StormHack!

(the exclamation edition)

A roleplaying game by Ralph Lovegrove © 2021

first public beta 4th Jan 2021

1.0 Introduction

This is my OSR game. There are many like it, but this one is mine. It's supposed to emulate a classic 1980s RPG based on the multiversal fantasy of a British fantasy author.

It's also a remix of familiar OSR system objects and names from the Worlds Favourite Fantasy Game (such as Ability Scores, monster stat blocks, etc.). That should make it easy to use other OSR resources while repurposing some game elements.

1.1 Inspiration and References

Source materials:

- Michael Moorcock's Elric stories (these days collected into two omnibuses, *Elric of Melnibone* and *Stormbringer*), plus other stories of the Eternal Champion
- The *Stormbringer* RPG (1st edition) by Ken St. Andre and Steve Perrin
- *Elric!* (a.k.a. *Stormbringer* 5th edition) by Lynn Willis and others. The *d20 Dragon Lords of Melnibone* has the same author credits and I believe the same copy for the descriptions of the Young Kingdoms.
- The *Elric of Melnibone* RPG by Lawrence Whitaker

and OSR inspiration:

- *Whitehack* by Christian Mehrstam
- *The Black Hack* by David Black
- *Beyond the Wall* by Flatland Games

This document assumes you have at least some of the source materials (hopefully the books at least), and the content that follows is mostly system. For the BRP games you obviously don't need the system but the background information (especially geopolitical) will be useful, and the most comprehensive

is probably Lawrence Whitaker's contribution to the Mongoose *Elric of Melnibone* RPG (although that edition has appalling layout and the worst map). Elric! (in various skins) is great, though more sparsely written. Stormbringer 1e-4e is even more terse and generally inferior to the other versions (although 1e is my favourite iteration of the system).

1.2 OSR-ness

Things in StormHack that are like a "typical OSR game":

- Six ability scores (STR/CON/DEX/INT/WIS/CHA)
- A main concept, similar to class
- Ability checks involve roll-under with a d20
- Saving throws are a kind of ability check
- Advances via experience points
- Monsters have hit dice, armour class, and damage (typical stat blocks can be used with little or no conversion)

Things which are a bit different compared to a typical OSR game:

- magic is derived from Allegiances to supernatural Patrons
- using magic may increase Elan, the measure of Allegiance. This in turn may give more power, but can also corrupt the character
- freeform Backgrounds for the character's life events
- ability scores are arranged on The Wheel which also tracks experience and backgrounds

1.3 Materials for play

- character sheets
- index cards
- 2 20-sided dice per player for normal rolls
- 4 or more 10-sided dice per player for magic

- other polyhedral dice (d4, d6, d8, d12) for occasional use

2.0 Characters

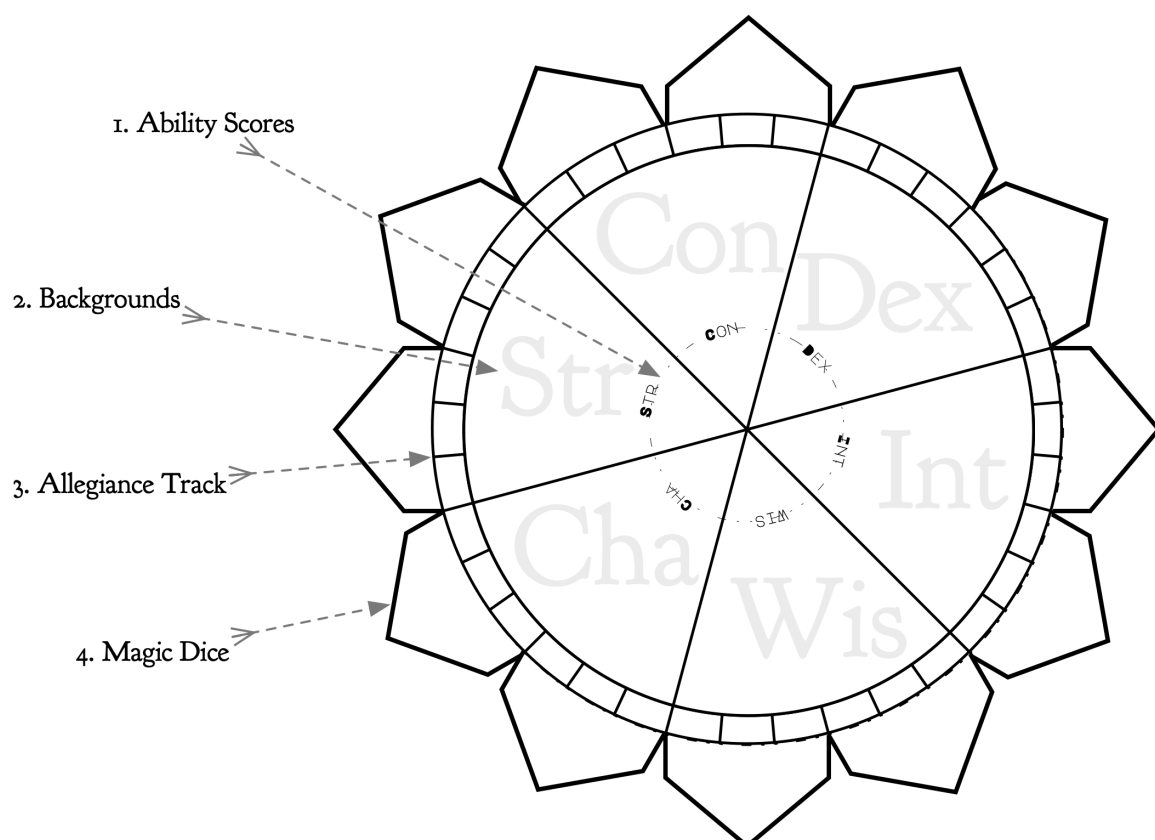This section covers character generation, with an introduction to the character sheet, the ability scores, backgrounds, allegiance, and starting corruption and legend.

2.1 The Wheel

The Wheel is the main focus of the character sheet. Working from the middle outwards, these are the character traits:

1. Ability Scores
2. Backgrounds
3. Allegiance track (the 36 Notches)
4. Magic dice (the 12 Lobes)

Other sections of the character sheet include your Patrons and your Legend. We'll work through the various traits in this chapter. Character generation can be random (both for your Ability Scores, and Backgrounds) or it can be structured if you have a high concept you want to go after.

2.2 Ability Scores

These six numbers are the core of a PC, and they're used to test success/failure for nearly all situations.

When you generate your character, you'll Tag some of these scores for Backgrounds (past experience). Tagging scores has benefits in play, giving Advantage where your Backgrounds apply.

Tag	Activity	Archetypes
Strength	Fighting, pushing, restraining	Warrior, gladiator, knight
Constitution	Surviving, resisting, working	Ranger, scout, druid
Dexterity	Skill, grace, stealth, precision	Acrobat, thief, artisan
Intelligence	Logic, reasoning, perception	Sage, scholar, magician
Wisdom	Empathy, spirituality, intuition	Mystic, priest, witch
Charisma	Impress, intimidate, charm	Bard, mountebank, artist

Split a pool of 24d6 between the 6 scores (6 lots of 4d6, or 2x5d6, 2x4d6, 2x3d6 if you want to favour some scores, or other combinations), then roll each set and take the best 3 dice for that score. If you don't fancy that, just split 72 points between scores.

Note: if you're using the random method the median results for 3, 4, 5 and 6d6 are:

Roll	Median

3d6	10–11
4d6	12
5d6	14
6d6	15–16

2.3 Backgrounds

Backgrounds are things in your past like your upbringing, the people you fell in with after you left your home, or circumstances of birth.

Background	Detail
Family	Who you grew up with, what you learned
Company	Who you fell in with after you left home
Legacy	Something you inherited at birth

When you choose each Background, tag an Ability Score on the Wheel and write down the details of your Background in that Segment. Backgrounds may give you skills, resources or even Allegiances to higher powers.

Your Background also contributes to your Legend. This is the stuff that people know about you, and it's not always good. Your Legend can be corrupted by your allegiances to higher powers.

Backgrounds also give your PC a Homeland, Ties and Trappings. Some of the benefits may be Allegiances. These may or may not be things you actually want; it's up to you whether you make use of the Allegiance and develop powers. The sections that follow have random Moorcock-flavoured tables.

Family and Homeland

Your Family are the people you grew up around. This background includes the trials of life, family trades, and other experiences. Some questions to ask yourself about your Family:

- What does your family do? What did you learn from them?
- What kind of upbringing did you have? Who raised you? Was it a parent, grandparent, gang, commune or village?
- What's your relationship with your family now?

Family also includes Homeland. If you're playing on an established map (such as the Young Kingdoms) point to a place on it where you grew up. Alternatively if you're creating a map dynamically or collaboratively for a new fantasy world, make up a new place. It may be distant from where you all are now; don't worry about what's between here and there, just describe where you came from.

The other players are encouraged to ask you questions about that place. Some key questions:

- Where is your homeland?
- What is the terrain and weather like?
- What are the hazards?
- What are the customs, gods, sayings, local food and drink, clothing styles?

You can make up your own Family and Homeland, but if you'd prefer roll on the (Moorcock inspired) table below:

Tag **Strength**: *your upbringing was harsh and even violent, and you learned how to handle yourself out of necessity*

Roll	Family	Homeland
1	Human slaves aboard Melnibonean war barge	(unknown)
2	Pikarayd barbarian clan	Pikarayd
3	Bakshaani street gang	Ilmiora

4	Gladiator clan from Gromoorva	Dharijor
5	Duelling nobles from Vilmir	Vilmir
6	Warrior fugitives from Imrryr	Melnibone

Tag **Constitution**: *your early life was spent outdoors in a rural setting*

Roll	Family	Homeland
1	Vilmirian peasants	Vilmir
2	Oinish shepherds	Oin
3	Dorelite dog trainers	Dorel
4	Barbarian clan from the Weeping Waste	The Weeping Waste
5	Grain masters in Jharkor	Jharkor
6	Andlermaign cattle barons	Argimiliar

Tag **Dexterity**: *your family practiced a trade or craft*

Roll	Family	Homeland
1	Pickpockets in Chalal	Pikarayd
2	Tarkeshite ship builders from Banarva	Tarkesh
3	Ilmari leatherworkers	Ilmiora
4	Shazarian horse breeders	Shazar
5	Jewelers in Old Hrolmar	Vilmir
6	Poison makers in Quarzhasaat	Quarzhasaat

Tag **Intelligence**: *you grew up in an urban environment*

Roll	Family	Homeland

1	House slaves from Bakshaan	Ilmiora
2	Beggars and spies for Urish	Nadsokor
3	Coffee traders from Dhakos	Jharkor
4	Dock workers from Raschil	Filkhar
5	Academics from Cadsandria	Argimiliar
6	Ilmari merchant prince	Ilmiora

Tag **Wisdom**: *spiritual matters were a large component of your upbringing*

Roll	Family	Homeland
1	Gutter preachers from Yu	Yu
2	Star worshippers from Elwher	Eshmir
3	Warrior cultists of Chardros	Dharijor
4	Ilmari fashionistas emulating Melnibone	Ilmiora
5	Court oracle to King Montan in Alorasaz	Lormyr
6	War priests to the Theocrat in Hwamgaarl	Pan Tang

Tag **Charisma**: *you had an extended family, and were used to different influential people in the house*

Roll	Family	Homeland
1	Sea kings of the Purple Towns	The Purple Towns
2	Barge families along the Zaphra-Trepek	Lormyr
3	Nomad clans from the Sighing Desert	The Sighing Desert
4	Tarkeshite longship clans	Tarkesh

| 5 | Karlaaki society of caravaners | The Weeping Waste |
| 6 | Ilmioran senate leaders | Ilmiora |

Company and Ties

Your Company are the people you fell in with after you left home. When thinking about your Company, consider:

- What common skill, career or situation bound you together?
- Where did you travel with these people?

Your Company includes Ties to a person or group of people that shared your adventures or experiences. Questions:

- who is it that you still have a connection to? It can be an individual or a group of people
- what is your relationship with those people now? What would they do if you came face to face with them?

Write these Ties down on your character sheet. They may become important NPCs for the GM to inject into your adventures.

If you don't fancy making up your own Company and Ties, roll on the table below:

Tag **Strength**: you joined a warband or other military unit

Roll	Company	Ties
1	Mercenaries	Argenok's Irregulars. You are considered war criminals after the action at Trome in the service of Ilmar
2	Coastal reavers	Crew and captain of The Wasp, who marooned you on a deserted isle in the Melnibonean archipelago

3	Assassins	The Bright brotherhood, from whom you stole the Oil of Eequor
4	Royal champion	The family of Ronand Demegue, whom you slew before taking his place as champion
5	Crusaders for Law	Your Mentor is Arkyn of Law (count this as an Allegiance to Law)
6	Duellists	Quinn Defane, former rival duellist who you defeated but did not kill, and who has vowed to end you

Tag **Constitution**: *you fell in with travellers, sailors, or explorers and saw the world*

Roll	Company	Ties
1	Sailors	Mag the Meg, first mate on the Dhole with whom you conspired to poison the captain over months
2	Caravaners	Daquin the Marche, who tried to murder you on the trail west of Karlaak, stranding you in the Wastes
3	Smugglers	Misogol Wrexe and associates, who you still owe after your vessel was sunk by a Vilmirian trireme
4	Cartographers	Prince Lorin of Ilmar, whose vanity financed your expedition to map the path to R'lin K'ren A'a
5	Explorers	Your mentor Roland Bec, with whom you ventured into the Silent Lands in search of the Doomed Folk
6	Couriers	Relick, a corsair whose hand you maimed in sea action, earning you a bounty on your head in Dharijor

*Tag **Dexterity**: you were apprenticed to a guild*

Roll	Company	Ties
1	Sword makers	Offen Grindr, who you worked with to produce an inferior sword to defraud Prince Whelm of Filkhar
2	Clockwork engineers	Omhie Wight, who stole your research and presented it as her own, and had your guild membership revoked
3	Thieves	The Night Hands, from whom you liberated Baron Figg's glass sceptre right from under their noses
4	Alchemists	Remphir Farragne, an instructor from Elwher who bequeathed you his alchemical cipher stone.
5	Astrologers	You're the protege of Sawesze of Eshmir, who instructed you in their nation's advanced sciences
6	Pamphleteers	The Fraternity of Barlok, a rival printing house. Your print feud escalated to knife duels and poisoning

*Tag **Intelligence**: you obtained a position in the establishment's hierarchy*

Roll	Company	Ties
1	Commander	Commander Jaen Lees, with whom you sacrificed fellow cadet Orn Riphil in Allegiance with Arioch
2	Constabulary	Brandt Loquel, minor lord who poisoned you in order to dispose of evidence of his criminality
3	Spy	Kander Rowse, spy-finder who suspects your involvement in the conflict between Bakshaan and Ilmar

4	Courtier	You owe an unspecified favour to Roma Jiana for their support in your rise in the court of King Naclon
5	Physician	Your mentor Sanchar Wact initiated you into the cult of Fileet, Lady of Birds (Allegiance)
6	Diplomat	In the worst blunder of your career you offended Hzazar Loth of Melnibone

Tag **Wisdom**: *you joined a cult*

Roll	Company	Ties
1	Church of Hionhurn (Chaos)	You betrayed cardinal Myagnar Dycs, who was then sacrificially eviscerated (Allegiance)
2	Church of Donblas (Law)	You survived a hanging by your own church, after refusing to execute captives (Allegiance)
3	Lasshaar, the Wind Giants	You liberated the Horn of Lasshaar from Magnus Rhel, merchant from the Purple Towns (Allegiance)
4	Church of Pyaray (Chaos)	You convinced Pyaray to take the soul of ship-mate Vaugn Geist instead of yours (Allegiance)
5	Meerclar, Mistress of Cats	You were selected by Gange Owane to succeed her as priest, but you declined (Allegiance)
6	Church of Xiombarg (Chaos)	You have an ongoing grudge against Jochim, Champion of Law (Allegiance)

*Tag **Charisma**: you fell in with players and artists*

Roll	Company	Ties
1	Minstrels	A troupe called the Rose Rain, with whom you spied for King Urish of Nadsokor
2	Acrobats	Chandy Mixo, who sabotaged the trapeze and nearly sent you to your death
3	Illusionists	You owe a large debt to Diem and her crew, which you avoided by faking your own death
4	Calligraphers	You stole the Gregarious Quill from the Chaos cult of Orunlu; it bonded to you (Allegiance)
5	Masquers	You studied acting under The Great Gampin. Their name still opens doors
6	Grifters	You defrauded Timish Armagin in Lormyr, and he took his life; his widow sent bounty hunters after you

Legacy and Trappings

Your Legacy is something you inherited from your ancestors that affects your life. It could be something your ancestor did, something they left to you, something genetic or magical you inherited from them. Like all Backgrounds this can give you some kind of advantage, in this case in the form of Trappings. Your Legacy might be:

- A relationship with another group (inherited from your bloodline)
- Territory
- Membership of a secret society
- A supernatural debt

Now consider what Trappings represent this Legacy. These could be physical or racial advantages, equipment, connections, or even Allegiances. Consider:

- Which of your ancestors does this Legacy come from? How did they get it? Did they bargain, did they steal, was it handed down to them, did they perform an act of bravery or perfidy?
- what clues about you suggest your Legacy?

Trappings could be an heirloom, a birth mark, a tattoo, a racial trait or something else that marks you as the inheritor.

Here are some tables:

Tag **Strength**: *an age-old blood feud*

Roll	Legacy	Trappings
1	Your family swore vengeance on the pirate clan of Rubin Vargloz and his descendants after he slew your great-grandfather in the Boiling Sea.	Your great-grandfather's blue-honed cutlass (1d8+1 damage) and duelling vambrace (+1 AC in 1-on-1 combat).
2	Legend has it that the Temial poisoned their sworn enemies the Chench under flag of truce; your great-great-grandfather was the only survivor, and having survived the toxin his descendants were remarkably resistant to poisons.	Your remarkable blood means you save against poisons with Advantage.
3	Your ancestor stole the Repenting Ring from the cult of Drooz. Should you ever encounter them, they will want it back.	The Repenting Ring. This is a simple iron ring with a diamond-shaped stamp. It may be used once per session to backtrack from a poor decision, at the cost of

		increasing Angst by 1.
4	The Ytolodra have hunted your bloodline for generations and are dangerous opponents. Their dimension intersects with panes of glass in ours.	Your people evolved an ability to sense the Ytoldra's emergence into the earthly plane, and to view the other planes through glass (at a risk)
5	Pursued by Furies of Mondrey of Law, your ancestor prayed to Arioch, the Knight of Swords. The Furies were slain and your family name was henceforth branded an Enemy of Law.	You have inherited an Allegiance to Arioch (Chaos)
6	Your grandmother's mercenary band was betrayed by their employer, the Duke of Oelioz, after they recovered the Parmetan Orb for them.	Charmain Houn, the one remaining survivor of the Duke's treachery. has supplied you with information and equipment in the past (when it furthers her own vendetta).

Tag **Constitution**: *a race or region*

Roll	Legacy	Trappings
1	Your grandfather apparently crossed several times into the Silent Lands, past the Marshes of the Mist.	A Marsh Whip has been in your family for generations. It's easily coiled at your belt and fabricated from some green leather that may be alligator; it adheres to bare skin thanks to hundreds of tiny hooks.
	Someone on your mother's	You can speak Myyrrhn. You have

2	side hails from beyond the Vale of Xanyaw in Myyrrhn.	vestigial wing stumps beneath your shoulderblades. You dream of mountaintop aeries.
3	One of your distant ancestors hails from an Argimilian backwater. The country was not always enlightened and progressive, and your family inherited several of the primitive and elemental superstitions of the agricultural region.	You have a Jar of Mice from your homestead. This heirloom was created by burying a jar in a field with bait, causing mice to fall into the jar, building up layers over years. The fetish is supposed to have medicinal properties as well as a component of some summonings.
4	Somehow, the Sighing Desert is in your blood; you dream of wailing winds blowing over dry sands, and a silk-clad column of the Nomad Nations. A blue eyed woman whispers your name sometimes.	You can sense water, including its general volume, whether it's still or turbulent, and whether it is fresh or not. You have an innate sense of the value of water.
5	Your Oinish great, great grandfather owes a debt to Grome which is passed on to each generation. You're not clear on the nature of the debt.	Allegiance: Grome, the elemental ruler of Earth (elemental)
6	Your grandmother, a famed artist, founded one of the great Salons of Old Hrolmar.	You have inherited a brass medallion, worn over decades of handling, inlaid with four enamel triangles representing the four factions of the Studio of the Shearg.

*Tag **Dexterity**: link to another dimension*

Roll	Legacy	Trappings
1	Impossibly your ancestor died in the War of Hellfrail before siring any children; his reflection came back home and fathered a long line of revenant children.	A short sword that is the mirror image of the original borne by your ancestor, including a reversed inscription.
2	An ancestor was infected by a phase ghoul; as a result, your family has been cursed with planar instability, headaches and visitations from nearby dimensions.	A side effect is a complete immunity to paralysis and resistance (roll with Advantage) against all transformative effects.
3	Your great, great grandmother arrived from another place via the Rogue Mistress, a ship capable of planar travel. For her own reasons, she never continued her journey and settled here instead.	Baleen Sextant; carved from a leviathan's jawbone, it is used for navigation on multiplanar cutters and similar ships, divining conjunctions of two or more spheres.
4	You remember other names and lifetimes including Lucia Bathos, Harry Lamb of Tranmere, and Orin Begg.	You receive whispers from another life; you can detect objects and places of significance in more than 1 dimension.
5	Your family has long been connected to Tovik the Relentless, Law Lord of Violence, after he rescued one of your forebears who was marooned on an alien sea.	Allegiance: Tovik the Relentless (Law)

| 6 | You have hereditary membership of the Wayfarers of Eckhold, bound to assist each other when travelling the Dusk Roads. | The society's tattoo, on the webbing your right palm between thumb and forefinger. |

Tag **Intelligence**: a secret society

Roll	Legacy	Trappings
1	Your ancestor was one of the Sisters of Motley, jester-assassins unstuck in time.	A mahogany case containing 4 Phase Darts, an assassin's weapon that can be thrown into the past or future.
2	You can trace your family back to the temple of Theril in Nadsokor, before the city fell to Chaos	Allegiance: Theril (Law)
3	You have one of the rare keys to the radioactive Library of Pang, in which your great grandfather's journals are kept.	The Recall Sphere which may be used to attend the Library at any time. Note that the Library itself is inimical to life (1 point of fatigue every 5 minutes).
4	Your family are members of the Ophidian Cult, who ingest rare and drink and drugs.	Exceptional tolerance for narcotics and other intoxicating substances, and remarkable sense of taste.
5	Your family have long been linked to the Scholars of the Blue Lady of Dismay, a group who study the Blue Realm of Eequor.	Allegiance: Eequor (Chaos)

6	You inherited membership of the Hunt Club, whose members stalk one another in distant killing grounds accessed through a portal of Balo.	Hunt Club concealed knife ring.

Tag **Wisdom**: *in debt to supernatural powers*

Roll	Legacy	Trappings
1	One of your ancestors was a zealot in the service of Miggea the Mad, Duchess of Dolwic. In your early adulthood you started to trace your ancestry, finding that your family history is secretly entangled with her machinations.	Allegiance: Miggea (Law)
2	Your family has always run with dogs and wolves, and are pledged to Roofdrak, Lord of Dogs	Allegiance: Roofdrak (Beast Lords)
3	A distant relative in your family's past was an agent of Mabelode the Faceless, King of Swords. Now in early adulthood your path has crossed several times with a cowled figure, offering you the same position.	Allegiance: Mabelode (Chaos)
4	Your grandmother came from a line of fishers who devoted themselves to Straasha. You stole her scale brooch and since then you have been cursed with an elemental Allegiance, and you've been unable to rid yourself of the brooch since then.	Allegiance: Straasha (Elementals)
5	Your great-grandfather was marked by Balaan the Grim-Faced after being spared torture. On his	Allegiance: Balaan

| | death he bequeathed the mark to you (you had no choice). | (Chaos) |
| 6 | An ancestor was saved from Pyaray's fleet by pledging his line as agents of Pyaray, Tentacled Whisperer of Impossible Secrets | Allegiance: Pyaray (Chaos) |

Tag **Charisma**: *a lost race, nation or people*

Roll	Legacy	Trappings
1	Your ancestors befriended the Dorelite horseclans. When you found yourself on the Southern Continent you fell in with clanspeople who recognised your name, and you were initiated as an honorary tribe member with a scarification ritual.	You were gifted with a short composite recurve bow, inscribed with Dorelite clan runes. 1d8+2 damage, compact.
2	Your race originated from the steaming jungles of the Silent Lands, slaves of the Doomed Folk.	You have a crystal lens embedded below your left ear, easily concealed by hair or a collar. It throbs and is warm to the touch. You save against charms and illusions with advantage.
3	One of your past relatives hailed from the Vale of Locusts, somewhere in the Chasm of Nirhain. You have an innate sense for insects and the hive mind that is Nnuuurrrr'c'c, lord of Insects	Allegiance: Nnuuurrrr'c'c (Beast Lords)
		You have curiously

4	Your bloodline briefly mingled with that of witches from the Ghost Worlds.	almond-shaped eyes with purple irises. You can perceive things (objects, structures, animals) in adjacent realms.
5	You have a drop or two of Melnibonean blood in your ancestry — from a time when the Melniboneans favoured Slortar, before they turned to Arioch.	Allegiance: Slortar (Chaos)
6	Few families know of the Dharzi, but your family kept the legends alive. You know they created beasts through sorcery, and possibly one offshoot of humanity known as Mabden, to which your family claim to belong.	Allegiance: Meerclar (Beast Lord) You have vestigial claws and a fine, patterned fur on much of your body (hardly visible when you are clothed).

2.4 Allegiance

Allegiance is your connection to the powers of Chaos, Law, the elemental rulers, Beast Lords and others. As you depend more on your Magic, your Allegiance will grow, and your power with it. At the same time, it will corrupt your life.

If you have a Background that indicates an Allegiance,

- Name a Patron to whom you owe Allegiance
- Gain a Magic Die for your Allegiance.
- Work out Elan with the formula (100+(MdNx88)). M can be any number and N can be any die size you like, as agreed with the referee.
- Mark notches on the Wheel, starting in that segment, equal to your Elan

divided by 100.

- If you mark all 3 notches below a lobe, mark that lobe too, and gain another Magic Die.

Starting Elan is really up to the play group. If you want a low powered game where Allegiances are really just rumours at the start, roll a small die. On the other hand if you want something a bit more poky, try 2d6 or 2d8. That would give you an average of >700 or >900 respectively, plenty of magic dice to play with, and an enthusiastic relationship with your Patron.

HOWEVER this game should be playable with a range of Allegiances from none upwards. Characters with low or no Allegiance are still very survivable, less susceptible to Angst and corrupting social effects.

Finally, some players might really want to have an Allegiance but start the game with none. As referee you could let them pick a Background that gives them the Allegiance they want. Or you could let them choose to be allied to a Patron as a separate measure. Or, find some way in-game to allow them to pledge themselves to a Patron. If you're going to do this, don't hang about; make the adventure into which they're flung a test of their Allegiance, a sacred quest, or some other kind of devotion right from the outset.

2.5 Corruption and Legend

This is the last step. Where your Allegiance touches a segment with a Background, your Background becomes connected with, and possibly corrupted by, your supernatural self.

How much will depend on how much of the segment is touched by your Allegiance:

- If you have only 1 or 2 segments touched then the segment then the corruption is a rumour
- If you have between 3 and 5 segments touched, the corruption is visible anyone you encounter

- If you have all 6 segments covered, corruption is a mark that signals your Allegiance

These aspects will always be connected with the details of your Background: your homeland, ties, and fate. These together make up your Legend: the things that people have heard or seen about you.

Once you've established that one of your Backgrounds has a corruption associated with it, ask the player to your left what that corruption is. Here are some guiding questions.

Background	Leading questions
Family	What terrible acts are associated with your Family?
Company	How has the Company you keep affected your reputation?
Legacy	What prophecy, bad luck, or calamitous fate is implied by your Legacy?

When you've established a Legend, build on it. If the character's Allegiance grows, evidence of corruption comes with it.

2.6 Example of Character Generation

First I choose how to distribute my dice. I'm going for a magical thief type, so I prioritise DEX, INT and CHA. These are my rolls:

	STR	CON	DEX	INT	WIS	CHA
Dice	3D6	3D6	5D6	5D6	3D6	5D6
Roll	2,3,3	2,4,6	5,2,2,2,5	3,5,3,6,6	1,2,3	5,3,4,4,5
Score (best 3)	8	12	12	17	6	14

An interesting spread, not quite the thiefy type but 12 is still respectable when considering advantage. Not much of a fighter, though.

Next, choose which scores to tag for backgrounds.

- For Family I choose CON for an outdoor upbringing, and roll on the table (rolling a 5), getting the result "grain masters in Jharkor" with the accompanying Homeland.
- Next, for Company I choose DEX. A roll of 4 gives the Alchemist's Guild, and some background for a person and an item.
- Finally for Legacy I choose CHA, and roll another 5. Apparently my PC has a little Melnibonean blood, and a family devotion to Slortar.

I reason that their upbringing was in a wealthy agricultural family, and when I was of age they were apprenticed to Alchemists; a good fit with both their ambitions and INT. Perhaps they're a kind of poisoner.

They also have an Allegiance to Slortar. I want to make this just a minor feature of the character, so just roll 1d6, with a result of 5. This is still a fairly high starting Elan of 540, marking in 5 points on the track. I pump 3 points in CHA, and 2 in STR. Magic-wise the PC has 2 magic dice, and access to the magical Realms of Obeisance and Violence. They have a Demon that manifests as a particular perfume that they wear, which renders those around them suggestible.

Finally I work out their Legend. It's their Legacy that is the source of their Corruption, their link to Slortar and their Melnibonean heritage. They have three notches on the Allegiance track, under Charisma meaning that their Corruption has some visible mark, so I interpret this as their reputation as a potion-maker, which has earned them some notoriety as those who are affected lose their inhibitions and perform acts they would not dare when sober.
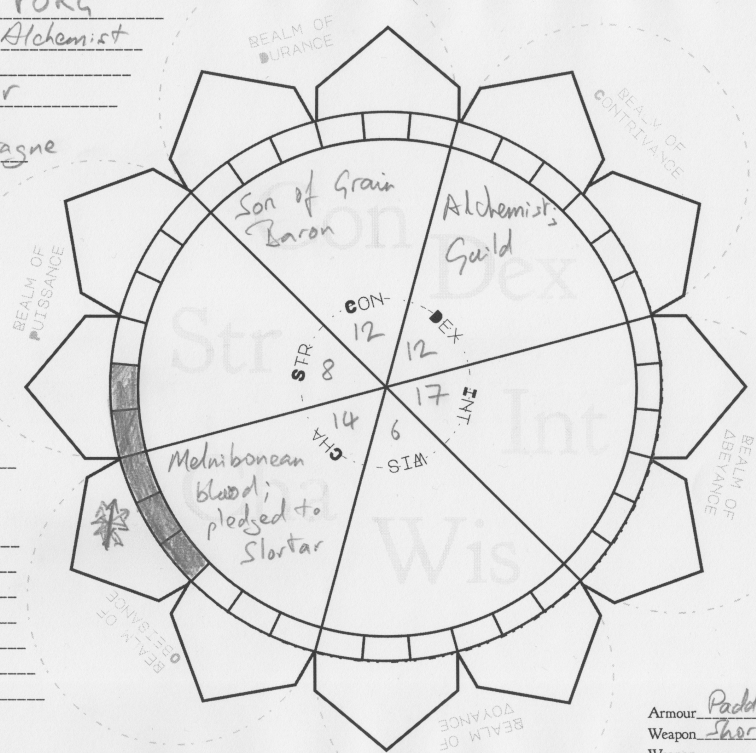
Name CHASTON YORG

Concept Itinerant Alchemist

Homeland Jharkor

Ties Remphir Farragne (Alchemist)

Trappings Melnibonean features; Mark of Slortar

Legend Notorious for narcotics

StormHack!

Patron SLORTAR
Elan 540 Magic 2d
Patron_____
Elan_____ Magic_____
Patron_____
Elan_____ Magic_____

Angst | Harm
O — 1 — [ ]
O — 2 — [ ]
O — 3 — [ ]
O — 4 — [ ]
O — 5 — [ ]
O — 6 — [ ]
O — 7 — [ ]
O — 8 — [ ]
O — 9 — [ ]
O — 10 — [ ]
O — 11 — [ ]
Ⓞ — 12 — [ ]
O — 13 — [ ]
O — 14 — [ ]
O — 15 — [ ]
O — 16 — [ ]
O — 17 — [ ]
O — 18 — [ ]

REALM OF DURANCE
REALM OF CONTRIVANCE
REALM OF PUISSANCE
REALM OF ABEYANCE
REALM OF DESTANCE
REALM OF CLOYANCE

Son of Grain Baron
Alchemist' Guild
Melnibonean blood; pledged to Slortar

CON 12
DEX 12
STR 8
INT 17
CHA 14
WIS 6

Armour Padded silks AC 2
Weapon Short sword Dmg 1d6
Weapon_____ Dmg_____

3.0 Play

This is an overview of the moving parts of the system.

3.1 Ability Checks

The core die roll is a d20 vs. an Ability Score, trying to roll equal to or below that score for a simple pass/fail result. The d20 is rolled for all kinds of basic skill test, and also for Saving Throws.

If you want more granularity try the following scale:

Roll	Success
10+	Great success (maybe additional benefit)
5+	Success (generally OK)
1-4	Weak (scraped by, maybe with some compromise or cost)

I like the 5+ and 10+ thresholds as they're intuitive, BUT you might want to fudge the margins above to suit your group, e.g.

- get a critical hit by rolling your Ability Score exactly
- weak hits on a 1-3
- set the threshold on a per-roll basis, e.g. the ref says "you need to beat a 6 or it's a weak hit"

This is a bit more flexible, but could also bog things down.

Advantage

Whenever you have an Advantage on a particular roll, you can roll 2d20 and pick the result you like. If you have Disadvantage, roll 2d20 and the Referee

picks the result they like.

Advantage comes from situations, clever plans, the right equipment, superior positions, and your Backgrounds. If you think your Background would give you an Advantage (say, you're trying to pole vault over a wall, and you're a former acrobat), claim it with the ref, maybe negotiate on why you should get the benefit, and perhaps even do a bit of exposition or backstory for your character if that's your thing (but be wary of bogging things down).

Backgrounds are specific and the skills that come from them have a context, especially in combat. If you're a gutter thief with form for close knife fighting in a dark alley, you won't get the same advantage on an open battlefield against a pike block. But as always it's down to the conversation between the players and ref.

Who does best?

If several party members are rolling the same thing and it really matters who does better than whom, use the numbers on the dice to work out the priority. Say Jenk, Skule, Jenna and Aubrey roll an INT check to spot the treasure: Jenk's roll of 17 means they miss, but the other three roll successes of 5, 12 and 9 respectively. This means the 12 is the first to succeed (and Jenna can rip the other party members off if she chooses).

3.2 Hazards and Saving Throws

Saving throws are about lucky escapes. Make a save against an ability score to avoid some or all of the effects of something (an enemy spell, poison, traps, etc.). Wisdom is the default score for all saves, although some groups might prefer to use a different Ability Score, so there's some alternative save suggestions below.

Saves can be rolled like any other Ability check, with either a pass/fail or a bit more granularity. Saving throws can be triggered by the consequences of bad

plans or bad choices, special monster attacks, spell effects, disease or poison and so on.

This table gives some broad suggestions for Hazard types, the effects of failing the save, and what might happen on a weak pass roll if you want that effect. Some alternative Ability Scores for the save are proposed, if you don't want to default to WIS each time.

Hazard	Fail	Weak pass (1-4)	Alternative save
Poison (ingested, inhaled), radiation, Death Magic	Take damage as stated, either all in one go or over time	Take a little Harm	CON
Paralysis	Paralysed	Reduce movement rate and DEX, shorter period of paralysis	CON or STR (breaking free)
Disease	Infected: pick the worst wound and make it worse (cross to a star, or tick to cross)	Asymptomatic carrier or only some symptoms	CON
Petrification	Turned to stone (or crystal, a tree, etc.)	Reduce movement rate and DEX, some body parts transformed	CON (physical resistance) or CHA (sense of identity)

Polymorph	Turned into something else (living or otherwise)	Partial transformation	CON (physical resistance) or CHA (sense of identity)
Devices (rods, staves, wands)	Hit with the effect of the device	A glancing hit, reduced effectiveness	DEX (dodging out of the way)
Dragon breath, explosions	Damage as stated	Damage reduced	CON or DEX (diving out of the way or behind cover)
Mind control spells (charms, commands)	Character is charmed, affected by fear, or commanded	Command is short-lived, ineffectual, or has a loophole	INT (seeing through the deception) or CHA (sense of identity)
Traps	Trap is sprung and the character is hit directly	Suffer some of the trap's effects	INT (noticing the trap) or DEX (reflexes)
Dimensional alterations and weirdness, illusions	Character is confused, possibly immobilised or trapped by the illusion or change	Character is confused for a short time but is able to find their way out of the miasma	INT

ONLY ROLL THE SAVE ONCE. Some hazards might be interpreted in more than one way, for example a thief failing to spot a trap gets hit with a poison dart: is this a trap hazard, or a poison hazard? Decide one way or the other before you roll and roll once.

3.3 Angst

Angst is existential dread. It starts at zero, and goes up under various circumstances: meddling in cosmic forces, mission setbacks, and other things that cause the heroes to doubt.

In play Angst works to mess up your character's life, and it comes into play whenever you roll a successful saving throw that's equal to or lower than Angst. If this happens, the ref should choose one of the following options:

- Make a Deep Wound fester, spreading to other wound boxes, or cause a Wound to become Deep.
- Highlight one of your corrupted Backgrounds (i.e. a background that's been touched by a Patron through Elan). The referee will then bring that negative aspect into the story, probably with bad social effects.
- Hold one over the party to reverse a positive outcome, hopefully at the worst possible time.

Of course the ref may think of other negative causes.

3.4 Elan

Elan is your connection to higher powers, and it increases through use of magic.

Any time you roll magic dice, if a die comes up 8+ then add that number to the running total of Elan for your Patron. If you have more than one Patron, increase the Elan of the Patron with whom you bargained for aid at that time. Every 100

points of Elan, mark off a new notch on the Allegiance track, adjacent to any existing mark for that deity.

See the Magic section for using Elan to bargain with higher powers.

3.5 Harm

Harm is "damage" and is marked on the Harm track with either a tick (fatigue, heals quickly), a cross (wound, heals slowly) or a star (a deep wound, needs special treatment). The capacity of your Harm track is equal to CON and Harm starts at zero.

Harm can be anything that negatively affects your PC. It could be physical damage from combat, but equally it could be some kind of mental or emotional drain, or even a social stigma. In general Harm is dealt one point at a time: for example, when a monster does damage, its damage die is rolled against the character's Armour Class. See the Combat section.

Healing

Healing entirely depends on circumstances but if the characters are able to at least rest, they can clear some fatigue. If they can get medical attention, they can clear some wound crosses, etc.

When Harm is healed, just remove the appropriate ticks and leave the unhealed ones behind. The next time you take damage, start by filling the highest empty slot. Here's an example:

```
Willhelm is struck 3 times in battle. The first two are just
fatiguing scratches worth 1 tick each, but the third is an
actual wound, so his player puts a cross against the 3 position.
Immediately after the fight Willhelm gets to rest and wipe out
the fatigue right there. The ticks disappear, but the cross
against number 3 stays because there's no time to heal the more
serious wound.
```

```
The next fight the wound hasn't healed, but Willhelm still marks
off the first empty box opposite 1 for the first bit of damage.
When he takes a third hit, the damage leapfrogs over the
existing wound and marks box number 4. And so on.
```

Healing Deep Wounds requires special circumstances (quests, special ingredients, skilled healers, etc.).

Wounds getting worse

Wounds can get worse: a tick becomes a cross, and a cross becomes a star. This might be the case if a wound becomes infected (due to missed saving throw, or monster effect), or if the character runs out of Harm boxes (in which case, ticks become crosses, etc.).

Deep wounds and festering

Deep wounds are marked with a star on the Harm track. They're particularly bad because they both need special circumstances to heal them, and they can spread to other boxes.

When Deep wounds fester, they infect the boxes nearby. Rather than leaping over to the next empty box, a festering Deep Wound will first affect the adjacent boxes until they are stars (fatigue, then crosses, then stars).

Example of deep wounds might include injury from a magical blade, a serious infection, a strike from a supernatural creature, a particularly nasty disease.

Incapacity and Death

If you keep taking damage, at some point the Harm track will be full of ticks and crosses. When you have no more boxes to fill in, roll a saving throw against CON to stay active.

A fail means you're incapacitated, or even dead. If the character has more ticks than crosses, they'll be unconscious but stable. However if they have more

crosses than ticks, they're at risk of death; immediately turn one tick into a cross, and periodically continue to do this (as prompted by the ref) until they're stabilised.

If you pass, you can continue fighting and acting, but when you take damage next, turn your next tick into a cross and roll a CON save again to check whether you're incapacitated.

4.0 Combat

Combat is a component of nearly all sword and sorcery. The basic procedure is as follows:

1. Combat is divided into Rounds where PCs take action.
2. By "take action" we mean swing a sword, move a short distance, shout an order or a warning, interact with the environment, etc.
3. Initiative can be used to work out who goes first in any round.
4. In a combat round, if the PC is in range of a monster, they can roll an attack. Similarly if they're in range of the monster's attack, they roll defence against each monster. Both of these are d20 rolls like any other check.
5. If they hit the monster, they do damage equal to the d20 roll plus their weapon damage, minus the target's AC.
6. If they miss any defence roll, they take damage from the monster as stated (usually the monsters damage die vs. their worn AC)
7. Repeat this until either one side quits (or is dead), or if the combat is interrupted. The end!

There are more advanced options in the form of Stances, which are covered shortly.

4.1 Initiative

For Initiative all the PCs roll vs Dexterity. PCs who make the check act before the monsters, those who miss it act after. Acting first means a PC might be able to hide before the enemy engages them, or strike a blow that slays a monster before it can strike back.

If it matters which PC goes first, use the number on the die to give order of action, just as with a who does best check. This probably won't matter most of

the time because the party will probably be acting as a unit, but once in a while it might matter who goes first.

4.2 Armour Class

Armour Class soaks damage, and ranges from 0 (naked) up to high numbers. In combat subtract AC from the damage to get hit point damage (monsters) or wounds (PCs).

For PCs, AC 1 is sturdy adventuring clothes, buff coats and the like, 2 is leather, 3 is boiled leather, brigandine or other light chain armour and 4+ is serious plate and chain (and starts to get heavy).

Monster AC runs on the same scale but can run higher due to being massive (e.g. being a dragon), or non-human physiology (e.g. a carapace).

4.3 Damage Dice

For monsters, your monster stat block will show a number of dice that are rolled when a hit connects. These dice are rolled and compared against the PC's Armour Class.

For weapons carried by PCs, non-magical weapons will have die sizes of 1d4, 1d6 and 1d8 for small-medium-large. Demon weapons will use one or more d10s. PC damage is worked out as part of the attack roll using the number on the d20, plus weapon damage rolled, minus the monster's AC.

4.4 Attacking

Attacking is usually done with Strength. Strength is more than physical power, it's the will to do harm and violence. On occasion Dexterity (or even Wisdom) is more appropriate for e.g. ranged fire or sneak attacks.

When you roll an attack, if it's a hit you just use the number on the dice and subtract the Monster's Armour Class for damage. On top, if you're carrying any weapon, roll the dice for that weapon (1d4, 1d6 and 1d8 for small-medium-large non-magical weapons; demon weapons will use one or more d10s).

Even the weakest PCs will be slaying small, lightly armoured Monsters with one blow. This is as it should be. The PCs are meant to be double-hard bastards, capable of taking on hordes of Monsters.

4.5 Defending

Defending is often done with Dexterity though sometimes Constitution is appropriate if the PC is trying to hold up something between them and their foe (a massive shield, a heavy table or door, etc.). Wisdom may be appropriate for defending against psychic attack.

Defence rolls are usually a pass-fail only. If there is more than one attack then too many defence rolls could bog the action down. On a successful defence, the character avoids taking damage. Otherwise they take damage as stated on the Monster's stat block.

4.6 Taking damage

When a monster does damage, it rolls all its damage dice and each die that scores above the PC's AC causes a hit on the Harm track. Obviously monsters with only 1 die damage of any size can only knock down a point of Harm at a time.

How the point of damage is marked on the track depends on how much damage is done:

- If the hit goes over AC by 1 or 2 points, mark it as a tick for Fatigue.
- If it goes over AC by 3 or more, mark it with a cross for a Wound.
- Deep Wounds are marked with a star and are caused under special

circumstances, monster special effects, etc.

4.7 Monsters

Most play groups will already have access to plenty of monster books already, so rather than reinventing a monster list the intent is to use what the group already has.

Monster stat blocks

Use "old school" monster stat blocks with as little modification as possible, using the unholy trinity of Armour Class, Hit Points and Damage.

Item	How to apply
Armour Class	Different systems will have ascending or descending AC and different unarmoured value (0, 9, 10, etc.). Work out the AC in StormHack! by just subtracting the lower number from the higher.
Hit Dice	Hit dice should just be rolled as you would normally to get a pool of hit points per monster.
Damage	Damage is rolled as usual, whenever the monster hits their target. Any single die over the PC's armour causes a hit.

Special effects

Monsters might have all kinds of special effects that don't fall into the above categories. Some suggestions:

- The effect happens only if the monster scores damage on the PC. This works for e.g. poison or disease. In this case a damage tick might become a cross and a cross becomes a star. The effects might be immediate or they might only happen after the fight.
- The effect happens instead of the damage roll; so the PC still gets to

defend, but armour doesn't factor into it. This might make more sense than the one above if the effect isn't stopped by armour (e.g. a touch range spell).

- The effect happens instead of the normal attack. This could work for a breath weapon or spell that has to be resisted in a different way by a different kind of saving throw.

For spell effects that cause a lot of physical damage like fireballs or dragon breath, translate the damage into a number of dice. A larger number of dice means more potential wounds/fatigue, and a larger die size means more of the dice are likely to stick. Saving throws just reduce the number of dice (by half, a quarter) before they're rolled.

Example monsters

Goblin	**AC 3, HP 5, Damage 1d6 (ranged or close). Come in waves from all directions.**
Ghoul	AC 3, HP 15, Damage 3d4 (claws and bite) plus paralysis for any hits that get through (see hazards)
Dragon	AC 8, HP 40, Damage 2d6 (claws) plus 1d12 (bite). Breath weapon up to 3 times in combat deals 5d8 damage from a corrosive cloud over a wide area (save to reduce number of dice).
Grey Jelly	AC 1, HP 20, Damage 2d8 (acid). After a successful hit it sticks to the target and will continue to deal damage unless removed. Jellies that stick will destroy 1 point of AC per round, at the start of each round before initiative is rolled.

4.8 Advanced Combat

Stances are basically statements of intent and ongoing mindset rolled into one. They're a bunch of assumptions about what your PC will do in the combat, like

a mini program of if/then statements. They draw a box around what you are doing and what you're not doing.

There are six Stances, in line with the six Ability Scores:

Attacking/Other	Engage	Wait	Avoid
Attacking	Pursuit (Str)	Defend (Con)	Flank (Dex)
Other	Talk (Cha)	Observe (Wis)	Device (Int)

As you can see there are three Attacking stances and three Others, which are subdivided into Engage, Wait and Avoid. This is the order in which monsters will pay attention to (i.e. target) the PC; if you're charging towards (or standing up and shouting at) the monster you're more likely to attract fire than if you're hanging back.

Choosing a particular Stance doesn't make you any better or worse able to defend however, it just makes it more likely that the monsters go after you. All the Stances assume that if attacked, a person will defend themselves (or to put it differently, none of the options mean you're not defending yourself).

After the ref has introduced the scene and established that there is going to be a combat, the order of combat should go like this:

1. Roll for initiative.
2. On your PC's turn, pick a Stance, and do what actions are prompted by that Stance (e.g. attack, get into cover, use a device, etc.)
3. On the monster's turn, the ref will manage whatever is natural for the monsters (usually close with the PCs and attack)
4. On the next round the players can choose to stay with their strategy or pick a different card.

The ref might limit the number of Stance cards on the table. Sample limitations and reasons:

- only allowing 2 Pursuit cards because the environment is too close, so only a couple of people can push to the front
- denying Observe cards because it's impossible to see further than a few feet in thick fog
- denying Talk cards because the environment is too loud, or magically silenced

These are the stances:

Pursuit (STR)

If you're pursuing the enemy, assume

1. Attacking is prioritised over all other actions. No matter what happens, you get to make an attack roll.
2. You attack as soon as you're in range. If for some reason you're out of range, move to get into distance.
3. You're not hiding or staying in a fixed location. You'll probably split off from any party members who aren't attacking with you.
4. You'll definitely attract the attention of the enemy.

For agressive fighters. You're not protecting anyone, but you're haring off after the first target you can see

Defend (CON)

If you're defending a person or place, assume

1. You will always move to put yourself between the enemy and who/whatever you're protecting. Enemy will have to attack you before they can attack your charge.
2. If someone comes close enough to threaten, you automatically get to strike at them. If they're not close enough, you can't hit them.
3. You're out in the open so you attract attention, although less than if you charge towards the enemy.

For bodyguards and defensive fighters protecting other party members.

Flank (DEX)

If you're flanking the enemy, assume

1. Your first priority is to get into a superior position where you can attack, but the enemy can't see you. (You might start the combat from this position already. If you try to do this in combat it will probably be a harder roll than if you were outside combat).
2. If you're in this position, you get to attack. This may or may not attract attention.
3. If the enemy spots you, your attack is spoiled. Either try to hide again next round, or change your Stance to another attack and give up hiding.

For snipers and backstabbers!

Talk (CHA)

If you're talking to the enemy in combat, assume

1. You're not attacking.
2. If the enemy can understand you, they'll hear your message, unless they're being attacked at that moment. The ref will work out their response, e.g.
   - if you're intimidating, they may pause or even flee
   - if you're charming, they may stop fighting and engage in talks
   - if you're taunting, they may make you their next target This is obviously for attempting social interaction in combat.

You're definitely sticking your neck out, so there's a high probability of drawing fire.

Observe (WIS)

If you're observing what's going on, assume

1. You're not attacking.
2. You're not making yourself obvious, but you're not actively hiding either. You're less of a threat/target than attacking party members.
3. You're watching out for what's going on.

If you alert someone else (e.g. to an ambush) the ref might credit that player with an advantage (or a roll if they would otherwise not get one). If you act yourself, you automatically gain the initiative next round, picking the Stance you want.

This is a catch-all for "wait and see" in combat. It can be used by anyone, and even non-combat types can use it to get involved in combat.

Device (INT)

If you're trying to use a device, cast a spell, pick up an object or do something else with the environment, assume

1. You're not attacking.
2. You're doing your best to avoid the enemy's attention. How successful this is will depend on whether there's someone else more attention-grabbing in the fight.
3. If you're attacked, it may delay or spoil whatever you're trying to do.

This is a catch-all category for doing something in combat, but includes casting spells.

4.9 After the Combat

Following a battle, consider these steps:

1. Wipe fatigue away with post-battle rest, as much as the referee thinks is reasonable.
2. Anything worse than fatigue will need treatment. Take a tally of the wounds suffered, so you (the ref) has a good idea how battered the party is.

Wounds are healed by doctors or by magic (for example from a Demon of Desire) and normally will need downtime but if the party has a physician or resources (salve, sutures etc.) then it might be fair to remove a wound. Deep wounds won't be healed without special intervention, though.

3. Think about the enemy — did they rout or were they all slain? Will they come back in greater numbers? Will they inform on the party?

4. Deep wounds are likely to need special ingredients, rituals, or sacrifices. Roleplay this. When Deep Wounds heal, they will leave a scar. They should be visible, nagging and unpleasant, and spur the party to action.

5. If the battle was particularly taxing, consider raising Angst by 1 or more points.

6. Check in with the party what their next priority is.

5.0 Magic

Wizardry, sorcery, enchantment... all magic involves appeals to entities for aid. These may be gods who intervene when called (directly or indirectly). Or they may be demons or elementals, summoned to do the conjurer's bidding.

An overview of magic in Stormhack!:

- Casting spells is like any other skill test with a d20 roll against an attribute. This is enhanced with Magic Dice which are used to achieve the target number. At least 1 Magic Die must be rolled when casting spells.
- There are six Realms from which all magic flows. Allegiances to higher powers will be rooted in and spread out from one of the Realm. The powers available depend on the Realm used.
- There are three ranks of magic, including one-use glyphs and demons of various ranks. Most magic is done through demons, who are like magical proxies.
- Magic has a few costs. In the short term it costs Fatigue (a tick on the Harm track). It also raises Angst while the spell is active. Finally if you have a Demon, you need to commit your Magic Dice to the Demon, which can then use those dice for its powers.
- When you roll Magic Dice, any result of 8+ is added to your Elan. Your Allegiance increases with more use of your powers.

5.1 The six Planes of Magic

All "magic" comes from the Six Planes, sometimes called the Demonic Realms, Mittelmarches, Ghost Lands, and other names. Despite the names these are not solely the provenance of Demons or Chaos, nor are they owned or controlled by them (though the PR team for the Variable Eight would have you believe otherwise). These are places through which all higher powers (Law, Chaos, the Balance, Elemental Rulers, Beast Lords and others) connect with

Earth. In game terms each Realm maps onto an ability score, reproducing the microcosm that is the mortal self in macrocosmic terms.

Microcosm	Macrocosm	Effects
Strength	Puissance	Harm, destruction, holding, combat
Constitution	Durance	Armour, wards, banishment
Dexterity	Contrivance	Transport, teleportation and gates
Intelligence	Abeyance	Conjuring and procuring objects of desire
Wisdom	Voyance	Scrying, divination, knowledge
Charisma	Obeisance	Enchantments and possession

The names above are the archaic, fundamental names given by scholars to the Realms. Usually they're referred to by simpler names e.g. Chaos' Demons of Knowledge or Demons of Combat. Similarly Law will refer to Virtues; servants of the Beast Lords are Vassals; and those of Elemental Rulers are Elementals.

A note on Elementals and Beast Lords

In the latter example Elementals aren't really categorised in the same way, but their nature is often assumed to fall into a particular area, e.g. fire elementals are usually destructive (or at least conjured for destructive purposes). Elementals and Beast Lords services usually fall into the more physical half of the wheel (Str-Con-Dex), but there's no reason Elementals can't produce objects from nothing or provide information by working within their domain.

5.2 The Allegiances

All power comes from Allegiances with Patrons (Chaos, Law, Elementals, Beasts, others). Allegiance is measured in Elan, a sort of position on the cosmic league table. Elan goes up with magical practice. A PC can have more than one Allegiance, but only one Allegiance per Realm/Ability Score. The strength of the

Allegiance in each Realm goes from 1 (passing) to 6 (complete). If the corresponding Ability Score is tagged with a Background then the Background is corrupted (see the Character Generation chapter).

Choosing a Patron

Allegiance comes from an event in the character's life where they are initiated into the cult or otherwise connected with the god. Several of the random Backgrounds result in Allegiances, and at the referee's option players may opt for their PC to become suitably allied at the start of the game, or pick up an Allegiance during play.

Marking Allegiance

When filling in both Notches and Lobes, mark the area with an appropriate symbol.

Allegiance	Symbol
Chaos	An eight pointed star for the Variable Eight
Law	An arrow, representing the singularity of Law
Elementals	A square, representing the four elements
Beast Lords	A triangle, for the trinity of Land, Sea and Sky

Develop other symbols as needed.

Elan and Allegiance

Allegiance is measured as Elan on the character sheet in the appropriate box (which also marks the Magic Dice the character gets from this Allegiance). When your character does magic they will roll one or more magic dice. Any magic die that comes up 8+ adds the number on the die to the Elan of that Allegiance. Every 100 points of Elan equals one Notch on the Wheel.

The Ranks

There are three ranks of magic available to the sorcerer for each Realm:

Rank	Prerequisite	Form
First	One notch anywhere in the given Realm	Glyphs
Second	One magic die acquired in the Realm (at least 3 notches)	Common demons
Third	Both magic dice for the Realm acquired, all Notches filled in	Court demons

There are prerequisites to the different levels of magic; these are on a per-Realm basis. For example if you have 1 magic die in CHA but only 2 notches in STR, you can conjure Common Demons from the realm of Obeisance, but only inscribe Glyphs from the realm of Puissance.

The first rank magics are Glyphs, which are single use. They're runes or other marks inscribed into objects, or in places, and they're triggered under conditions set by the sorcerer.

The other two Ranks are the conjuration of Demons, which fall into two types: Common Demons, and Court Demons. Demons have Ability Scores though Common Demons are often incomplete (for example, a demon weapon might have a STR and CON scores but nothing else).

Magic Dice

Magic Dice are d10s used to enhance magic rolls, and at least 1 die must be rolled when attempting any magic. If any die comes up 8+, the number on that die is added to Elan with the relevant Patron.

When Magic Dice are used to conjure a Demon, those dice are then committed to that Demon until it is released. While the Demon has these dice it can use them (e.g. a Demon Weapon would get to roll these dice as damage dice), but

this means the dice may not be used by the sorcerer. Glyphs don't require dice to be committed to them.

The benefits of a Patron are access to magic. You get a single free Magic Die for your Allegiance to any one patron. Further dice are gained thus:

- There are twelve lobes around the outside edge of the Wheel, two per Ability Score (and Realm)
- These get marked if all three Notches under a Lobe are filled in
- Each Lobe filled gives a magic die to use for conjuring.

Obviously as your Allegiance grows, more of the Notches get filled in, and both the number of magic dice and the scope of your powers increases.

5.3 Casting Process

Whether you're inscribing a glyph, conjuring a minor demon or appealing to one of the Dukes of Hell, follow the general process:

1. Decide on the effect you want to achieve, and work out the target number with the referee
2. Roll on the ability score related to the Realm for the basic success. Like any other roll, favourable conditions (e.g. inscribed circles, helpful familiars) might give an Advantage. The number on the die is your base level of success.
3. To hit the target number, roll any number of Magic Dice (but at least 1). Add those results to the base level of success.
4. If this final total hits the target number, you're golden.
5. If the final total misses the target, the spell goes off but may be deficient in some way. See the remarks on Deficiencies.

Difficulty and Costs

The sample difficulties are given in the details for each Realm, but they basically come down to three things:

- The effect you want to happen (the main cost)
- Any complications (such as range, special conditions, etc.) which might raise the difficulty by 1-3 points
- Boosting the Ability Scores of your demons (obviously doesn't apply to Glyphs)

Magic has a few costs:

- Every spell costs the sorcerer 1 fatigue (a tick) per Magic Die used. This fatigue will go away with a brief rest, just like after a combat (so it only matters if the sorcerer is trying to do magic in a stress situation)
- Any magic die that comes up 8+ has that number added to the Elan with the sorcerer's Patron
- Raise the sorcerer's Angst by a number equal to the number of Magic Dice used. This increase stands until the spell is used up or otherwise discharged (glyph dispelled, demon released, etc)

An example:

```
Grand mystic Tobl Eron'e seals the main door of his residence
with a Glyph of Warding to ensure he's undisturbed while he
prepares greater works. The Glyph acts as a kind of armour which
must be broken through. Since it's a simple ward the referee
makes the difficulty fairly low at 12. Tobl's player rolls a CON
roll, and the referee agrees that they get advantage because
they have time to prepare. They roll 2d20 for a 19 and an 8, so
the success is at 8 — below Tobl's CON of 11 so a success. The
player needs to roll 4 or more for the ward to be executed
properly, but they don't want to take any chances so they roll 2
Magic Dice for a result of a 9 and a 1 on 2d10. Adding this to
the initial roll of 8 and they've safely beaten the target
number of 12. However since one of their dice came up a 9, they
add 9 to their Elan with their Patron Xiombarg. Furthermore
because they added 2 dice, they raise their Angst by 2 whilst
```

```
the ward remains in place.

Because this is just a ward, their magic dice are still
available for other magics. However they now need to think about
the second ward they planned for the back door and whether they
can risk the additional temporary stress.

Whilst the Ward is in place, it provides 2d10 armour which must
be overcome by anyone trying to break down the door. Once
overcome it will be discharged.
```

Complications

Finally, if you manage to successfully cast (making the Ability Score check) but don't manage to pony up the magical moolah with your Magic Dice, your spell has some kind of Deficiency. This means it still works, but there might be some drawback as well.

Immediately after missing the target number (but still casting the spell with a successful Ability Check) the sorcerer needs to make a Saving Throw to avoid any immediate negative effects. Bear in mind the effect of Angst on Saving Throws. The actual drawbacks are entirely freeform and should be proportional to (a) the strength of the spell and (b) the margin by which it was missed. Here are some suggestions:

- The spell bites the sorcerer or an ally (1 or more d10)
- The demon runs away for a brief period (demons only, obviously)
- The spell is vulnerable to something
- The spell fails to protect, spot something, or otherwise function at a random event

Glyphs

Glyphs are one-use, and must be inscribed on something, imbued into something, or otherwise attached to the object on which they function. When inscribing a glyph the sorcerer must decide the conditions on which the glyph

is triggered, for example when someone is close to it (could be anyone, could be a particular race, or a named individual). It could be stepped on, intentionally touched, certain words spoken over it, and so on. It could also be ingested as a potion. When triggered the glyph might deliver a deadly attack, or a message, or shift the object that it's bound to elsewhere, or bring an object from there to here, perhaps transmuting the object. It might reveal something not previously visible. The base difficulty for any Glyph is 11. Variations will increase this a bit — an increase between 1 and 5 is probably reasonable, to be discussed with the referee.

Common Demons

Common demons are permanent forms (until released, destroyed or banished), may be bound into objects or autonomous, and may be anthropomorphised or alien. The sorcerer commits their magic dice to the demon, which may then use said dice to perform various services.

Demons have ability scores, which work much like PC scores, e.g. STR for attacking, INT for perception, CHA for communication, and so on. In play they're treated like ancillary PCs. Common demons are often incomplete, meaning they're missing some of the attributes that would otherwise make them whole like a human.

The various Ability Scores have the following effects for Demons:

Ability Score	Function	Zero score
Strength	Do damage, carry things	Cannot harm anything
Constitution	Demon's physical integrity	Cannot resist any damage
Dexterity	Independent motion	Cannot move independently
		Cannot act on instructions away

Intelligence	Independent thought	from its master
Wisdom	Sense and intuition	Cannot perceive beyond immediate surroundings
Charisma	Communicate and influence others	Cannot communicate

Note however that a low or zero score doesn't mean the demon is stupid, inarticulate or lacking personality, it just means there are things the demon physically can't do because those parts of the demon are not adquately manifested on this plane of reality, and therefore it doesn't have the capability to act. A demon sword without CHA may still gurgle and moan, it just can't influence anyone by doing so.

Furthermore, demon Ability Scores are in flux, and they make use of the Magic Dice bequeathed them by their sorcerer to actually do something. Any demon with a non-zero Ability Score may enhance its score temporarily by rolling and attaching Magic Dice. A demon with a DEX of 5 may suddenly wish to move with greater speed; the player rolls a single Magic Die and gets a 7, making its DEX temporarily 12. This lasts for as long as the demon is required to take that form, after which it reverts to its base and frees up the Magic Die. Thus demons may morph their plastic form as the situation demands.

Some demons expend magic dice for using their powers. These refresh the following day.

When conjuring Demons, the base target number is 15, after which it is adjusted in the same way as Glyphs. The final score (1d20+nd10) may then be divided against the base Ability Scores as needed.

Court Demons

Court demons are like their lesser counterparts, with the following distinctions:

- They are always complete, fully formed and independent.

- They are unique and named. Court Demons should be created as NPCs.
- They have access to the more exotic effects of that realm. These are detailed in the Grimoire.

Otherwise, Court Demons are formed exactly as their more common counterparts. However, because they usually demand such a large investment of magic at any one time, they're often only engaged for a short amount of time and then released back to their home realm. When they emerge they frequently cause significant local disruption which can include odour, miasma, emotional response, and disruption of the physical surroundings.

The base difficulty for summoning a Court Demon is 30, and a minimum of 3 dice must be committed to their conjuring. However the special abilities are effectively "free" and don't need to be accounted for in the difficulty number.

5.4 The Grimoire

Here's a rundown of the various Realms and the associated Glyphs, Common and Court Demons.

These are written as a general case rather than specific spells. In play the referee and players will create the spells on the fly, and spells should be unique to each sorcerer. I recommend the play group keeps a Grimoire of their spells to write glyphs and conjure demons (can be done as a group or individually). Keep them on index cards or in a notebook, etc. The Court cards may be especially useful (and you might want to keep a record of your ongoing relationship with those Demons). Give the spells fancy names.

Realm of Puissance

This Realm deals with all forms of destructive and harmful magic including magics that strike, grip, push, poison, corrode, infect, or inflict pain.

Prime requisite: Strength

Typical service: cause damage of 1d10 per Magic Die used in the casting.

Variations:

- cause pain
- burning (poisoning, burning, pestilence or causing other damage over a long period)
- push (lift up, push back, trip over, or something else that causes the target to move)
- area effect
- ranged effect

Glyphs: battle glyphs that directly harm when the target is nearby. Often used as a trap, or on the end of a weapon.

Common Demons: Demon Weapons. These are normally bound into actual weapons, and do the weapon's damage plus any additional damage per their nature.

Court Demons: the Warmasters. These are demon war-makers and warriors, destructive elementals and so on. They are generally rolled out as engines of war (sometimes on both sides).

Realm of Durance

This realm is about physical integrity, protection, and preservation. Effects include limiting physical damage, elemental harm (e.g. fire and cold) or other kinds of harm.

Prime requisite: Constitution

Typical service: resist damage. The glyph or demon can use 1d10 per Magic Die to resist damage dice on a 1 for 1 basis, e.g. if a monster rolls 2d8 for damage then each 1d8 can be opposed by 1d10. If the damage exceeds the demon's resistance the die is lost (permanently for a glyph, until next day for a demon).

Variations:

- resist a particular type of damage (e.g. fire)
- immunity to a particular weapon (wardpact)
- resist psychic damage or attack

Glyphs: wards that prevent physical or even psychic entry (scrying) into a place, talismans that protect against injury (e.g. fire)

Common Demons: Demon Armour. It may be actual armour, or more subtle protections woven into a cloak, jewellery or other clothing. Demon Armour usually just has CON but may have other attributes.

Court Demons: the Guardians. These are similar to the Warmasters but they are normally conjured to guard a particular place; the demon is usually persuaded to by the sorcerer to adopt the area as its territory. Like the Warmasters these tend to be violent and destructive demons, and frequently have wardpacts and other immunities.

Realm of Contrivance

This realm is concerned with all manner of travel through any terrain, plane or dimension.

Prime requisite: Dexterity

Typical service: allow movement from one place to another. Magic dice are used to enhance basic attributes for purposes of movement.

Variations:

- teleport
- speed
- carrying capacity
- vertical movement
- temporal movement

Glyphs: transit glyphs. These are glyphs that open doors, bring stored objects forth, or move things in time and space. They may transport those who touch them, or be consumed (e.g. a potion) to allow jumping or levitation.

Common Demons: Transporters. Typically these demons have CON, DEX (for speed), and STR (for carrying capacity). They may move in three or more dimensions, teleport from one location to another, etc. In play these are supplemented by the Magic Dice granted to them to allow them to transport their charges.

Court Demons: the Gates. These are the planar gatekeepers, enabling transit between distant or otherwise inaccessible locations. They often require not only conjuration but some kind of pledge or sacrifice for each traveller they admit.

Realm of Abeyance

This realm is about conjuration and transformation of objects.

Prime requisite: Intelligence

Typical service: reshape reality

Variations:

- A person
- A place
- An object
- A sensation

Glyphs: glamours. These are used to disguise the true worth of things, to briefly form illusions of light and sound and smell, and other tricks. However whilst the senses are often deceived the body won't be; so an illusion of water won't quench thirst, even though it looks and feels like water. Similarly an illusion of fire may give the sensation of heat, perhaps even pain, but it won't burn.

Common Demons: Demons of Desire. Demons of Desire often appear in forms aesthetically pleasing to their master. The relationship between demon and master may be intimate or simply based on transaction.

Demons of Desire use the Magic Dice invested in them to procure objects and services for their master. When the sorcerer asks the demon to procure something, the demon will state how difficult it is, then roll its INT and expend at least 1 magic die, which will come back in the next day. Optionally the demon can be forced to expend CON permanently to get additional 1-use magic dice, which might be needed if it's expended its allocation of magic dice for the day.

Court Demons: Phantasmal Forces. These are wish-granters which can be conjured and persuaded to alter reality. For example they might be able to make a nation forget who the king is, change the gravity in an area, procure something of fantastic value or power, hide an entire town, infect the dreams of a whole city, and so on.

Realm of Voyance

Demons of Knowledge are concern themselves with understanding the past, present and future, including the perception of all things.

Prime requisite: Intelligence

Typical service: all kinds of detection, distant scrying, probing the past or future

Variations:

- In the immediate vicinity
- A kind of object, group, or species
- A specific person
- Distant
- In the past
- In the future

Glyphs: illuminations. These are all kinds of minor detection magics, for example to determine whether a particular kind of object or person is nearby.

Common Demons: Demons of Knowledge. Demons of Knowledge use their powers to answer questions. At least one Magic Die is needed per question, using the Demon's INT to answer the question.

Court Demons: the Fates. The highest orders of Demonic Knowledge, their vision is virtually boundless. They can be conjured to answer any question, but with one of the following conditions:

- Everything the Fates tell the sorcerer is true.
- Some of what the Fates say is true, and some is false.
- The prophecy will directly harm the sorcerer or their allies.

Realm of Obeisance

This is the realm of human affairs and interactions.

Prime requisite: Charisma

Typical service: influence mortal behaviour

Variations:

- Emotions
- Rational thoughts
- More than 1 person (a group, a court, a city, etc.)
- Commands to commit crimes
- Commands to sacrifice oneself

Glyphs: charms. Charms are glyphs that change mood and reactions. Sometimes they are worn as talismans, or consumed as potions, or suffered as marks applied surreptitiously to an unwary victim.

Common Demons: Passing Demons. These are demonic advisers, messengers, and other proxies who will act on the behalf of the sorcerer to achieve social effects (introductions, social manipulations, etc.).

Passing Demons will use their CHA to directly affect others. In addition they can place their own charms on others, by expending Magic Dice. The complexity of the charm will affect the number of dice needed and the roll required.

Court Demons: the Possessors. These are the most adept at human manipulation, and are conjured not simply to charm others, but to occupy human bodies. They are often encouraged to do so in the short term to achieve the sorcerer's ends, with the understanding that they will continue occupying the body after the end of the contract.

5.5 Demons against Demons

Demons often have a CON score, but this is usually not important as they can't be harmed by any mortal source of damage. This is not the case however when the Demon encounters a supernatural threat.

If a demon is directly injured by a supernatural force (another demon, etc.) damage is done just as it would be for a PC, i.e. each die of damage is compared against the AC of the target and any dice that beat the AC count as a point of damage.

When the damage is done, it directly reduces the demon's CON score. Once the demon's CON reaches zero, any damage will destroy it. Note that Glyphs don't have a CON (or any other score) but they can be directly attacked using demonic damage.

Unless otherwise stated, assume a glyph's AC is 2, a Common Demon's AC is 3 and a Court Demon has AC 4 vs. these attacks only.

5.6 Appeals for Aid

In desperate times you may want to appeal to your Patron. The success of this entirely depends on your Elan. Knock off the two right-most digits and you'll get a number from 1 upwards (should be equal to the number of Notches you've devoted to that Allegiance).

Roll as many Magic Dice as you want (these must be free, i.e. not bound up in a demon). If at least one is equal to or lower than the number, the Patron hears you. Add any dice that come up 8+ to your Elan, of course. When your Patron answers your plea for aid, they will render some kind of assistance, but it will always come with conditions or a price. How heavy the price will depend on the character's current relationship with their Patron, how desperate the situation, and so on. It would be especially high if the Patron is saving the character from the machinations of one of the other Dukes of Hell, owing to the political fallout of such a manoeuvre.

This will be a one-time offer of aid, to be granted directly and immediately, and the Patron will expect the character to make good on their end. Some requests that a Patron might levy against their subject include:

- Recover an artifact of significance to the cult
- Restore a temple or shrine
- Convey a message to someone (which may involve danger, embarrassment, retribution from the recipient, etc.)
- Inconvenience, ruin, or assassinate an enemy of the Patron
- Insult one of the Patron's rivals at Court
- Perform a clandestine action on behalf of the Patron
- Track down a deal-breaker and exact the Patron's revenge upon them.

On the last point: choosing to break a deal will certainly result in sanctions, but not always be fatal. After all, the subject may still be a loved and valued instrument of the Patron; they just need a bit of discipline. Examples of such measures include:

- Being denied access to Demons under that Patron's purview (but not necessarily Glyphs)
- Being physically harmed, disfigured, or mutilated.
- Ability scores being diminished.
- Loss of taste or smell.
- A run of bad luck (expressed as one or more disadvantageous rolls per session).
- Being humiliated.
- Backgrounds, especially corrupted ones, being brought into play in a disadvantageous way.

6.0 Refereeing

I assume the reader has plenty of experience and I don't need to explain either what a roleplaying game is or the finer points of playing or refereeing; BUT FWIW here are my eight principles for running this game:

1. Give the PCs the time and space to be themselves.
2. Reward ingenuity, proactivity, and character exposition from the players.
3. Start in media res. Don't wait for the party to find each other, or to find the place where there's danger and adventure.
4. Test the characters with violence and hardship. They can take it. This game is designed to be survivable from the outset, unlike typical OSR games. Demand saving throws regularly.
5. Increase Angst when there's a setback, and lay the omens and portents on thick.
6. Make the surroundings fantastic and colourful. In particular, inject colour into every scene, even if it's just a splash. Where appropriate, embrace Chaos and pervert the landscape.
7. Law and Chaos lords and their vassals interfere all the time. Have them drift in and out of the narrative.
8. You must read Moorcock if you want to run Moorcock.

Bear these in mind when adapting old Stormbringer (or indeed any) scenarios, which may be wonderful but also have the habit of allowing, or even forcing, the PCs to wander around. Edit the adventure savagely before play.

7.0 Character Sheet

Name_____

Concept_____

_____

Homeland_____

Ties_____

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Trappings_____

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Legend_____
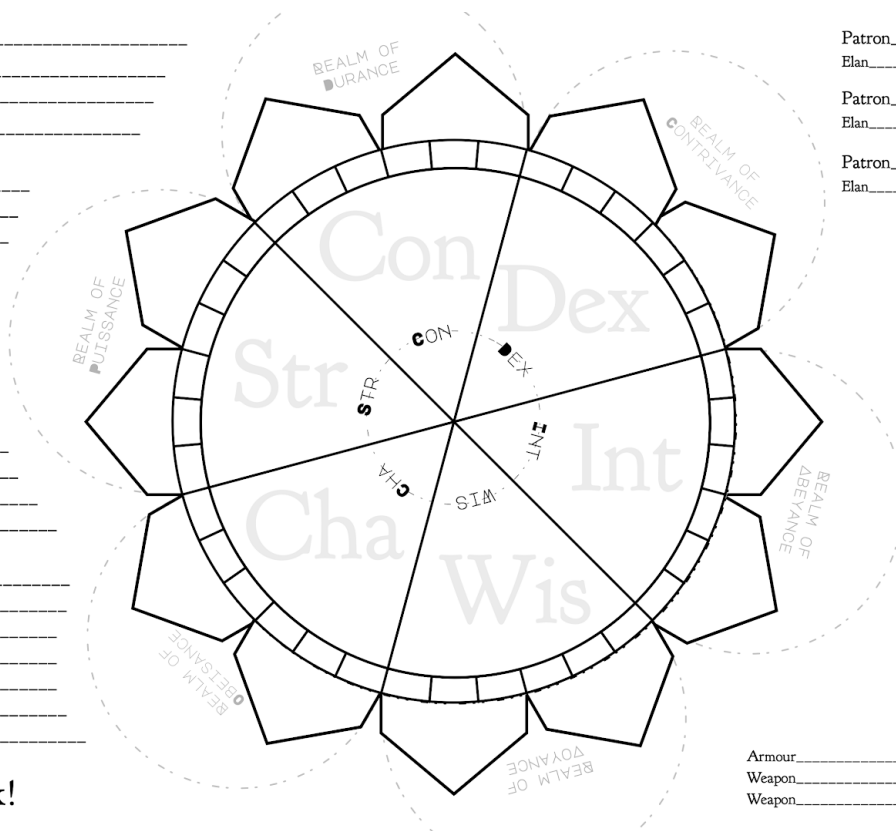
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StormHack!

REALM OF DURANCE

REALM OF CONTRIVANCE

REALM OF PUISSANCE

REALM OF ABEYANCE

REALM OF OBEISANCE

REALM OF DOYANCE

Con Dex

Str Int

Cha Wis

CON · DEX · INT · WIS · CHA · STR

Patron_____

Elan_____Magic_____

Patron_____

Elan_____Magic_____

Patron_____

Elan_____Magic_____

Angst | Harm

O — 1 — [ ]
O — 2 — [ ]
O — 3 — [ ]
O — 4 — [ ]
O — 5 — [ ]
O — 6 — [ ]
O — 7 — [ ]
O — 8 — [ ]
O — 9 — [ ]
O — 10 — [ ]
O — 11 — [ ]
O — 12 — [ ]
O — 13 — [ ]
O — 14 — [ ]
O — 15 — [ ]
O — 16 — [ ]
O — 17 — [ ]
O — 18 — [ ]

Armour_____AC_____

Weapon_____Dmg_____

Weapon_____Dmg_____

(see here for a pdf version)

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