

# BLOOD RITES

A Dark Role-  
Playing Game

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## Introduction

### Mud

Unfortunately, you were born on Mud.

Life is hard in your village. You have lost many play mates to the deadly jungle that surrounds you.

You took solace only in the tales told around the sputtering village fire, of the vast empire of the High Old Ones, the age of leisure and war, of slaves and feasts. That was before the Uprising, and the long Downfall that left those few who survived naked and huddling in the darkness of the jungle.

You grew. When the time came for the Trials of Life and you went through the Bloodletting, the shaman moaned at the sight your blood. You have the Blood's Way in you.

You spent the next painful year learning the ancient, strange arts of magic. You have the scars to prove it, some carved by your own hand. Now, at the height of your fourteenth summer, you must leave your village. If you're lucky, you will survive your four years of exile and become a full shaman. Perhaps you will even uncover the secrets of the High Old Ones and the great stone cities they left behind. Perhaps you will even stay sane.

### *What the Hell, Dude?*

This is a strange RPG system set in a dark world. Your character was born into a primitive, savage existence. You use magic that hurts others or yourself.

This is a system of constant harsh choices. Your character must make difficult decisions in an environment very alien from our own.

### *The Basic Feel of the World*

**The world is primitive.** There is no technology (at least not in the villages). Most infants and children do not survive to adulthood. Culture is limited to a few simple religious observances and beads in womens' hair. Even clothing is a luxury that almost nobody can afford.

**The world is savage.** Tremendous, powerful beasts hunt in the vast jungles of the world. Nobody

ventures more than a few miles outside their village, except shamans and Carrion the Plague Carrier.

**The world is unexplored.** After Downfall, mankind scattered. People know nothing of the world beyond the next hill. Great treasures and forgotten relics lay half-buried in the jungle.



### *The Required "What's Role-Playing?" Section*

If you've never role-played before: it's basically a game of "Let's Pretend," with rules. The rules determine who's stronger than who, and in what areas.

This role-playing game (RPG) is played by a group of *players* and a *Game Master* (GM). The players pretend to be (in our case) shamans-in-exile, wandering the endless jungles of Mud. The GM provides a scenario for the players, and stands in for all the villains, monsters, and side characters (commonly called Non-Player Characters, or NPCs).

## The Core Mechanic

Every creature—intelligent and otherwise—is represented by a few statistics. These statistics are listed as either a number from -4 to +5, or an adjective which corresponds to one of those numbers:

- +5 Legendary
- +4 Superb
- +3 Great
- +2 Good
- +1 Fair
- 0 Average
- 1 Mediocre
- 2 Poor
- 3 Terrible
- 4 Abysmal

When attempting an action that carries with it significant difficulty or danger, the GM determines a numerical difficulty (such as 2), and the situation is resolved as follows:

Roll *Fudge dice*—four 6-sided dice—and add the most relevant statistic (Cunning, Agility, *etc.*). You can use actual Fudge dice, which have two -1 sides, two +1 sides, and two 0 sides. If you instead use regular six-sided dice, then every die that rolls 1-2 subtracts 1 from the relevant statistic, 5-6 adds 1, and 3-4 has no effect.

That result is then compared to the difficulty of the action. If the result is equal to or higher than the difficulty, the player who rolled succeeds.

These rules describe this mechanic with the notation “succeed on a Fair (+1) Endurance roll.” This means you roll Fudge dice, add your Endurance statistic to what you roll, and succeed if the result is +1 or higher.

*You want to convince a tribe that you really want to help them. You use your Presence, which is at +2. You roll a 6, 5, 4, and 1. That translates to +1, +1, 0, and -1, or a total of +1. Added to my Presence of +2, I did a Great (+3) job of convincing the tribe.*

## The World

The world of Mud was once ruled by powerful Demon Kings, the High Old Ones who used terrible and powerful sacrificial magic to enslave the world.

The Demon Kings were not unlike the Aztecs or Maya in this regard, except that their magic worked, and ceremonially eviscerating a few slaves could summon a dragon or flatten a village.

The High Old Ones lived lives of unthinkable luxury in their sprawling cities of stone and crystal, surrounded by innumerable slaves who would do their bidding without thought.

Eventually, the slaves revolted and killed the High Old Ones, but only the Demon Kings could work the magical devices that kept the empire running. Humanity reverted to savagery and barbarism. They now huddle in tiny villages, surrounded by the terrible creatures who are now also free from the Demon Kings' shackles.

## Locales

The Demon Kings left behind great stone cities that

have since sunk into the jungle. Some tribes live in the decaying buildings, but so do various monstrous creatures.

Legends tell of underground cities, too; vast dungeons and tunnel complexes that may literally go on forever.

There are also stories of flying ships, handheld eyes with terrible and painful gazes, temples to old gods, and forgotten coliseums now ruled by the vicious creatures that once fought each other for sport.

## Other Characters

### Carrion, The Plague Carrier

Carrion wanders the world, wearing a long cloak that completely covers his (or her?) body, his (her?) face covered by a bird-skull mask.

Carrion carries the plague, and visits villages to spread it. Why? A far worse form of the plague exists (and it is said that only Carrion knows where it lays dormant). Carrion spreads only the milder version of plague—which still kills one in ten—so that the full horror is never released.



## Characters

### Your Character's Statistics

Stats are divided into *vital* statistics and *non-vital* statistics. All creatures have vital stats, but non-vital ones are only used by player-characters and major villains.

Each character's **vital** statistics are:

<b>Brawn</b>	Your character's raw physical might. This is used to determine the power of physical attacks.
<b>Cunning</b>	Your character's intelligence and mental flexibility. This is used to determine the accuracy of ranged attacks.
<b>Spirit</b>	Your character's will and ability to relate to others. This is related both to magic and your relationships with others.

Each character's **non-vital** statistics, which are used in non-combat situations, are:

<b>Agility</b>	Your character's physical flexibility and dexterity.
<b>Endurance</b>	Your character's ability to withstand the elements.
<b>Lore</b>	Your character's knowledge of the past and the natural world of Mud.
<b>Perception</b>	Your character's ability to notice things.
<b>Presence</b>	Your character's charisma and ability to influence others.

All your stats start at +1. You can take any number of stats down to 0 or even -1 to give you an equal number of extra points for other stats. No stat may be below -1 or above +3.

*Ox is a physically powerful but not-too-bright boy. His vitals are Brawn +2, Cunning 0, Spirit +1. His non-vitals are Agility +1, Endurance +2, Lore 0, Perception +1, Presence +1*

*Yol is a spiritually sensitive girl. Her vitals are Brawn -2, Cunning +2, Spirit +3. Her non-vitals are Agility -1, Endurance 0, Lore +1, Perception +2, Presence +2.*

### Your Character's Benefits (Optional)

If your character's Brawn is +2 or higher, you can swim well enough to avoid drowning.

If your character's Cunning is +2 or higher, you can read. However, writing is rare on this world.

If your character's Spirit is +2 or higher, you are sensitive to the spirit world. If dealing with spirits, they will appear to you first.

### Your Character's Fetish (Optional)

Your character may focus his or her magical training on some aspect of the world. This fetish gives you access to a special spell. Fetishes include:

#### Beast Master

You can command beasts. This does not give you an animal companion. You can, however, sense the general attitude (hostile, unaware, friendly, confused, etc.) of any non-sentient animal, and you know the *Beast Direction* spell.

#### Control Beast

*Use within 3 days*

**WEAK** Give one creature a single-word, non-violent command. The creature will obey the command for about half a minute.

**STRONG** Give one creature a single command. The creature will obey the command for several minutes.

**EPIC** You have complete telepathic control over one non-sentient creature for up to 3 hours. The creature will obey any command, including suicidal ones.

#### Fire Walker

You access the element of fire. You can light a small fire at any time just by snapping your fingers, and you know the *Immolation* spell.

#### Ball of Fire

*Use within 1 day*

**WEAK** You unleash a ball of fire directly at one target within 10 feet. Target takes one effect.

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**STRONG** You unleash a ball of fire directly at one target within 50 feet. Target takes two effects.

**EPIC** You launch an arc of fire that hits up to three targets that are each within 10 feet of each other, one of which must be within 50 feet of you. Each Target takes two effects.

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### Flesh Healer

You know of many potions and poultices that greatly speed up the healing process. If you are close enough, you may lay hands on up to two people at a time when removing effects during combat (see [Removing Effects](#), page 15). You also know the *Healer's Touch* spell.

#### Healer's Touch

*Use within 3 days.*

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**WEAK** Remove one effect on one creature.

**STRONG** Remove up to three effects on one creature.

**EPIC** Remove up to six effects total among any number of creatures.

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### Game Hunter

Everyone on Mud must hunt for food, but you have taken your magical powers and tuned them to the hunt. You can track an animal through even dense underbrush if it is less than 100 yards away, and you know the *Hunter's Scent* spell.

#### Hunter's Scent

*Use within 1 day*

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**WEAK** The target's scent fills your nostrils and you can track them for the next 1 day. The target must remain in your sight.

**STRONG** You know the direction of your target and can pick up his or her tracks and scent from up to 5 miles. This lasts for 3 days, and you must know what the target looks or smells like.

**EPIC** You know everything there is to know about the target, from their movement patterns to their thought patterns. You know the target's exact location at all times. +1 to attack rolls

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against target. Lasts one month.

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### Illusion Maker

You can manifest illusory sights. You can create a distracting, shadowy ripple up to 20 feet away from you, and you know the *Illusion* spell.

#### Illusion

*Use within 3 days*

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**WEAK** Your appearance shifts so that you look like another human you have met. Lasts 1 hour.

**STRONG** Your appearance shifts so that you look like another human you have met. Lasts 1 day.

**EPIC** For the next 1 day, at any time you can change your appearance to look like any human you can imagine.

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### Mind Warper

You can meddle with others' minds. You can sense truth on a roll of 0 or higher, and you know the *Intuition* spell.

#### Mind Control

*Use within 2 days*

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**WEAK** Give one sentient a simple command that can be carried out within seconds. The sentient obeys it without a second thought.

**STRONG** You bedazzle one sentient, who does whatever you command for five minutes. Commands that conflict with the sentient's nature (killing a loved one) must succeed on a Spirit roll vs. the controlled creature's Spirit.

**EPIC** One sentient will do absolutely anything you command it to for the next hour.

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### Water Shaper

You call upon the element of water. You can purify up to one gallon of water per hour, making even the most brackish water perfectly clean, and you know the *Wall of Water* spell.

**Wall of Water**

Use within 1 day

**WEAK** One target within 20 feet is encased in a bubble of water for one turn; target is *immobilized*. After that turn, the water splashes to the ground.

**STRONG** Up to three targets within 20 feet are encased in bubbles of water for up to 3 turns (your choice); target is *immobilized* and *stunned*. Afterwards, the water splashes to the ground.

**EPIC** Up to five targets within 50 feet are encased in water, and moved up to 20 feet per turn for up to 5 turns (your choice); targets are *immobilized* and *stunned* every turn. Afterwards, the water splashes to the ground.

**Your Character's Spells (Optional)**

The following optional rules make for a less brutal, slightly more high-fantasy game.

At the beginning of the game, your character has learned two spells (besides the spell provided by his or her focus) during his or her training. Choose those spell from the Magic chapter.

If you see another spell being cast or are taught a spell by another shaman, you can now cast that spell. Teaching a spell takes about a day.

**Your Group's Ambition**

In addition, the entire group must have some specific objective they are trying to achieve. The player-characters may come from different villages or the same village, but the players must choose a common goal that unites them all. Feel free to create one yourselves; here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- You must find a new site for your decimated village.
- You seek to end the plague.
- You search for the Blood Urn; those that drink from it may be able to practice the Way of the Self with no penalty.
- A new disease ravages your village; you have heard that it can be cured by sacrificing an incredibly rare raptophoenix.

- You wish to find a city of the High Old Ones and pillage it for wealth for your village.
- You wish to become one of the High Old Ones yourself.
- You wish to destroy all vestiges of the High Old Ones' dangerous remains.

**Your Character's Stuff**

Clothes and possessions are luxuries on Mud. Armor will not protect you from a raging fleshrender or a swarm of pirritous.

However, you will probably want to carry a weapon:

A one-handed weapon is worth +1 on your attacks. Examples include:

- Bone knife (hand-held)
- Sling (ranged, 50 feet)
- Blowgun (ranged, 50 feet) – on hit, the target is *weakened* (page 14).

A two-handed weapon is worth +2 on your attacks, but restricts you in combat. While using a two-handed weapon, you cannot let go of it to open doors, drink, pick up objects, *etc.*

- Spine sword (hand-held)
- Bow and arrow (ranged, 50 feet; 100 feet if you take -1 on the roll)

You can also choose training in unarmed combat. This gives you a +1 on melee and ranged attacks, but you cannot use any weapons, even if you hold them.

There are no healing potions or the like.

**So, How Do I Create a Character?**

Put 1 point into each of the following statistics. You can lower any stat to -1 to give you extra points for another stat. Each stat must be between -1 and +3.

- Brawn
- Cunning
- Spirit
- Agility
- Endurance
- Lore



- Perception
- Presence

Optionally, note your character's benefits if any of the first three stats are +2 or higher.

Choose one **weapon** for your character.

As a group, think up one **Ambition** that the characters want to achieve.

*Ox's vitals are Brawn +2, Cunning 0, Spirit +1. His non-vitals are Agility +1, Endurance +2, Lore 0, Perception +1, Presence +1. He can swim. He wields a bone knife.*

*Yol's vitals are Brawn -2, Cunning +2, Spirit +3. Her non-vitals are Agility -1, Endurance 0, Lore +1, Perception +2, Presence +2. Spirits appear to her first. She carries a blowgun.*

*The group's village is cursed to manifest a shape-changer every generation, which kills several villagers in a violent rampage. The group seeks a way to end the curse, even if it means the death of the group members. They cannot return to their village without a solution.*

Sample names: Ain, Baat, Ek, Hom, Hun, Kai, Ki, Kin, Mayel, Moch, Muan, Mul, Muluc, Muyal, Nab, Noh, Nohol, Pacal, Pik, Tahal, Tzek, Tul, Yax, Zacal.

## ***How to Play Your Character in Blood Rites***

This game demands a certain kind of role-playing.

I'm not going to exhort you to "become your character." I will suggest a few things that may seem paradoxical, and are cribbed from Graham Walmsley's excellent book, *Play Unsafe*.

Create a group with a **strong Ambition**, one that the other player-characters can react to and build on. An ideal Ambition evokes a strong reaction from the characters.

In play, **build on other players' actions** and ideas. Don't try to counteract another character's behaviors; instead, react and make it more interesting.

When in doubt, **do the next obvious thing**. Move the story forward. Momentum is more important than careful planning; on Mud, careful planning will get you killed. Besides, "obvious" acts often look brilliant to other players.

if there's a strong relationship between that risk and the potential reward), or you can try something that you're a bit uncomfortable with. Don't like to flirt? Flirt.



## Magic

There are two kinds of magic: The Art of the Other and the Art of the Self.

### The Art of the Other

When practicing the **Art of the Other**, you must capture an animal and, while it still lives, drain its blood in a specific way in-character. Doing so takes about 20 minutes. While performing the sacrifice, you choose a spell and make a Spirit roll (roll Fudge dice and add your Spirit).

Variant Available	Target
Weak	+2 or lower
Strong	+3 or +4
Epic	+5 or higher

You may now cast this spell at any time within the duration specified by the spell. You may prepare at most 3 spells per day. You may not prepare the same spell multiple times before casting it.

*Yol wants to be able to Create Terror. She finds a small lizard and sacrifices it. She makes a Spirit (+3) roll, getting a total of +1 on her Fudge dice for a total roll of +4. This gives her a Strong result. At any time over the next 2 days, she can cast the Strong version of Create Terror.*

### The Art of the Self

When practicing the **Art of the Self**, you cut yourself in a prescribed manner. You immediately choose a variant of a spell and attack yourself with a Brawn roll.

Variant Desired	Attack
Weak	Brawn - 1 vs. Spirit
Strong	Brawn vs. Spirit
Epic	Brawn + 2 vs. Spirit

If you roll less than your Spirit, you immediately cast the corresponding version of the spell. If you roll equal to or greater than your Spirit, you take an effect (see page 14).

You may use the Art of the Self as often as you want, though note the effects in the After-Effects section on page 13.

*Ox needs to Disappear. He makes a Brawn roll, adding his Brawn (+2) to his roll which turns out to be -2, for a total of 0. His Spirit is +1. He rolled less than his Spirit, so he immediately Disappears.*

## Spells

### Complete Understanding

Use within 2 days

- 
- WEAK** You understand how a simple mechanical system works. When applied to a lock, you will now recognize the key that fits that lock.
- STRONG** You understand how an electromechanical system as large as about 1 foot cubed works. You can perform simple repairs on it.
- EPIC** You understand how any given mechanical, electromechanical, electronic, or otherwise non-biological system works. Given the appropriate tools, materials, and time, you can perform any repairs on it.
- 

### Create Terror

Use within 2 days

- 
- WEAK** One sentient is gripped with fear. If it succeeds on a Spirit roll of 2, it is merely *immobilized*; otherwise it immediately flees the immediate area.
- STRONG** As above, but affects any creatures of the caster's choice within a 10-foot radius up to 50 feet from the caster.
- EPIC** All targets of the caster's choosing within a 50-foot radius of the caster are immediately reduced to gibbering puddles of raw terror. Each target either cowers helplessly or flees screaming as far as possible, running thoughtlessly for at least 5 minutes (caster chooses effect for each target).
- 

### Destroy Utterly

Use within 1 day

- 
- WEAK** Deal two effects to one creature within 10 feet.
- STRONG** Deal two effects to up to 3 creatures within 50 feet. Roll Fudge dice; if you roll -2 or
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lower, you take +3 damage.

**EPIC** Kill any living creature within 50 feet. Roll Fudge dice; if you roll -1 or lower, you are knocked unconscious. If you roll -3 or lower, you die.

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## Disappear

*Use within 1 day; effect lasts 1 hour*

**WEAK** The caster can make him- or her-self, or a willing target within the caster's sight, nearly invisible or visible at the caster's will. Others must make a perception roll of at least Great to see the target.

**STRONG** The caster can make him- or her-self, or a willing target within the caster's sight, completely invisible or visible at the caster's will.

**EPIC** The caster can make any number of desired targets within 10 feet—including the caster—completely invisible or visible at the caster's will.

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## Disenchant

*Immediate*

**WEAK** If you roll a Good (2 or higher) Spirit roll, an ongoing minor spell of the caster's choosing dissolves away.

**STRONG** If you roll a Good (2 or higher) Spirit roll, an ongoing major spell of the caster's choosing dissolves away. If you roll lower, a minor spell of the caster's choosing dissolves away.

**EPIC** If you roll a Good (2 or higher) Spirit roll, an ongoing great spell of the caster's choosing dissolves away. If you roll lower, a minor or major spell of the caster's choosing dissolves away.

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## Drag Creature

*Use within 2 days*

**WEAK** The caster drags a creature up to 10 feet.

**STRONG** The caster drags a creature up to 20 feet, or up to 3 creatures who are within 5 feet of each other up to 5 feet.

**EPIC** The caster drags one creature and up to 4

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others who are within 10 feet of the target creature up to 50 feet.

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## Drag

*Use within 1 day*

**WEAK** Lift and slowly move a small object weighing up to half a pound up to 15 feet.

**STRONG** Lift and move an object up to five pounds in weight up to 30 feet. A creature hit with this object is shaken.

**EPIC** Lift and move an object up to 60 pounds a distance of up to 90 feet. A creature hit with this object is stunned.

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## Enchant

*Use within 1 day*

**WEAK** Infuse one (non-living) object up to 1 foot square with magic. If you are within 1 mile of the object within the next 30 days, you will know its exact location. You can immediately provide the same benefit to up to 5 other shamans within 20 feet.

**STRONG** As above for one object up to 3 feet square. You can instead know if the object is touched or moved by any means if you are within 1 mile of it within the next 30 days.

**EPIC** As above, for an object up to 6 feet square. You can also rig the object to explode on a trigger of your choice, doing Physical damage scaled such that a human-sized object deals 2 damage.

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## Far-Seeing

*Use within 3 days*

**WEAK** Objects 300 feet away are seen as though they are only 3 feet away. Effect lasts for 5 minutes.

**STRONG** Objects 500 feet away are seen as though they are only 6 feet away. Effect lasts for 15 minutes.

**EPIC** Objects 1,000 feet away are seen as though they are only 9 feet away. Effect lasts for one hour.

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## Find the Lost

Use within 1 day

**WEAK** The caster concentrates on a specific object or type of object and knows its direction from him or her, if it exists within 20 feet.

**STRONG** The caster concentrates on a specific object or type of object and knows its direction from him or her if it exists within 30 feet, or is guided to it if it exists within 10 feet.

**EPIC** The caster concentrates on a specific object or type of object and is guided to it, if it exists within 100 feet.

## Fly

Use within 3 days; effect lasts 1 hour

**WEAK** The caster can levitate up to 30 feet above the ground and move sideways up to 5 feet, but can lift only normal amounts of weight.

**STRONG** The caster or a willing target can fly through unobstructed air up to 10 feet per turn in any direction.

**EPIC** The caster and anyone else within 10 feet can fly as a group up to 20 feet per turn in any direction. Alternately, the caster can lift a weight of up to 1,000 pounds.

## Hold in Place

Use within 1 day

**WEAK** One creature within 20 feet cannot move next turn. Flying creatures stay aloft but cannot otherwise move.

**STRONG** One creature within 50 feet cannot move for 1 minute. Flying creatures stay aloft but cannot otherwise move.

**EPIC** All creatures within a 10-foot radius up to 50 feet away cannot move for 5 minutes. Flying creatures fall to the ground.

## I Am Not Here

Use within 1 day

**WEAK** One enemy within 10 feet confuses the caster (or one of the caster's allies) for one of the caster's allies (or the caster). Effect lasts for

one turn.

**STRONG** One enemy within 30 feet confuses the caster (or one of the caster's allies) for one of the caster's allies (or the caster). Effect lasts for about 30 seconds.

**EPIC** Up to five enemies within 50 feet confuses the caster and his or her allies with other individuals or creatures of the caster's choosing. Effect lasts for about 60 seconds.

## Mental Blast

Use within 1 day

**WEAK** One target within 5 feet is *stunned*.

**STRONG** A target within 10 feet is *shaken* and *stunned*.

**EPIC** Deal three effects to a target within 50 feet, or one effect to up to 3 targets within 20 feet.

## Move Like Thought

Use within 3 days

**WEAK** Instantly transport the caster exactly 300 feet to a position previously occupied by the caster.

**STRONG** Instantly transport the caster and any willing creatures within 10 feet exactly 300 feet to a position previously occupied by the caster.

**EPIC** Instantly transport the caster, any willing creatures, and any inanimate objects weighing less than 100 pounds each within 10 feet of the caster up to 50 miles away to a position previously occupied by the caster.

## Muddle the Mind

Use within 1 day

**WEAK** The target's Cunning is decreased by -1 for the remainder of the fight.

**STRONG** The target's Cunning is decreased by -2 for the remainder of the fight.

**EPIC** The target's Cunning is decreased by -3 permanently.

**Read Mind**

*Use within 1 day; effect lasts half an hour*

- 
- WEAK** Read the surface thoughts of another sentient.
- STRONG** Read the surface thoughts of another sentient, as well as the target's hostility or friendliness towards the caster.
- EPIC** Communicate telepathically with one sentient.
- 

**Skin Like Stone**

*Use within 2 days*

- 
- WEAK** You may ignore one attack during this fight.
- STRONG** For the duration of one fight, you may take a special effect, *bloodied*. This effect does not change your statistics and cannot be doubled.
- EPIC** For the next day, you may take a special effect, *bloodied*. This effect does not change your statistics and cannot be doubled.
- 

**Scent of Blood**

*Use within 5 days; effect lasts 5 minutes*

- 
- WEAK** The caster can determine whether inanimate objects within 10 feet are enchanted.
- STRONG** The caster can determine whether inanimate objects within 10 feet are enchanted, and whether they are hostile or dangerous.
- EPIC** The caster can determine whether inanimate objects within 10 feet are enchanted, and the exact nature of the enchantment.
- 

**Thin the Muscles**

*Use within 1 day*

- 
- WEAK** The target's Brawn is decreased by -1 for the remainder of the fight.
- STRONG** The target's Brawn is decreased by -2 for the remainder of the fight.
- EPIC** The target's Brawn is decreased by -3 permanently.
- 

**After-Effects**

You can cast one spell per day with no noticeable effect.

If you cast 2 to 3 spells in one day, then when you next awake from a night's sleep, you take an after-effect from the following table. This after-effect persists for one day.

If you cast 4 or more spells in one day, when you next awake you take an after-effect that persists for three days.

Choose an after-effect that is interesting to you, or roll three six-sided dice and choose the corresponding after-effect.

3-4	<b>Angry</b>	+1 to Brawn, -1 to Cunning.
5-6	<b>Depressed</b>	-1 to Spirit, and you can only move 5 feet per turn.
7-8	<b>Distracted</b>	Before every attempted roll, roll Cunning; if the Cunning roll is Fair or below, you take a -2 on the attempt.
9-11	<b>Dizzy</b>	Immediately after next spell use, -1 penalty on all rolls for 10 minutes.
12-13	<b>Paranoid</b>	You're convinced that one other player is trying to harm you in some way.
14-15	<b>Schizophrenic</b>	Once per day upon waking, roll Fudge dice for each vital stat. Change each stat by the rolled amount.
16-18	<b>Voices</b>	Strange voices urge you to a sadistic or otherwise bizarre act.

## Combat

### Actions During Combat

Combat is divided into rounds, and each round is divided into turns, one turn per combattant. You can determine the combat order in any way you'd like: around the table, pass out playing cards, go in order from highest Cunning to lowest Cunning, or have each player roll dice to determine initiative.

During your turn, your character may move up to 10 feet, and may either attack with a weapon or cast one spell.

Movement includes climbing, jumping, swimming, opening doors, picking up stones, dropping a weapon, picking up a weapon, and other physical feats. Particularly challenging movements may require a roll at the GM's discretion.

You can use an entire turn to drop one weapon and grab another. If you want to move while you drop a weapon and grab another, you must succeed on a Good (+2) Agility roll.

Each round lasts about 5 seconds in the game world.

### Physical Attacks

For a non-magical melee attack—that is, a face-to-face brawl using fists, knives, swords, *etc.*—roll Fudge dice and add your Brawn and your weapon's value (if any). If this beats the defender's Brawn, the attack succeeds and the defender takes an effect (see below).

*Tarka has a Brawn of +2 and a weapon that adds +1. He attacks a creature with 2 Brawn. Tarka rolls 0 on his Fudge dice, for a total of +3. This still beats the creature's Brawn, so the attack succeeds.*

For a non-magical ranged attack—using a blowgun, a sling, a thrown rock, *etc.*—roll Fudge dice and add your Cunning plus your weapon's value (if any). If this beats the defender's Cunning, the attack succeeds and the defender takes an effect.

### Effects

If an attack succeeds, the defender chooses an effect from the list of effects below. If the defender already has an effect, the defender chooses another effect.

If an attack succeeds for 3 or more points above the

defender's defense, the effect is doubled (see “Doubling an Effect” for details).

*Tarka has a Brawn of +2 and a weapon that adds +1. He attacks a creature with 2 Brawn. Tarka rolls +2 on his Fudge dice, for a total of +5. The chosen effect is doubled.*

If a character has all five effects, he or she can take no more effects.

If a weapon or creature calls out a specific effect, then the defender must take that effect. If the defender already has that effect, the effect is doubled (see “Doubling an Effect,” below).

### List of Effects

Effect	Standard	Doubled
<b>Immobilized</b>	Movement reduced to 1 foot per turn.	Cannot move at all, even to pick up a stone.
<b>Weakened</b>	-2 penalty to melee attack rolls.	-4 penalty to melee attack rolls.
<b>Stunned</b>	-1 penalty to all rolls.	-2 penalty to all rolls.
<b>Shaken</b>	-2 penalty to ranged attack rolls.	-4 penalty to ranged attack rolls.
<b>Dispirited</b>	You cannot cast prepared spells.	You cannot cast any spells.

The *stunned* effect combines with the *weakened* and *shaken* effects. So, a character who is both *stunned* and *shaken* takes a total of -3 on ranged attack rolls.

### Doubling an Effect

If a weapon or creature gives a specific effect and the defender already has that effect, double the power of the effect. For example, a *stunned* creature would now take -2 to all rolls.

If the effect is already doubled, nothing changes. In other words, effects can only be doubled once.

To be clear: if you have all five effects and you are hit with a normal attack, you take no more effects. It's as though the hit did nothing.

However, if you have all five effects and are attacked

with a weapon that specifically *weakens* you, your existing *weakened* effect is doubled. Indeed, if you only have the *weakened* effect and are attacked with a weapon that specifically *weakens*, your existing *weakened* effect is doubled.

### Clearing Effects

During one turn of combat, if you only move and succeed on a Superb (+4) Brawn roll, you may clear an effect on yourself. If the roll (without Brawn) is +4, you may clear one more effect.

During combat, if you spend a full turn with your hand on an ally's skin and take no other action, that ally clears one effect.

After combat, if you have the opportunity to rest for at least an hour, you may clear an effect on you. If you sleep for a full night, you clear all effects on you.

Clearing an effect removes it completely even if it is doubled.

### Risking Death

At the end of your turn, if you have 3 or more effects, roll Fudge dice.

Your character collapses and dies if..

...you have 3 effects and you roll -4

...you have 4 effects and you roll -3 or lower

...you have 5 effects and you roll -2 or lower

## Bestiary

The following is a selection of beasts that inhabit Mud.

Beasts can only take one or two effects, as described by the beast. If a beast is hit after it has taken all the effects available to it, it dies.

To create your own beasts, simply choose a point budget appropriate to the challenge: 4 points are easy, 6 are moderate, and 8 are hard. Distribute these points between Brawn, Cunning, and Spirit. An easy creature has no effects, a moderate creature one to two effects, and a hard creature three effects.

### Doomcoil (moderate)

This is a giant snake with two spiked tails.

Brawn: +2                      Effects:  
 Cunning: +3                  Immobilized  
 Spirit: +1                     Stunned  
 Attacks:

**Coil.** +2 melee attack against a creature not captured by this doomcoil. If successful, the creature is *immobilized*. The doomcoil can coil up to two creatures at once. A coiled creature must make a Great (+3) Brawn roll to escape the coil.

**Crush.** +3 melee attack against a creature it has coiled.

### Fleshrender (moderate)

This large reptilian beast has a nasty temper and even nastier teeth.

Brawn: +4                      Effects:  
 Cunning: +2                  Immobilized  
 Spirit: +0                     Shaken  
 Attacks:

**Bite,** +4 melee attack.

**Howl,** once per fight. +3 ranged attack (30 feet). If successful, its enemy is *stunned*.

### Howlers (easy)

These simians may lack sentience, but they can be organized when they want to. Their long-range slings can do significant damage.

Brawn: +2                      Effects:  
 Cunning: +1                  None  
 Spirit: +1

**Fists,** +2 melee attack.

**Sling,** +2 ranged attack (10 to 50 feet).

### Kerrak (hard)

Kerrak are velociraptors.

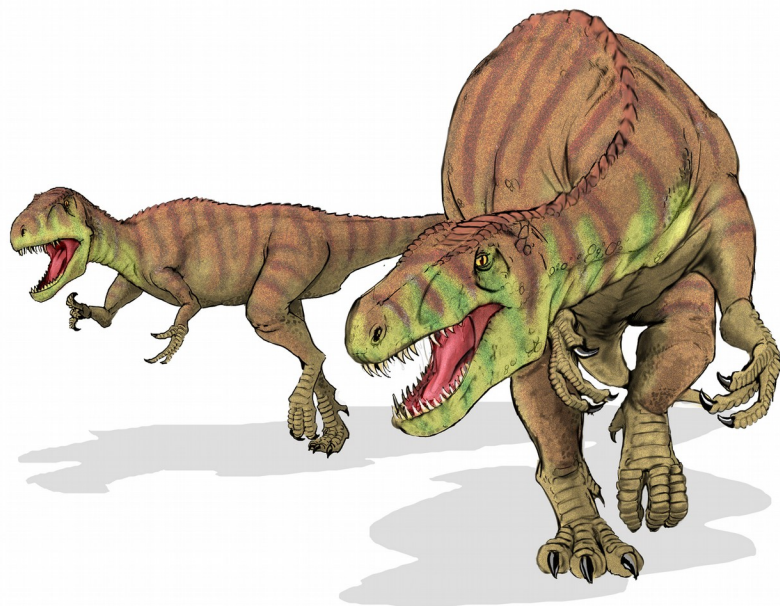
Brawn: +3                      Effects:  
 Cunning: +3                  Shaken  
 Spirit: +2                     Stunned  
 Attacks:                      Dispirited

**Bite,** +3 melee attack.

**Pack Tactics,** once per fight. Another Kerrak within 20 feet either moves up to 10 feet or makes a free attack.

Spells:

**Telepathic Confusion.** Any creature standing between at least two kerrak takes a -1 penalty on all Spirit rolls. A creature standing between at least 4 kerrak also takes -2 to Cunning rolls.





### ***Pirritous (hard)***

These small winged creatures are individually a nuisance, but a colony can strip the flesh from a human in seconds.

Brawn: +4            Effects:  
 Cunning: +3        Immobilized  
 Spirit: +1          Shaken  
 Attacks:

**Gnaw**, +4 melee attack.

**Thousand Wings**, +3 ranged attack (20 feet).

### ***Shaman, Bestial (hard)***

Other shamans wander the world. Some have reverted back to beasts.

Brawn: +3            Effects:  
 Cunning: +1        Shaken  
 Spirit: +4          Stunned  
 Attacks:            Weakened

**Knife**, +3 melee attack.

**Blowgun**, +3 ranged attack (50 feet).

Spells:

**Locomotion (special)**, twice per fight. +4 attack. If successful, one enemy is thrown up to twenty feet against a hard surface and takes is *weakened*.

**Great Mental Blast**, once per fight.

### ***Shaman, Mindwarper (hard)***

Some shamans simply want you to help them, and won't accept a refusal.

Brawn: +1            Effects:  
 Cunning: +3        Shaken  
 Spirit: +4          Stunned  
 Attacks:            Weakened

**Knife**, +1 melee attack.

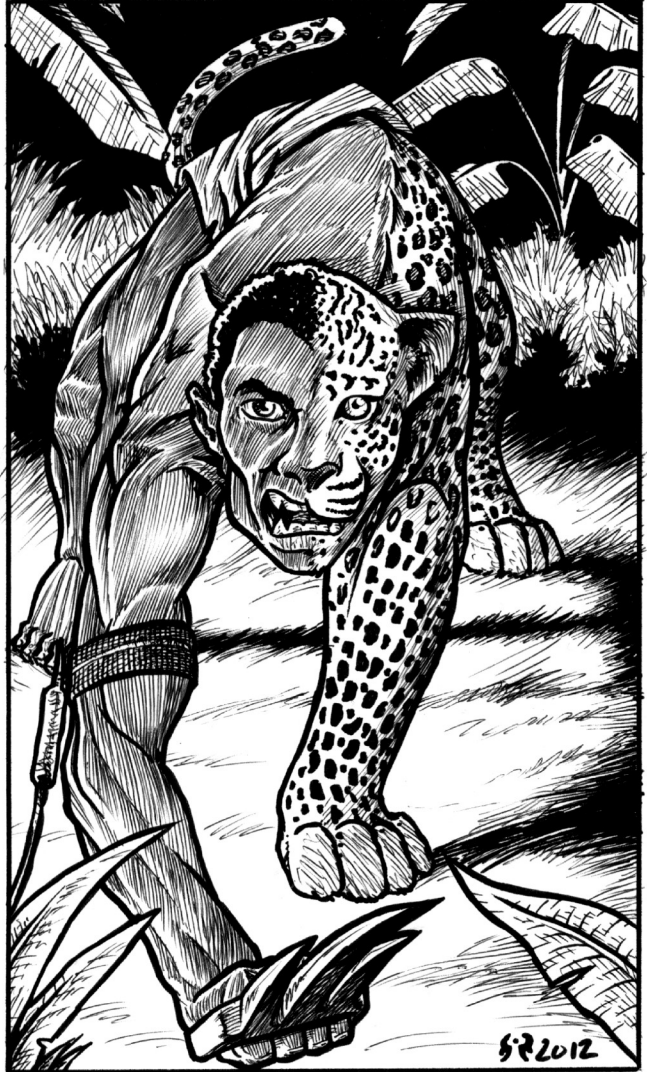
Spells:

**Major Disintegration**, once per fight

**Major Redirection**, once per fight

**Major Terror**, once per fight

**Minor Transportation**, once per fight



### ***Spitter (moderate)***

These strange, ooze-like creatures guard ancient temples and structures, spitting acid at anything that draws near.

Brawn: +3            Effects:  
 Cunning: +2        Stunned  
 Spirit: +1  
 Attacks:

**Consume**, +3 melee attack.

**Spit**, +3 ranged attack (20 feet). If successful, its enemy is *shaken*.

### Stone Guardians (easy)

These ancient stone constructs remain, guarding long-forgotten treasures.

Brawn: +3            Effects:  
Cunning: +1        Immobilized  
Spirit: 0  
Attacks:

**Fists**, +3 melee attack.

**Bash**, once per fight. +3 attack. If successful, its enemy is *weakened* and *immobilized*.

Spells:

**Immobilizing Eyes**, twice per fight. +3 attack *vs.* Cunning. If successful, target and all of its allies within 5 squares of target are *immobilized* for one turn.

### Village Leader (moderate)

Most villages do not want shamans in their midsts.

Brawn: +1            Effects:  
Cunning: +2        Shaken  
Spirit: +3  
Attacks:

**Furious Bash**, twice per fight. +3 melee attack.

### Wisp (easy)

Brawn: +0            Effects:  
Cunning: +2        None  
Spirit: +2

All attacks made by a wisp use Spirit instead of Brawn.

### Zombie (moderate)

These fearsome creatures retain some shred of intelligence, leaping and clawing at living humanoids in the constant desire for brains.

Brawn: +3            Effects:  
Cunning: +2        Stunned  
Spirit: +1  
Attacks:

**Claw**, +3 melee attack.

**Leap**, once per fight. The zombie makes a +3 Agility roll to leap up to 20 feet.

### Zombie Queen (hard)

This intelligent undead creature directs other zombies for its own nefarious purposes.

Brawn: +1            Effects:  
Cunning: +4        Bloodied (no stat change)  
Spirit: +3            Shaken  
Attacks:              Stunned

**Claw**, +1 melee attack.

**Come, My Minions!**, once per fight. When a hit lands on the Zombie Queen, another zombie within 10 feet immediately leaps in front of the Zombie Queen to take the blow instead.

Spells:

**Death Ray**, twice per fight. +4 ranged attack (50 feet) *vs.* Cunning, inflicting two effects on the first attempt and one on the second.

**Numbing the Spirit**, once per fight. +3 attack. If successful, the enemy is *dispirited*.



## Notes for the GM

### *If You've Never GM'ed Before*

Don't panic.

Keep the story loose. Think up an interesting villain and some mooks. Think up an interesting location or two.

Start in an interesting location with a challenge for the characters. If the villain's involved, great!

React to the players' decisions. A world designed in advance is slightly more vibrant but far more brittle than one created as you game. Move forward and leave a lot of decisions for the game.

When you have a neat idea for a conflict or situation, use it as soon as possible. You likely won't have the luxury of several sessions to build up to that scene.

### *Running Blood Rites*

Games played in *Blood Rites* should be savage and bloody. Rip off arms. Behead things. Armies of acid-clawed, naked, zombie slaves fit perfectly in Mud.

The party's Ambition should give you a starting point for your adventure's villains and plots.

If you're using the rule that shamans must learn spells before casting them, the characters can learn of other spells quickly. The limitation on spell casting is mostly a fact of Mud's primitive nature. No village shaman will have an encyclopedic knowledge of spells.

Mud was designed so that its physical world can be changed drastically by the GM. PCs know very little about the world itself, so you can go wild. Mud could contain vast, civilized empires that simply haven't reached the PC's villages yet. There could be crashed spaceships nearby. The jungle could give way to a blasted wasteland filled with mutants and shotguns—indeed, perhaps the legends of the High Old Ones are vague post-apocalyptic memories of our own technological world.



## ***The Years of Exile***

Okay, GM: this is for you. Shamans enter exile for 4 years. Each year, they face a trial. Each trial tests their skills and their character.

This is a convenient way to organize a *Blood Rites* campaign into something resembling a traditional series of adventures. Each year is a broad scenario into which you can drop any number of battles and scenes.

But more importantly, each year deals with some major moral or ethical issue. Each year is designed to challenge the characters'...character.

### **The Year of Air**

*Theme: Protection*

King Torra of the Pterrans rules his kingdom with an iron fist...and has begun expanding with ruthless precision. The party is sought by peaceful Pterrans who want them to sneak into King Torra's kingdom and steal the terrible Ancient Eye that he uses to create his fearful Death Riders.

### **The Year of the Dragon**

*Theme: Hunt*

A great and terrible beast has been awakened. The party must find and destroy it.

### **The Year of Ends**

*Theme: Magic*

Someone is corrupting magic at its source on Mud, so that all magic is mis-firing. The party tracks this to the legendary Fountain of Souls and must stop the meddling.

### **The Year of Fire**

*Theme: Goals*

The party encounters another group of shamans in exile who want to kill and loot the party.

### **The Year of Passageways**

*Theme: Cunning*

The players discover a portal that takes them to a

bizarre, obstacle-course world of mental and physical challenges. Another shaman discovered it and is using it to build a personal army.

### **The Year of the Shell**

*Theme: Rescue*

A village decimated by plague seeks a new home. The party discovers the villagers beset by monsters, then protect the villagers as they search for a prosperous place for their new village.

### **The Year of Stone**

*Theme: Justice*

The party finds a new skarrrl empire based in a Demon King city. The skarrrl stumbled on a Demon King who had put himself in stasis, and they now keep him just awake enough to power the city's dread machines. The skarrrl have enslaved thousands, and every day sacrifice three victims at the top of the city's ziggurat.

### **The Year of Water**

*Theme: Survival*

The party discovers the Ska, a race of savage fish-people who are now creating an empire on dry land. The party must find an ancient spell scroll that will enable them to breathe underwater, then dive into the sea and face them on their own turf.

Ska are individually weak, but they are arcane masters of the element of water, and can create driving rain, cutting ice gales, and walls of solid water. The party must deal with constant environmental obstacles.

## Credits

This game was written entirely by [Brent P. Newhall](#).

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