

# Dungeon Crawl Solo

Parts Per Million



COMPATIBLE WITH

# DCC RPG

# CREDITS

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# FOREWARD



hen I started out, I used to create solo rules for games purely for my own benefit. Then it turned into one of those side hustles where I could fund my game buying habits by selling a few PDFs here and there. It didn't take long to go beyond the scope of just a side hustle, and I was not alone.

It started with people who had read one of my solo booklets suggesting games that I may enjoy, and that then became people requesting games that they would like solo rules for.

That is how this booklet came about. I knew that Dungeon Crawl Classics™ was quite popular, but it was not something I had played. I had heard of the zero-level funnel but not seen one in action.

Writing rules like these involves reading the rules, making characters, often many characters, and then trying to get a feel for the rules, how the game is supposed to be played, and then trying to mesh that with the bare bones of a solo play system.

While writing these rules, I created more characters than I had ever needed to make before. There is a tightrope to walk between preserving the game system's built-in brutality and trying to give a single character a fighting chance in a game designed for a party. I hope that I have walked that line in the rules that follow.



# INTRODUCTION



What the heck is Solo Role Playing? Wherever solo Role Playing gets mentioned, there will inevitably be people who do not understand how it can be done and what it is. Some do not even consider anything that doesn't have a group of players to be Role Playing with.

Solo Role Playing is a real thing. It is not creative writing, although solo tools can be used for writing inspiration. Solo Role Playing is a game, just as much as any Role Playing game. You interact with NPCs, explore dungeons, and rescue royals in distress, and frequently die in the attempt.

How it works is by abdicating some of the choices about the game world to dice rolls. This happens in-game anyway; if your dwarf may detect a sloping passage, the Judge doesn't just decide; they roll a dice. The same is true for morale checks and even clerics' disapproval; your god's favor is controlled by a simple dice roll.

These rules contain simple to use rules for answering the questions you would put to your Judge about the world your characters inhabit.

There is no die with enough sides to give every possible answer, not even the d30 or d100; the answers you are going to roll will need interpretation. I give some advice on handling that as well.



# THE HUMBLE QUESTION



hen a judge asks you to attempt a DC roll, they have set a difficulty based upon your description of what you wanted to achieve and how difficult they feel the task is. The core rules give some guidance, and DCs of 5 [child's play], 10 [a man's deed], 15 [derring do], and 20 [heroic] are the standard breakpoints.

Once you have made your roll, the result will be rather binary, pass or fail, hit or miss. The only shades of grey tend to be criticals at the top end and fumbles at the lower.

We can use these numbers to answer any question that is, broadly, yes or no.

The DC is set by considering how likely you feel an answer is going to be yes. For example, If you were stood in a boneyard looking for a freshly dug grave. *We won't enquire as to why you want a fresh grave.* In an old abandoned boneyard, the chances are very low. In a typical town or village, they are probably 50/50. During a plague or following an attack by Man-bats, the chances are much higher.

When an answer is likely to be yes, use DC 5.

When an answer is 50/50 or thereabouts, use DC10.

When an answer is less likely to be yes, use DC15

Success equals yes, failure equals no.

Fumbles and criticals for rolls of 1 and 20 are detailed below.

## INTERPRETING ANSWERS

Two techniques will help you use your answers in your game. The first is to phrase the question as a yes or no question. "Can I find a fresh grave?" is a good question. "What does the inscription on this tomb say?" is not suitable for this method. There are ways of answering those open-ended questions later in these rules.

Once you have your question, imagine what the yes and no answers would mean to your character. If you cannot imagine



both yes and no outcomes, do not ask the question. If there is only one possible result, go with that, and do not roll the dice.

Having both possible results in your mind's eye before you roll helps your game flow much more easily, as the die roll is just confirming which option is true, rather than getting an answer and then trying to fit it into your game.

### **FUMBLES**

A natural one on the question dice is the question-and-answer equivalent of a fumble.

A one is always a negative answer, but it is a more extreme form of no, if possible. In our example, not only is there no fresh grave, but you may decide that the boneyard caretaker or an acolyte from the temple appears, thus disturbing your search.

If it is not possible to get a more extreme version of no, then the no is the final answer.



## **CRITICALS**

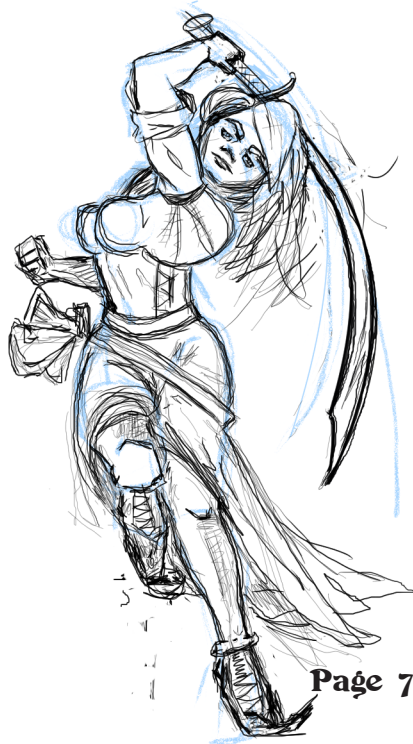
A natural twenty is a critical. This is always a yes answer, but it would be a more extreme form of yes. In our example, yes, you spot a fresh grave in the corner by a wall, out of sight of passers-by.

It is not uncommon for a critical yes or critical no to create spontaneous NPCs to make your life difficult or come to your aid. It is often best to go with whatever comes into your mind first, your gut instinct, and not try and overthink these answers.

## **NPC REACTIONS**

Everybody else in the world is an NPC, at least once you are out of your zero-level funnel. I suggest trying to play just one player character, not a party. You can and probably should form a band or party with some NPCs.

Just because it is your game does not mean that the NPCs will do what you want. You can control the actions of your party





members with simple yes-no questions. Suppose you ask the fighter to watch the street as you start to dig into the soft soil. In that case, you can roll a test using a question like "Does the fighter stay alert?" that is a yes-no question, and on a yes, your companion is an attentive lookout. On a no, maybe they get distracted by something shiny in the gutter.

These questions put the actions of the NPCs out of your control. You can ask them to do things, but depending on your relationship with them, they may or may not do as you asked or expected.

You do not need to ask about your NPCs at every turn, but it adds a lot of interest to your games if you ask when the outcome is important. You should also take into account your relationship. If you have fallen out with your group's cleric, they may be less willing to do what you ask of them.

### **TAKING CONTROL OF AN NPC**

There will be times when your character is taken out of your control. They could die or be dying, paralyzed, or magically controlled, or countless other fates. When this happens, you can control an NPC and play them as if they were your player character. If your original character is still active somehow, you can use questions to control your character until you take full control again.

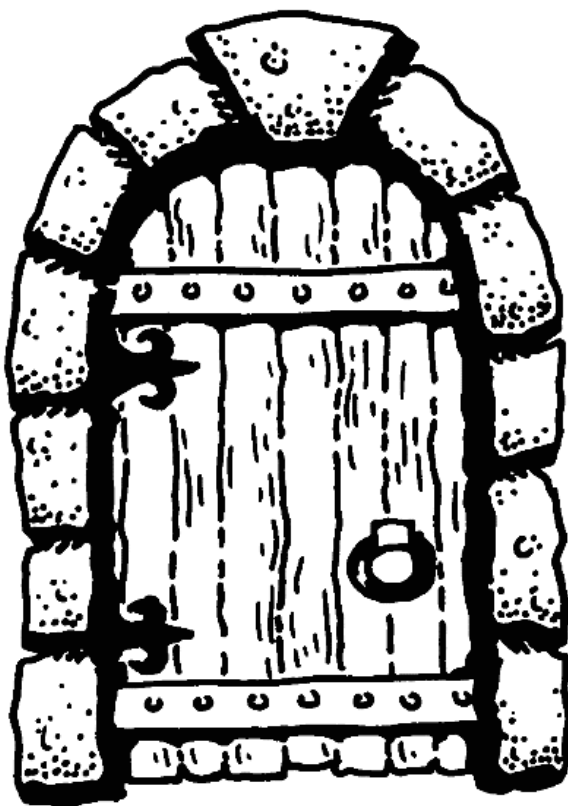
This is also useful when the spotlight falls firmly on just one character. You may be playing a cleric, but if your adventure hinges on a successful burglary of the town's provost's house, you could play the thief for the duration of the break-in.



### **WHAT QUESTIONS TO ASK**

There are two ways of asking the questions. The first is to put yourself firmly in the players' role and ask the questions from your character's point of view. Your questions may tend to be very local to your immediate scene or location.

The second option is to ask the questions from the game's point of view. You may be less concerned about the guard you can see on the battlements and more about the watch's discipline as a whole. There is no right or wrong way, and you may find yourself switching in and out of both roles during a game. The top-level view is particularly good for world-building or adding details to the world.



# EVENT DICE



aving to make decisions about events that your character cannot see or influence can feel like it breaks the sense of immersion. We are going to use Event Dice.

Two alternative methods are shown later, Clocks and Drama Dice. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. You may

Suppose there is a chance that someone may notice you digging around in the boneyard. In that case, you decide what will happen if you are spotted, such as the priest in the temple coming to throw you out of the yard or someone calling the watch. Then you select an Event Die. Every time you do something that could alert a passer-by or the priest, you roll the Event Die. If the die comes up with its highest face, a 6 on a d6, for example, you move down to the next smaller dice.

You will slowly go down the dice chain until you reach a d3. When you roll a 3 on the d3, there is no more Event Dice to go to. At this point, the event happens.

The goal is for you to not know when the event will happen, but you should also have an increasing feeling of tension as you see the Event Dice shrink.

You can use Event Dice at three levels.

**Immediate:** The event is likely to happen at any minute or second. These are things like being spotted in the boneyard, sneaking past guards, escaping a sinking galley.

Rather than rolling DC tests for each guard that may spot you, or each patrol of monsters, you can use Event Die rolls whenever you do anything that could be spotted or noticed, like a forced lock or a guard going missing; you roll the die. Starting with a 1d3 or 1d5 depending on how on a knife-edge the situation is.

**Local:** These events are typically not measured in seconds. If you were trying to search a tower to discover a villain's plans before they skip town, that is likely to be a local scope event.

1d6 or 1d8 may be suitable.

**Campaign:** Your campaign may have an overarching story. If you want to save the world, defeat the gods of chaos, you will want a campaign Event Die. At the end of each distinct adventure, you roll the Event Die, and if you roll the highest face, the villain's plans take a step forward. Long campaigns need big Event Dice.

The point of an Event Die is that you never know when it will count down. You could sneak far into an underground dungeon and have the die never count down until you do something so obvious that no die roll is needed to give the game away.

### **Clocks**

Imagine a clock or timer counting down to an event. That event could be a chaotic god destroying all life, your ship casting off and leaving the quayside, or a butler discovering that you have broken into the manor house.

Every clock has a timer and an event part. When the timer runs down, the event happens.

You create a clock by drawing a circle and then dividing it into segments. The more imminent the event, the fewer segments has the clock.

Imagine you are sneaking around a castle at night, trying to avoid being discovered while searching for a secret temple to Cthulhu. You decide how alert you think the castle watch is; it just so happens that tonight is Walpurgisnacht, and even the guards on watch have had a small beer or two. You decide that 6 segments to the clock will do.

As you sneak around the castle, every time you do something that could lead to your discovery, to cross off a segment. If you force a lock that could be spotted, cross off a segment, knock out a guard, stash the body, cross off a segment, dash across a courtyard hoping not to be seen, and cross off a segment.

When you cross off the last segment, that is when one of these things has been discovered and reported to the Sargeant-at-Arms and the alarm raised.

If the castle guards had been crack troops and on high alert, a two-segment clock would have been more appropriate. If they were drunken mercenaries, you could have gone to eight segments.

When you see your clock tick down to the last couple of segments that the tension will mount, any more mistakes and disaster could strike.

You can run clocks are three different levels.

**Immediate:** Immediate clocks are very short-lived. The example of sneaking around a castle was an example of an immediate clock. If you were searching the necromancer's secret laboratory while the city guards are approaching and the necromancer fleeing to the docks. You could have a clock for both the impending arrival of the guard and the escape of the villain.

**Local:** A local clock is good for tracking game time, where events may take hours to play out. Each segment could be an hour or half-day. If there is a threat and a deadline, you can tick the segments as time passes.

**Campaign:** A campaign clock could run through an entire campaign; each adventure where you fail to derail the bad guy's plans ticks the clock; when you succeed, the clock stands still. If you deal a serious blow to their plans, you could reset the clock.

You can create as many clocks as you need and discard any that are no longer important. They are a very useful tool for tracking events that span more than one solo game session.

### **THE DRAMA POOL**

The Drama Pool serves the same purpose as a clock but operates differently.

Rather than drawing a circle and dividing it into segments, you grab 1d6 for every segment you used.

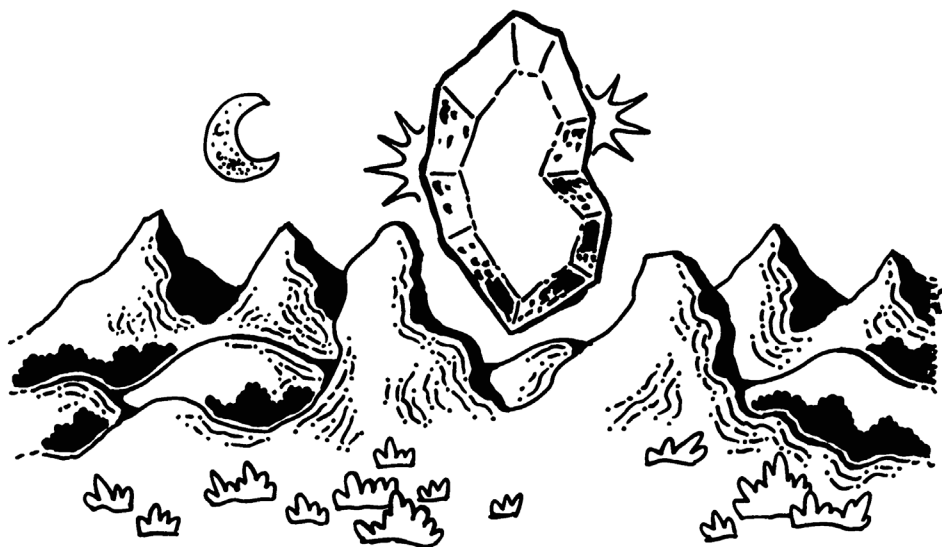
When you would have ticked the clock and crossed off a segment, you roll all the dice in the pool and discard any that come up 6.

With every tick of the clock, you roll all the remaining dice, discarding the sixes, until the pool is empty. When that last die is discarded, the event happens.

The difference between a clock and the drama pool is that you could roll the dice on the very first tick and have every die come up six. Conversely, you could roll the dice all day and never roll a six. The pool is much more random and inconsistent. Event Dice have the random nature of the dice roll but must pass through each dice size before the event happens. Event Dice is a compromise solution but works best when you have the special DCC dice rather than calculating the traditional dice results.

I feel that pools are better for very short-term events, where you may have used an immediate clock. As your pool shrinks, you still get the sense of drama.

You should try all three methods and decide on a situation-by-case basis, which is the most suitable.



# MIGHTY DEEDS AND MAGIC

Solo Role Playing mostly takes place in your mind's eye. You can write or record as much as you like; the majority of the action will take place in your imagination.

Battles that become slugging matches and grinding down hit points are often not that exciting. There is a sense of tension if your hit points are low, but when the outcome is not really in doubt, but the opponent just happens to have many hit points, it can be hard to keep up the excitement.

I recommend making maximum use of movement, your environment, and Mighty Deeds of Arms if your character has that option. For non-martial characters, consider using your class abilities such as relying on luck or even divine aid.

## **MOVEMENT & ENVIRONMENT**

You will rarely see static trading of blows in a blockbuster movie. If your characters are constantly on the move, even if the two combatants circle each other looking for an opening, it creates a more realistic visualization of the fights. Jumping over benches, standing on tables, or using upturned carts as higher ground all create visual interest.

If the ground is slick with mud, bring it into your picture of the scene. If your foes are high on the sides of a canyon wall, work that into the scene.

Remember, if you did not roll high enough to hit, you did not just miss. What actually happened is that your foe turned your blade with their own, or your sword struck sparks off their shield, or they jumped, ducked, dived, or rolled under or over your swing.

Nothing is static in combat. Everything is in motion. Remember that and work it into your descriptions of the combat.

Almost every save involves some kind of movement or reaction. If you saved against a fire trap, it was not because



you grew fire-resistant skin for a moment; it is because you crouched behind your shield as the flames roared around you, or you dived and rolled as the sheets of flame burned just over your head.

### **MIGHTY DEEDS OF ARMS**

It is nearly always a good idea to use a mighty deed. These add excitement to combats; they can prompt the movement of foes and friends alike. If you bring something crashing down, it has to be avoided or moved around.

Even failing to pull off a mighty deed adds something exciting to the fight scene. Failing to complete your mighty deeds still have you moving about the battlefield or striving to be bigger, better, and more exceptional than a static piece on a grid or battle map.



# OPEN QUESTIONS



n open-ended question cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. These could be as simple as "What is in the box?" or "What do they want?"

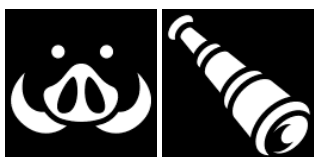
I present two interchangeable methods for answering these questions. One uses images in the form of black and white icons, the other uses word-based prompts.

## Icons

A picture is worth a thousand words, so the saying goes. For example, having dug up the fresh grave, you force open the coffin and look inside. What is in the casket?

Each image can be interpreted in different ways. Roll for two icons and try and derive meaning from them.

The icons are arranged in a dyslexia inspired 4x4 grid. You can either roll 1d4 for row and column or a single d16 to find an icon. In this case, I rolled a 4 and 2 (using d4s) and a 1 and 1, giving me the following icons.



The first icon suggests wild boar, and I think I will take that quite literally this time. The looking glass makes me think of spying or examining something. This suggests that opening the casket, rather than finding a human body, as I was expecting, it looks like the casket held a small boar—roughly the right weight, but certainly not the person inscribed on the headstone.

In this way, the icons can create facts and explanations. Another interpretation could be that the icon is not a boar at all, but the tusks and snout are those of an orc, or possibly half-orc. The grave clothes suggest a sailor or pirate. This second explanation uses the same icons but a wildly different meaning. You should not make yourself work too hard to

derive meaning from them. If it does not come quickly and easily, you can roll for an additional icon and see if that makes things easier.

Each dyskelia contains 16 icons. You can swap to a new dyskelia each time you start a new scene; whenever you handwave a block of time, consider it a scene change.

### **Words**

The words version can be very descriptive. The method is extremely simple. You can use any books that fit the style of game you want to play. It could be a setting book, the DCC RPG rules, or your favorite Swords & Sorcery fiction.

You are going to find a random page, paragraph, and sentence from your chosen texts. For example, I am using the DCC RPG rules, and the book has about 500 pages. Using a d5-1 and a d100 together will give me a page number. Rolling a 1 on the d5 (1-1 is 0) is used for pages 1-100, Rolling a 2-1 is for pages 101-199, and so on. This gives me a range of 1 to 500. Then roll 1d6 for the paragraph and 1d4 for the sentence. If your selection rolls over to the next page, that is not a problem. If you get a very long and complicated sentence, just take the first clause.

Once you have one sentence, repeat and find a second sentence.

For example, having dug up the fresh grave, you force open the coffin and look inside. What is in the casket?

I rolled a 2 on the d6 and 01 on the d100. This becomes page 101. I then rolled paragraph 4 and sentence 4. That gives me: *"The counterspell may kill creatures out of initiative order"*, repeating gave me page 262, paragraph 5, sentence 1. *"a glowing banquet table appears laden with food and then vanishes."*

Many words leap out at me, but the three that I want to use are

Kill, Creatures, Vanishes. Those say that something terrible or monstrous (kill and creatures) in the casket is desperate to escape (vanishes). You could have picked out entirely different words and applied a totally different interpretation. That is not a problem; it is intentional and one of the strengths of this method.

### **CREATE A CAMPAIGN**

Either method can be used to create the key facts about your campaign or the villain's plans. There is no right or wrong amount of text or icons to use. I find around five icons works for me, and eight to ten sentences give enough words to pull something out of.

Nothing is fact until your character has learned it for themselves. This means that you can add more ideas, change things that no longer seem to fit, or just abandon things that no longer sound fun.

The less you define at the beginning of the game leaves you more options to add more facts later. The more you know about your character and the game world, the more meaning you can attach to the words or icons.

The less that is known by you at the start, the more fun you will discover what is going on as you play.

### **Using Icons:**

I roll and get the following icons in order.



We are going to fit the icons into a simple structure of 1) plot hook, 2) barrier, 3) a challenge to overcome, 4) a showdown, and 5) reward.

Our icons suggest that the plot hook could be a prophecy written down long ago. The barrier to overcome could be an arduous journey. The challenge could be a dangerous

foe known for using bows, elves, maybe? The next icon also suggests some kind of armed conflict. Finally, we have our reward, which could be interpreted as maybe something mystical or enlightenment.

I now have an interpretation. You could have read something completely different into the same icons. The general outline does not proscribe anything, it does not railroad you at all, but it does give you an idea of where your game is going.

### **Using Words:**

The words method is similar to both the icon method above and the open-ended question rules. You will find five sentences at random and fit them in turn into a plot hook, a barrier to overcome, a challenge, the showdown, and the reward.

This time I come up with these words.

**Hook:** *"Failure, but spell is not lost"*

**Barrier:** *"He must do nothing but utter chants and intonations for the next 10 minutes,"*

**Challenge:** *"Lost"*

**Showdown:** *"A warrior with an improved threat range adjusts accordingly"*

**Reward:** *"If you find these game aids helpful, by all means use them"*

Interpreting these sentences is all about picking out the bits that seem the most fun for a campaign outline. This suggests that something has gone wrong with something magical; you need to pilgrimage to see a wise monk for guidance. My first thought about the challenge is a maze or labyrinth. The showdown sounds like a great warrior that needs defeating. The last sentence is obviously rules and actually referred to miniatures, but to me, the best game aid for a player character is a magic item.

# ICONS



n the following pages are sixteen grids of sixteen icons each, two hundred and fifty-six icons in total. There are thousands of icons available at [game-icons.net](http://game-icons.net), including a random icon tool.

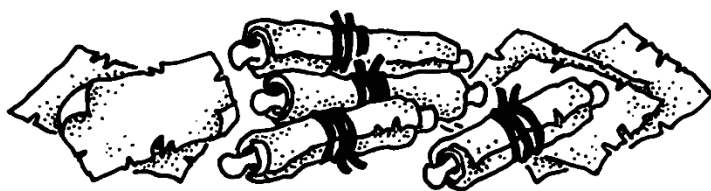
Another useful tool is called Zero Dice, created by Todd Zircher of Tangent Zero [tangent-zero.com](http://tangent-zero.com) in the web toys section.

After the main body of icons are a few specialist collections of icons, such as traps.

## **SPECIAL ICONS**

The tables of special icons are intended to be used to answer specific questions, where using the general icons would be unlikely to give a usable answer with a single roll.

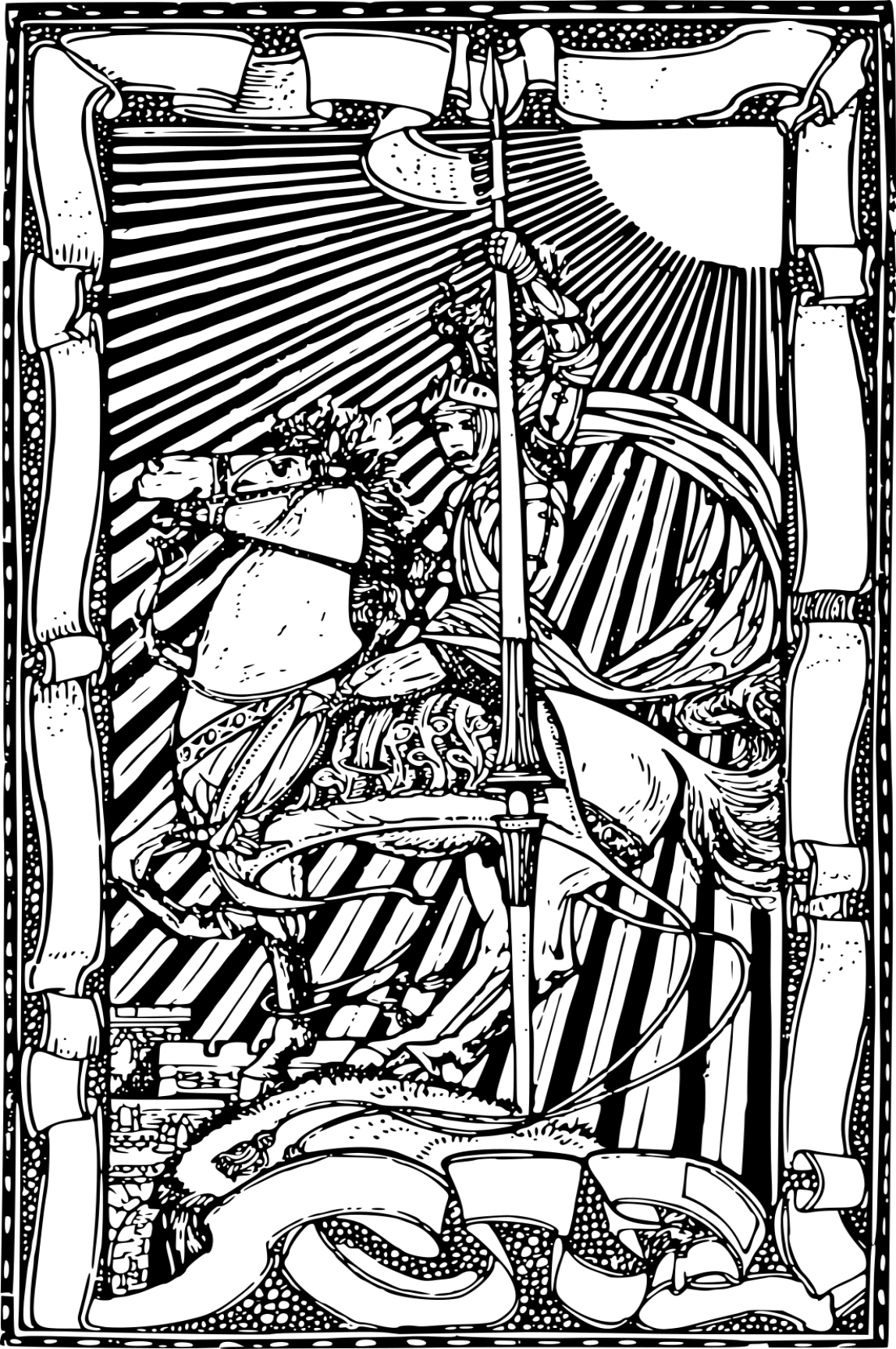
These are still intended to be inspirational rather than literal. You are unlikely to get a rolling boulder in a city tavern, but could that be a rigged game of chance? If the icon shows a giant, but you are in a small cave, maybe the threat is a giant if its kind, such as a particularly large orc or goblin.

























# SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

## TRAPS

This is a d20 table of traps. The table is meant to be faster to find something suitable for a trap if your story calls for it.



## MONSTERS & THREATS

This is a d24 table of threats. These are not intended to be entirely literal. The ghost, for example, could be anything from a scary noise to an illusion, a real undead ghost or shadow.



# PLAYING A PUBLISHED ADVENTURE



n solo circles, the question of how to play a published adventure is one of the most hotly debated topics.

The goal is to try and preserve some sense of wonder and surprise as the adventure unfolds. How do you know enough to not kill off someone who later turns out to be crucial to resolving the adventure?

Solo play has you switching between the Judge's role and that of the player, often several times a minute. Someone has to roll the monster's attack rolls and damage before you plan your character's reactions to the situation.

Below are some techniques that may make this easier. Pick and choose those that work best for you.

## SKIM AND DC

Most adventures pick out DC rolls and what you are rolling against (DC 15 Strength). Skim over the adventure. Do not read the detail but find these DC tests and make a list of them.

Before you start to play, for each character and record the roll, ignore any modifiers for now.

If you had four characters, your list would look something like this.

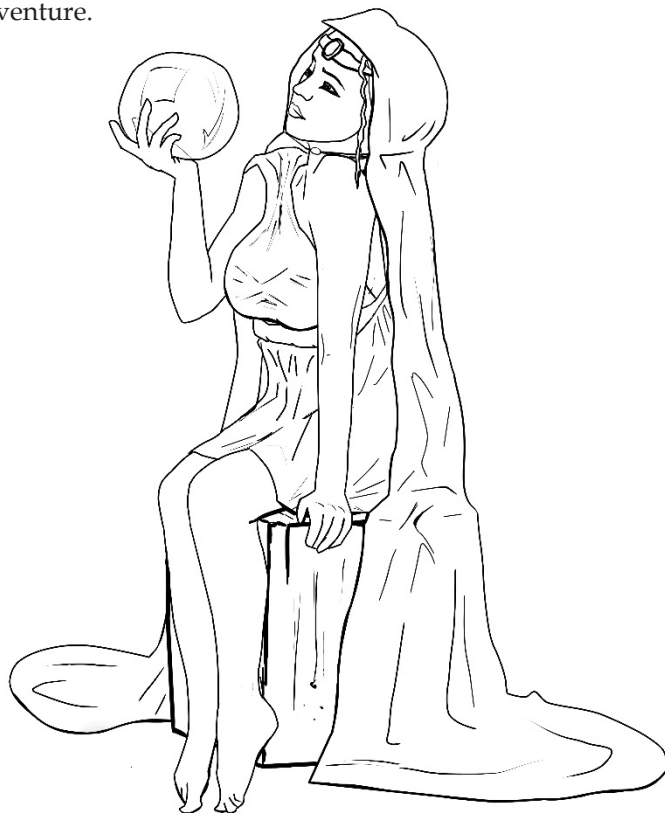
Location 1-1				
DC	Albert	Charlie	Eric	Ted
Int	20	4	13	14
Str	15	5	10	12
Ref	11	1	16	14
Search	1	12	11	19
Location 1-2				
DC	Albert	Charlie	Eric	Ted
Int	13	15	16	6
Ref	4	15	1	20

The goal with these rolls is that you can immediately see automatic successes and failures. You can apply more narrative meaning to these. Things being obvious or completely misinterpreted.

Although you have rolled for every character, you have no idea who will be either alive to make those rolls or even in the right place to be eligible to make the roll.

You can now read the boxed text for the first location and see how you would react. Having decided your actions, you can read the rest of the location description, see if there is anything else you need to resolve, and what DC tests need to be made, who succeeded and failed.

This may be all that is needed to play a smaller published adventure.



## THE FLOW OF THE ADVENTURE

Bigger adventures often have multiple scenes and locations. These can have side quests and subplots.

You can start by breaking the adventure down into its constituent smaller parts. What you are looking for are events that *must* happen. Events that, if they do not happen, something later in the adventure may not work. If a creature can only be killed with a specific magical item, you must have that item.

Once you have identified these hardpoints, you can play out the adventure using just the Skim & DC method above. If your characters go very off course, which can happen with the complete freedom that solo play offers, you may need to move the key event to a new place or time. If you must talk to a wise old man to learn a secret, you can put that secret into the mouth of other NPCs.

The adventure flow may get to place A, learn secret B, get to place C, use secret B to defeat bad guy D.

Knowing that, if you never make it to place A, nothing will work from that point on. You can move secret B to wherever you have gone to, which will get you back on track to finding place C and complete your adventure.

I suggest making a note of these 'must happen' events on post-it notes or index cards. Once you have hit them, you can discard the note. If you have notes left over at the end of the chapter, you are going to either accept the consequences or move whatever the note contains to a different point in your adventure.

This is also where you can record that devious NPC that will turn on you at the last minute. Make a note of it, in this way you will know that you must not kill them, or if you do, that it will change something later on.

Normally, most of what you need to include in the adventure flow can be found in the Judge's notes relating to running the adventure. You rarely have to read each step in detail. This still keeps some of the sense of discovery as you work your way through.

## **JUDGE FIRST**

Most solo play assumes you are playing your character. The Judge's role is delegated to dice rolls or random icons or keywords and given meaning in the context of where you are, what you are doing, and what has gone before.

Judge First flips this. You are the Judge. The characters' actions are then delegated to the dice rolls, icons, and keywords. In the same way that any character that is not in the spotlight can be controlled with questions like "Would they try the door before checking it for traps?" or "Would she demand that they set a watch?", you can ask questions about how the characters act, playing them as you would imagine them acting, but with question rolls to create unexpected situations.

In Judge First, you can read the entire adventure and then run it for a party of characters you do not fully control. When you are not actively resolving actions, you can focus on the characters' actions, conversations, and desires. You still get to play through every interaction with an NPC, but in this setup, everyone is an NPC because there are no players.

In social scenes, there is no distinction between Judge First and the more usual player-led solo play. You can see the world from the eyes of your character and play them as you wish. When the action starts, the dungeon is then something you are inflicting on the party.

## **MIX AND MATCH**

The right way to run a published adventure is a personal preference. I suggest mixing and matching the different techniques for different parts of your game. You will find the right balance for your games.



Pencils by William Caddell  
inks by René (The Z) Barr  
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## SANDBOX PLAY



sandbox is an open world where you can do anything and go anywhere. For some players new to solo play, the lack of direction can be daunting.

Earlier I touched on creating a campaign. Picking icons or words can give you a reason for your character to start adventuring.

In the same way that we selected a set of icons or words to create the outline of the campaign, we can repeat this for each adventure, but on a need-to-know basis.

I am going to demonstrate using icons.

We know that the character has taken up adventuring because



of an old prophecy. The first adventure in this campaign was the barrier.

Drawing more icons, we can find out a bit more about what this barrier means to the character.



The first icon I rolled is the glass. My first instinct says water, and it seems logical to me that this is a river journey.

I play out an emotional scene of my character leaving his village and boarding a riverboat.

I want to find out if the boat is heading to a coastal port, a city, or a town.

Drawing an icon I get...



That looks like death to me. It seems that I have fallen into the clutches of river pirates intent on murdering me! This is a scene I can play out. Just to elaborate, I ask the question do the pirates know about the prophecy and my quest? The answer comes back as yes; they do. That adds a first hint of the bigger campaign to this first adventure. If the answer had been a no, I would have continued to ask this question at each new scene or twist in my character's story.

I can play out this pirate scene, if I manage to interrogate a pirate I may well find out if they were paid to intercept me, or to capture me.

The action is controlled by either icons/words and yes, no questions. When you feel the adventure is resolved, normally, when you award yourself experience, ask yourself, have you resolved this step of the campaign?

It could be that as my barrier icon [boots] was interpreted as a journey, and I have survived the journey and the predations of the pirates and everything else that was thrown at me. At that point, I decide that I have passed that point.

I try and draw about five icons or sets of keywords for each stage. In this case, they turned out to be:



Each of these is drawn as needed and as the game developed. If you draw an icon and it doesn't really speak to you, either draw another icon, treat the two icons as a pair, or try using the keywords method and add some words to the icon.

There is a kind of unwritten question that these icons or keywords are answering, and that is "What is the next challenge I need to overcome?"

Once you have an idea of what the challenge will be, you can consider how that fits into your game. You could go through all five icons and feel that you have not resolved the campaign icon, so the process starts again. At higher level, you can go through many five icon adventures for a stage of the campaign.

### **CAMPAIGN VILLAINS**

Unless there is a specific villain you want to have as your campaign villain, such as a campaign about freeing the kingdom from a tyrannical dragon, you do not start your campaign knowing what you will face.

Keep a list of the keywords and icons used for the campaign and adventures. Periodically, look over the list and the meanings you attached to them, and look for a common theme. Keep doing this until you see a pattern appearing and it becomes obvious. This can often be as a result of a repeating icon or repeating meaning. The death icon above, I interpreted as pirates. That pirate theme could keep recurring and become the theme for the campaign. If I had read something different

into the death icon, the campaign could go in a completely different direction.

### **SHORT CAMPAIGNS**

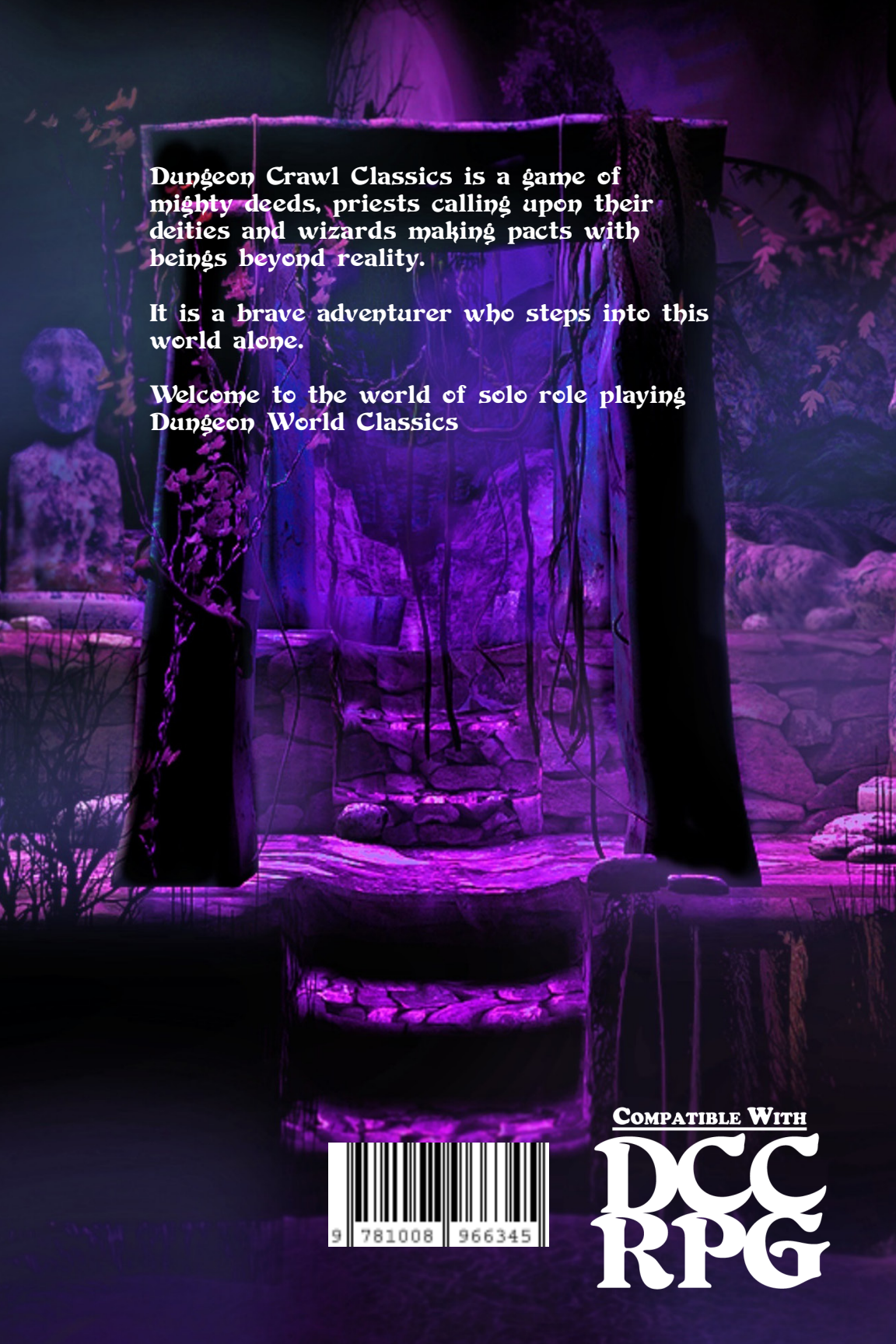
You do not need to start at 0 level and work your way up. Neither do campaigns have to be vast sweeping affairs. As you only have to please yourself in solo play, you can create a campaign to explore a specific idea or part of the rules. If you want to have a short high-powered campaign between competing wizards, go ahead and do it. Want to battle demons right up to the gates of hell? Go ahead and do it.

### **LONG CAMPAIGNS**

You can construct adventure after adventure using either icons or words. Each time, go through the same construction process and different stages, from hook to reward. As you build up a history of adventures, look for which could be part of a common theme? Are you meeting undead after undead? Do rivers and boats keep cropping up? Once you identify a theme, it becomes easier to spot a pattern within your adventures so far. Technically this is utilizing Apophenia, a human trait of seeing patterns in what is meaningless data. The chances of drawing random sentences from random pages from various books and constructing a detailed and exciting campaign are on a par with having monkeys reproduce the script to Hamlet by randomly typing on a keyboard. The chances of a human player that wants to see an exciting campaign to see one emerge from a growing number of random sentences and icons are almost certain.

If you wish to mix adventures into those that advance the campaign and those that are just part of your character's adventuring life, I would suggest you review your past adventures, looking for patterns on the even levels when you hit 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, etc. This will let you build up a body of work to look back on and figure out what could be going on.

**Remember:** There is no wrong way to play your game.



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