canopy can see the smoke.

The attackers left a few dead horses and guards along the road where they fell, and 4 bandits still watch over the site.

They remain until after the characters complete a rest, then abandon the site and return to their camp (see area 8).

Characters searching the site find one crossbow, a case with twenty bolts, two swords, seven days of travel rations, and a *healing potion*. If the group is small, you can have the characters find an injured caravan guard with 5 damage who joins the group. Use the **patroller** statistics for the guard, adding whatever interesting details you choose.

2. Fungus Patch: The air in this section of forest is redolent with rot. The source of the stench is the decaying corpse of an ogre, dead three days and bloated with foul gas. Growing in the meat are **2 fungal mites**: mobile, dimly sentient fungi that feed on rotting flesh. They look like mushrooms with red caps, about 1½ feet tall. Should a living creature come within short range of the corpse, the mites pull free and lurch toward the intruder to attack.

The ogre is nice and ripe. If it takes any damage, the pent-up gases cause the corpse to explode, throwing blood, gore, and bits of bone from a point in its space in all directions out to short range. Each creature in the area must get a success on an Agility challenge roll or take 1d3 damage; any that take damage must then get a success on a Will challenge roll made with 1 boon or gain 1 Insanity.

Characters searching the area around the ogre discover a large burlap bag that holds a wheel of cheese, half a decomposed sheep, 4 ss, 27 cp, and a sword.

3. Haunted Ruins: The ruins of an ancient tower rise from the center of this hex, reaching a dozen yards or so high. The top fell years ago, scattering rubble over the ground to the north and east of the tower. A character searching through the rubble who gets a success on a Perception challenge roll with 1 bane finds one of the following: 2d6 cp, 1d6 + 2 arrows, a bone knife that glows red while within medium range of a troll, or a silver cup worth 1 gc. All four can be found with enough successes.

At night, 1d3 hours after sunset, a few ghostly forms rise up from the ground and drift through the tower's ruins. These apparitions ignore the group and are immune to all attacks and effects. Any character who sees them must make a Will challenge roll, gaining 1 Insanity on a failure, or 1d3 Insanity if the character is already frightened. On a success, that character is unaffected by their

ghostly appearance until after he or she completes a rest. The apparitions linger in the area until just before sunrise.

4. Misty Clearing: The trees give way to a small clearing where nothing grows, the bare dirt strewn with small rocks. Curls of yellow mist rise from the ground and dissipate to fill the air with a curious metallic odor. When a living, breathing creature moves into the clearing, it must succeed on a Strength challenge roll or become diseased. On a success, the creature becomes immune to the toxic mist until after it completes a rest.

A creature diseased by the mist must make a Strength challenge roll whenever it completes a rest. On a failure, the creature takes a cumulative -1 penalty to Health, which lasts until the creature is no longer diseased. After three successes, it removes the diseased affliction.



5. Psychotic Woodcutter: One of the more dangerous denizens of the woods is a cursed woodcutter (a **skinchanger**). By day, he is a hairy, filthy human, naked and carrying a woodsman's axe. By night, he transforms into a bizarre possum-human hybrid that attacks anything it encounters, tearing its victims apart with sharp teeth. The woodcutter has lived alone so long that he no longer knows how to speak. Should the characters befriend him while in his human form, he urges them through pantomime to flee from his presence when it draws close to dark.

6. Lonely Cottage: A humble cottage stands in a small clearing. The walls are timber, with a stone chimney climbing up one side. The roof is sod. There's a well around back and a stack of wood nearby, with an axe stuck in the stump.

The cottage belongs to a hermit named Rena. She was driven out from her home in Verge, which lies some distance to the south, and has eked out a living here ever since. She's a noncombatant, but if the characters befriend her, she can use her magic to heal all their damage. She does this for them just once. She can also give them guidance about how to get out of the woods, granting the lead character 1 boon on the Intellect challenge rolls made to avoid getting lost. Finally, she warns the characters to steer clear of the woodcutter, who's very dangerous.

7. Eaters of the Dead: A pair ghouls lair in a small cave at the bottom of a sinkhole in this hex, where a pool of rust-red water collects and almost covers a pile of bones. The ghouls leave skulls around their territory to warn off enemies. No more than one ghoul is present at this location at a time.

8. Bandit Camp: The bandits, of which there are twenty, gather in a large camp near the pool in this hex. They live in homespun tents held up by wooden poles and build rings of stones to contain their cook fires. Several dead animals hang from nearby trees for the evening meal. At any time, the camp contains **1d6 + 3 bandits**. As well, there's a 1-in-6 chance that the **bandit leader** is here. (Remember to subtract any bandits the characters kill or drive off from the total.)

9. Fletcher's Rest: A tiny community that barely qualifies to be a town, it is home to thirty-two humans who live in ramshackle houses huddling behind a 3-yard tall wooden palisade. No one would ever come here if it weren't for the tomb of a martyr important to the Cult of the New God. Pilgrims come to offer prayers to the martyr's spirit once each year, believing the spirit can perform miracles of healing. The pilgrims are the only reason the town has an inn, which has the same name as the town, at its center.

Should the characters reach Fletcher's Rest and warn the inhabitants about the danger, the town can drum up six men and women (as **patrollers**) to help them wipe out any remaining bandits.

CREATURES

The following rules excerpt and creatures are from chapter 10 of *Shadow of the Demon Lord*. Refer to that chapter for more information.

A STATISTICS BOX

The statistics box is a standard format for presenting a creature's game information. It contains both descriptive material and numerical entries for how to use the creature in the game.

NAME	Difficulty #
<i>Size # [frightening/horrifying] descriptor (special)</i>	
Perception # (+#); special senses	
Defense # (armor); Health #	
Strength # (+#), Agility # (+#), Intellect # (+#), Will # (+#)	
Speed # ; special movement traits	
Immune List of things by which the creature is unaffected	
Defensive Trait Name and description of how it works.	
Vulnerability Description of how it works.	
Other Train or Passive Talent Name and description of how it works.	

ATTACK OPTIONS

Attack (melee; [reach +#]) +# [with # boon(s)] (damage [plus attack talent])

Attack (range) +# [with # boon(s)] (damage [plus attack talent])

Attack Description of how it works.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Name Description of how it works.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Name Description of how it works.

MAGIC

Power #

Tradition *name (#), name (#), name (#)*

END OF THE ROUND

Effect Description of what happens.

BASIC INFORMATION

The first two lines of the box state basic information about the creature.

- **Name:** The creature's common name. A creature might be known by other names in different areas or by other cultures.
- **Difficulty:** A creature's Difficulty rating represents its overall power.

CREATURE DIFFICULTY

Difficulty	Recommended Group Tier
1	Starting
5	Starting
25	Novice

- **Size:** This line indicates the creature's normal Size.
- **Frightening:** A creature that does not have the frightening or horrifying trait must make a Will challenge roll when it first sees one or more creatures with this trait. It makes the roll with 1 bane if it can see four or more frightening creatures at once.
- On a failure, the creature becomes frightened for a number of rounds equal to $1d3 +$ its Insanity total or gains 1 Insanity if it is already frightened. Once a creature makes this roll, whether it succeeds or fails, it cannot again be affected by this trait of the creature or creatures it saw until after it completes a rest.
- **Descriptor:** This word tells you to what group the creature belongs and gives you a sense of how it fits into the game. A creature might be an animal, a faerie, a monster, or something else. Usually, descriptors do not have special rules.

CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTRIBUTES

The next few lines present numbers representing the creature's characteristics and attributes.

- **Perception:** This entry tells you the creature's Perception score and modifier.
- **Special Senses:** If a creature has a special sense, it is noted here. Rules for the most common types of senses follow. Special senses beyond these are described in full in the creature's entry.

Shadowsight The creature can see in areas obscured by shadows as if those areas were lit.

Darksight The creature can see in areas obscured by shadows and darkness within medium range of it as if those areas were lit. Beyond this distance, the creature treats darkness as shadows and shadows as lit.

Sightless The creature relies on senses other than sight to perceive its surroundings and can pinpoint the location of each creature and object within long range of it. Creatures within the area cannot hide from the creature, and it ignores banes imposed by obscurity on rolls to perceive things. A sightless creature is never subject to the blinded affliction.

- **Defense:** This entry tells you the creature's Defense score. A creature's Defense score might be higher than its Agility, due to natural armor or intrinsic abilities. Creatures that wear armor or use shields note them parenthetically after the score.
- **Health:** The creature's Health score. When a creature that is not a player character becomes incapacitated, it dies instantly unless you decide otherwise.

- **Attributes:** The scores and modifiers for the creature's four attributes are listed here. If an attribute entry has a "—" instead of a number, the creature does not have that attribute and is immune to anything that would target that attribute or require a roll using it.
- **Speed:** The creature's Speed, measured in yards. If the creature has any special movement traits, they are noted here. If a special movement entry includes a number, the creature uses that number in place of its normal Speed when moving in this way. See "Special Forms of Movement" in chapter 2 of the rulebook for more information.
 - Climber** The creature ignores difficult terrain from climbing.
 - Swimmer** The creature ignores difficult terrain from swimming.
- **Immune:** If the creature is unaffected by certain damage sources or afflictions, they are listed here. Otherwise, this line is absent.
- **Defensive Trait:** If the creature has any special defenses, they are described here. Otherwise, this line is absent.
- **Vulnerability:** If the creature gains afflictions from or is otherwise harmed by certain environments or situations, they are described here. Otherwise, this line is absent.
- **Other Trait or Passive Talent:** If the creature has any other special trait or a talent that doesn't require it to take an action, it is noted here. Otherwise, this line is absent.

ATTACK OPTIONS

When the creature uses an action to attack, it may choose from any of the listed options. Unless otherwise noted, the creature attacks one target creature or object and makes its attack roll against the target's Defense.

- **(Reach +#):** Most creatures have a reach of 1 or their Size, whichever is larger. If a creature has a longer reach, that is noted here.
- **(Range):** Ranged attacks note the range (short, medium, long, or extreme).
- **Natural Weapon:** Natural weapons can be anything a creature uses to hunt or to protect itself, such as teeth, claws, spines, horns, or a tail spike.

ATTACK TALENTS

This entry describes any additional effects on the target from a success on the attack roll using this Talent. Certain attack talents take effect only if the creature gets a success on an attack roll result of 20 or higher and exceeds the target's Defense by 5 or more. This is written in abbreviated form as "on attack roll 20+" on the attack line.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Some creatures have talents that grant them special attacks, which are described in this entry. Using a special attack counts as an attack action. If the creature has no special attacks, this entry is absent.

- **Multiple Attacks:** Many creatures can make two or more attacks using a single attack action. For example, a creature with Double Attack can use one action to make two attack rolls. Unless otherwise noted, these attacks can be against the same target or different ones.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Some creatures can use special actions, which are described in this entry. Taking a special action uses an action unless otherwise specified. If the creature has no special actions, this entry is absent.

MAGIC

This category is present only if the creature knows any spells, which none of these creatures do.

END OF THE ROUND

This entry describes anything that happens at the end of the round if the creature is not incapacitated. When combat starts, you resolve any such effects as though a previous round had ended and then proceed with the first round.

CREATURES

All the following creatures appear in the adventure.

BANDIT

Difficulty 1

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
Defense 14 (brigandine, small shield); **Health** 12
Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 10 (+0),
Will 9 (-1)
Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Club (melee) +2 (1d6, or 2d6 against a surprised target)

Longbow (long range) +0 (1d6 + 1, or 2d6 + 1 against a surprised target)

BANDIT LEADER

Difficulty 1

Size 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
Defense 14 (brigandine, small shield); **Health** 12
Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 9 (-1)
Speed 10

Leadership Other creatures within medium range of the bandit leader that are friendly to it and that can see it make attack rolls with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Club (melee) +2 (1d6, or 2d6 against a surprised target)

Longbow (long range) +0 (1d6 + 1, or 2d6 + 1 against a surprised target)

FUNGAL MITE

Difficulty 10

Size 1/4 or 1/2 fungus

Perception 11 (+1); sightless
Defense 11; **Health** 20
Strength 13 (+3), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 5 (-5), **Will** 15 (+5)
Speed 8

Immune gaining Insanity; asleep, blinded, dazed, deafened, fatigued, frightened, stunned

ATTACK OPTIONS

Appendage (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 + 3)

GHOUL

Difficulty 25

Size 1 frightening monster

Perception 12 (+2); shadowsight
Defense 15; **Health** 15
Strength 11 (+1), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 8 (-2), **Will** 11 (+1)
Speed 8

Immune damage from disease or poison; diseased, poisoned

Fear of the Gods A ghoul makes attack rolls with 1 bane against a creature wearing or wielding a holy symbol.

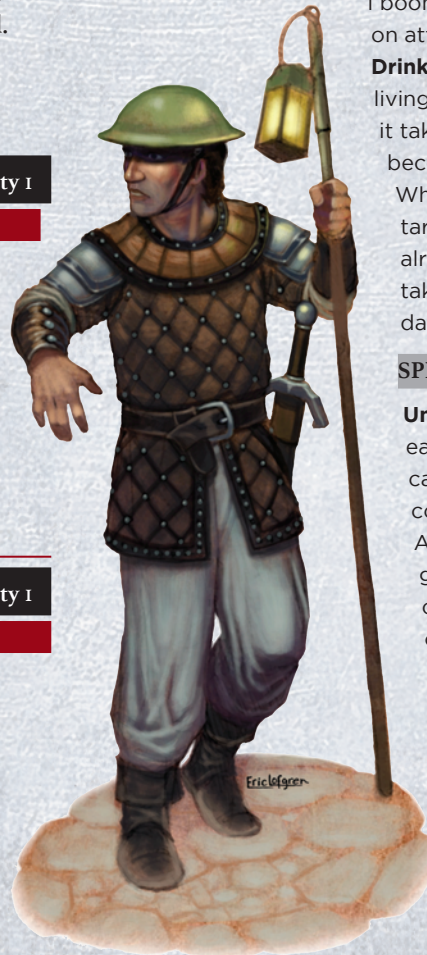
ATTACK OPTIONS

Claws and Teeth (melee) +3 with 1 boon (2d6 + 3 plus Drink Blood on attack roll 20+)

Drink Blood If the target is a living creature of flesh and blood, it takes 1d6 extra damage and becomes fatigued for 1 minute. While fatigued this way, the target is also slowed. If it was already fatigued, it instead takes another 1d6 extra damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Unholy Feast The ghoul eats one dead creature it can reach, which requires concentrating for 1 minute. At the end of this time, the ghoul utterly consumes the corpse and assumes the creature's appearance for 24 hours. While wearing this new form, the ghoul loses its frightening trait.



LARGE SPIDER

Difficulty 10

Size 1/2 or 1 animal

Perception 16 (+6); darksight
Defense 14; **Health** 20
Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 7 (-3), **Will** 10 (+0)
Speed 14; climber

ATTACK OPTIONS

Fangs (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 plus Poison)

Poison The target must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If the target is already poisoned, it instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Scuttle When a creature within the spider's reach moves, the spider can use a triggered action to retreat.

MEDIUM ANIMAL

Difficulty 10

Size 1 animal

Perception 12 (+2)
Defense 14; **Health** 20
Strength 13 (+3), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 6 (-4), **Will** 10 (+0)
Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 + 2)

MEDIUM MONSTER

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1 monster

Perception 12 (+2); darksight
Defense 13; **Health** 20
Strength 13 (+3), **Agility** 9 (-1), **Intellect** 7 (-3), **Will** 13 (+3)
Speed 10
Immune gaining Insanity

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 + 2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Frenzied Attack The monster attacks two different targets with its natural weapon, making each attack roll with 1 bane.

PATROLLER

Difficulty 1

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 11 (+1)
Defense 14 (hard leather, small shield); **Health** 11
Strength 11 (+1), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 10 (+0)
Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Spear (melee) +1 (1d6)

Torch (melee) +1 with 1 bane (1d6 plus 1 from fire)

SKINCHANGER

Difficulty 25

Size 1/2 or 1 frightening monster

Perception 13 (+3); shadowsight
Defense 15; **Health** 30 (Regeneration)
Strength 14 (+4), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 9 (-1), **Will** 11 (+1)
Speed 12

Silver Vulnerability When a skinchanger takes damage from a silver weapon, it takes a penalty to Health equal to the damage. The penalty lasts until the skinchanger completes a rest.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Teeth (melee; hybrid form only) +4 with 2 boons (3d6 plus Skinchanger Curse)

Skinchanger Curse If the target is human or a similar mortal creature and becomes incapacitated by the skinchanger's attack but does not die, it must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane the next time the moon rises full. On a failure, the target transforms into a skinchanger until moonset. While transformed, it uses the skinchanger's attributes, characteristics, attacks, talents, and traits in place of its own but can take only hybrid form. When the transformation ends, the target has no memory of its time as a skinchanger.

The curse lasts until lifted or until the target kills the skinchanger that cursed it.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Change Form The skinchanger uses an action or a triggered action on its turn to assume the form of a **medium animal**, assume a hybrid form, or return to its human form. While in animal form, it uses that creature's physical attributes, characteristics, attacks, talents, and traits. It retains its own Intellect and Will.

END OF THE ROUND

Regeneration The skinchanger heals 1d6 damage if it is not incapacitated.

SICKLY WOLF

Difficulty 5

Size 1 animal

Perception 12 (+2)
Defense 14; **Health** 8
Strength 13 (+3), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 6 (-4), **Will** 10 (+0)
Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 (1d6 + 2 plus Disease)

Disease The target must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it becomes diseased. Each time a diseased creature completes a rest, it must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes a 1d6 penalty to Health. If this penalty reduces its Health to 0, the creature dies. After three successes, the creature removes the diseased affliction. The next time it completes a rest, the reduction to Health ends.