

Robert E. Howard's

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ENTERTAINMENT

**GAMEMASTER'S
TOOLKIT**

F-F-F[™]

Robert E. Howard's

CONAN

ADVENTURES IN AN AGE UNDREAMED OF

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GAMEMASTER'S TOOLKIT



“Well, Ascalante,” said the Stygian, “your dupes have slunk into the streets like rats from their burrows.

You work with strange tools.”

— Thoth-Amon, “The Phoenix on the Sword”

Creating a tale that would challenge even Conan can be a daunting task for even the most experienced gamemaster. The sheer pacing and intensity of the stories that Robert E. Howard created to unravel the mysteries of the Hyborian Age often raises readers to a lofty peak of savage joy and accomplishment, before plunging them headlong into a pit of despair and misfortune due to a strange twist of fate or an act of harrowing sorcery — only to finally see the hero triumph over adversity in a pulse-pounding climax that leaves the reader gasping for breath and craving more!

Unfortunately, this toolkit cannot teach how to write tales of fiction that could rival those of Conan's creator. It will, however, explore sources of inspiration that are designed to prompt any number of adventures that could take place anywhere within Conan's world. The toolkit also offers expert advice on pacing and drama — two very important components of any pulp adventure — and includes ways to alter them using both the gamemaster's very own tool, Doom, and Momentum, the player's counterpart.

Several other plot devices, from hooks and themes to supporting cast, are also explored before the toolbox unleashes a series of tables designed to help the gamemaster create romping tales of sword-and-sorcery that will rouse even the most addled of debauched sorcerers from their lotus-induced dreams.

WEIRD TALES AND FIGHT STORIES

Conan has been crafted to return to the barbarian's roots and seeks to remain true to the tone of the original manuscripts as written by Howard. This can rightly cause a certain amount of self-doubt and trepidation for the gamemaster when seeking to craft epic tales that will be talked about by players for years to come. To help overcome this stage fright, several fonts of inspiration will be examined that should serve to energize even the most assured storytellers, as well as the timid.

Before continuing, however, it is worth taking time here to refresh some of the points that were addressed within the corebook. This interpretation of Conan's world is arguably one of the truest reflections of the Hyborian Age to date, and it assumes that those playing the game are seeking sword-and-sorcery adventures with larger-than-life heroes of a Howardian bent. The players should be certain that their characters will be wrestling with otherworldly evils, contending with diabolical sorceries, and exploring inaccessible ancient ruins, with little more than their trusty weapons and the clothes they left home with, and the gamemaster should be more than willing to provide these opportunities!



True to their pulp inspirations, Howard's tales were brimming with action, adventure, agony, romance, low points that brought the reader to the edge of despair, and high points that left them wanting to shout with exhilaration. It is this exhausting pace that the **Conan** game seeks to invoke. That said, there are other themes that can certainly be explored within the setting that could offer a change of pace or break from the norm, with one or two of these being examined further within the toolkit.

A CONSPIRATOR'S GAIN

The gamemaster preparing a campaign — whether their own or one taken from the pages of the **Conan** sourcebooks — should strive to remember an important consideration that can sometimes be forgotten amidst the fervor of preparing to run the game: a roleplaying game is a storytelling tool for the enjoyment of everyone involved.

Conan only seldom sought to adventure alone, and he frequently managed to stumble upon strange companions in unlikely places. Although they may seem like bizarre allies in a game that is intended to pit the player characters directly against the gamemaster's devilry, seeking inspiration from the players and ensuring that they are also enjoying

themselves will provide a real and tangible boost to every gaming table; a campaign that is only being enjoyed by the person running it risks suffering a swift and ignominious end.

Before opening the campaign, the gamemaster should take some time to understand the motivations and desires of both the players and their characters. Although roleplaying games are designed to offer players the opportunity to wear someone else's shoes for a short time, the line can and often becomes blurred between the player's and character's personality. Understanding a little of what has motivated them both to adventure will help in tailoring different elements of the story to everyone's satisfaction. Another consideration to offer is in allowing the players to drive the story, which can be achieved in several ways.

Firstly, the gamemaster should use the character's and their backstories to provide recognizable links to immerse the players in the game; a named relative that arrives to offer advice, or a sworn enemy that is current news in the local region, for instance. Second, the gamemaster offer the players themselves the opportunity to occasionally drive the story, both inside and outside of combat. Momentum is a great mechanism for instigating this, as it provides a player with numerous options to carry their success forwards. Allowing players the chance to offer unique and innovative Momentum spends will be rewarding for them and will enable the story to flow more freely.



PULP INSPIRATION

Even battle-scarred dog-brothers and veteran sword-sisters can benefit from searching for inspiration when first taking the steps to prepare a game set within the Hyborian Age. Many sources can provide a spark to ignite a tale of barbaric savagery worthy of the sagas. This section of the toolkit offers a perspective on several influential examples and provides an insight into media that might be considered when first preparing a campaign. Not an exhaustive list by any means, as there are numerous other sources that can be equally as inspiring. The gamemaster should not feel in any way limited by the examples offered here.

THE SCHOLARLY MEDIUM

Like most of his works, Conan was given literary life through the keys of Howard's treasured Underwood typewriter. The written word is where Conan has garnered most his fame and exposure, so it is fitting that this is the first place that inspiration should be sought.

The Boxer and the Bullfinch

What better source of inspiration can there be for a campaign set within the Hyborian Age than the very works that unveiled Conan's exploits to the world. This game line has taken the setting back to its roots of course, so avoiding the more heavily redacted versions of Howard's works is highly recommended to gain an insight into the moods and themes that **Conan** seeks to recreate. Del Rey Books recently published three volumes that remain true to Howard's original manuscripts, while the Gollancz UK editions and Gutenberg Australia e-texts draw primarily upon the original *Weird Tales* pulp magazine versions. It is also important to understand the influences that Howard himself drew upon when imagining the world in which Conan adventured; becoming a student of him in a literary sense reveals historical auspices that are recognizable within the Conan tales, and leads to several jewels of inspiration for new adventures suitable for a freshly-minted batch of larger-than-life scoundrels, rogues, and opportunistic warriors.

The Conan Game

A lot of emphasis has been placed upon making this edition of the **Conan** roleplaying game as truly reminiscent of Howard's original Conan works as possible. The corebook is replete with guidance on how to create and run engaging characters and adventures set within the Hyborian Age. Perhaps even more so than Howard's works, this should be a necessary port of call for the gamemaster looking for inspiration, as it has been designed to offer clear direction on how best to represent a pulse-pounding pulp Conan-style

LETTING THE STORY UNFOLD

Howard was a master at revealing the background to his characters and their current story within a few succinct paragraphs that often took the form of revealing conversations between the main protagonists. There is nothing wrong with following this example when opening a campaign. In fact, it allows the game to open on the action without any preamble, which is something else that Howard achieved with practiced ease. His introductions hooked the reader straight in to the visceral and exotic experiences of Conan in a pulp magazine that offered limited space. A gamemaster, of course, is working without such limits, but what better way could there be to enjoy a romping adventure than throwing the players into the thick of the action from the outset.

There are a few points to take care of before diving straight in:

- Ensure that everyone involved understands and agrees with how the campaign will begin. There is little point in dropping the player characters into the midst of a titanic battle with little preamble if they would prefer to first develop plausible backgrounds that take them to the opening point of the game.
- Other than a few minor notes on race and religion, for instance, invest each player with the ability to develop their character's background during play. Involve the players from the outset and allow them to offer up snippets of how they came to be involved in current events as the game unfolds. Be prepared also to offer minor experience point rewards at the close of the opening session for any player that helped their character's involvement unfold in interesting and dramatic ways.

tale on the tabletop. The chapter on gamemastering will of be especially useful to the gamemaster, as it offers not only definitive advice on how to manage and run a game and many of its facets, but also explores many of the themes that are prevalent throughout the Conan tales, such as action and conflict, horror and dread, and strange horizons.

Other Pulp Fiction

Created as a cheap, mass-market means to provide literary entertainment to the working class of America, pulp fiction magazines became a veritable breeding ground for creative talent and helped launch the careers of many of literary greats still highly-regarded today. Although there are many subgenres to pulp fiction, some of them clearly

DERIVED INSPIRATION

Conan extols the virtues of enjoying the game embodying the spirit of Conan's creator, and rightly so; enjoying the setting as presented by Howard is one of the best ways to indulge that inclination. The toolkit has already examined a few Howard's other works as a possible means of inspiration, but just how would that be achieved within the context of a sword-and-sorcery setting?

For example, look at the El Borak tale "Three-Bladed Doom". Only recently has this work been restored to the original long and short versions as produced by Howard. Prior to this, "Three-Bladed Doom" had been re-worked into the pastiche Conan novella "The Flame Knife". While its outlining plot and drama remained largely the same, its defining elements had been re-skinned to transport Francis X. Gordon from the harsh landscapes of Afghanistan and deposit him in the stony wilds of Iranistan, morphing him into the blue-eyed Cimmerian in the process.

A sense of how to borrow inspiration from Howard's non-Conan works might therefore be gained by comparing "Three-Bladed Doom" — the recently restored original, not the edited versions that came earlier — to its hybrid descendant.

stand out as interconnected parts to Howard's own sword-and-sorcery subgenre.

Listing all the available fiction and tales would be a monumental task far beyond the scope of this book, but the gamemaster would readily find inspiration for their games within the works of the two prolific pulp legends Edgar Rice Burroughs (*Tarzan, A Princess of Mars*, and numerous others). Pulp writers and stories that directly influenced Conan's development include the Cossack tales of Harold Lamb, the Hyperborean Cycle of Clark Ashton Smith, the Jimgrim series by Talbot Mundy, the pirate novels of Rafael Sabatini, and H. P. Lovecraft ("The Call of Cthulhu", "The Shadow Over Innsmouth", and numerous others). Howard himself contributed to several pulp outlets beyond the *Weird Tales* magazine; again, it would pay dividends to track down some of his other works that appeared within the pages of *Fight Stories*, *Oriental Stories*, *Top-Notch*, and others.

Some great examples of these include:

- **The Professor John Kirowan Stories:** The younger son of an Irish noble family and an expert on both the Cthulhu Mythos and lost civilizations, the good professor grew out of Howard's friendship and correspondence with H. P. Lovecraft and other members of the so-called "Lovecraft Circle". Lovecraft encouraged all the Circle's members to push each other's boundaries:

he also inspired his fellows to both borrow from and contribute to each other's works. Professor Kirowan became a recurring character in Howard's many contributions to Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos; an intriguing facet that gifted the Texan author with the entitlement to slip the odd nod to the Hyborian Age into the dark tales of gothic horror. The voice of the archaeologist Kirowan can also be heard throughout the Conan corebook, so seeking inspiration from such a clear link would certainly be profitable.

- **The Francis Xavier Gordon (El Borak) Stories:** The fast-paced stories follow the exploits of the Texan gunslinger affectionately known as "El Borak" in post-Imperial Afghanistan. They sit firmly within the adventure genre of pulp fiction, yet often share similarities with themes that Howard explored in his sword-and-sorcery tales. Of Irish and Scottish descent, Gordon is portrayed as a diamond in the rough; an untamed-yet-civilized man with a dangerous edge. He has no love for the English, though he tolerates them as the lesser of two evils when faced with other imperialist nations seeking to impose their will on his beloved tribesmen. El Borak's whirlwind adventures across the crags and sands of Afghanistan can provide a wide range of adventure hooks and character inspiration for the gamemaster. The story "Country of the Knife", for example, contains a character named Vladimir Jackrovitch who is a clearly a spiritual descendent of the Zaporoskan adventurer Olgerd Vladislav, from "A Witch Shall Be Born". Both are ambitious, tall, grey-eyed northerners who rose to power in the desert, forming outlaw bands and dreaming of empires.
- **The Solomon Kane Stories:** Perhaps Howard's second most famous hero, Puritan adventurer Solomon Kane had a wide-ranging career, venturing across Europe and into the deepest heart of Africa. He fought all manner foes, human and otherwise, and explored a variety of lost cities and cursed places. Though driven by religious fervor, Kane was surprisingly worldly, one of his few recurring allies an African sorcerer, and willing to use magic to smite supernatural evil. His stories would be relatively easy to adapt for **Conan**, requiring few changes.
- **Others:** Howard was vastly prolific, and a list of all his characters would dominate this toolkit, but inspiration can easily be drawn from the following: Pictish king Bran Mak Morn; French mercenary swordswoman Dark Agnes de Chastillon (partial inspiration for the "inspired by Howard" character Red Sonja); adventuress Red Sonya of Rogatino (the other source of Red Sonja's inspiration); Crusader knight Cormac

Fitzgeoffrey; American adventurer Kirby O'Donnell; Irish pirates Cormac Mac Art and Black Vulmea; and another pirate, Helen Tavrel. Even the aforementioned El Borak had a Sikh ally, El Singh, who had three Howard stories devoted to his solo exploits. Such was the nature of their adventures that they could be easily transformed into **Conan** adventures, and Howard himself borrowed liberally from his earlier works, returning to common themes and story elements repeatedly.

INSPIRATION FROM OTHER MEDIUMS

The tales of Conan of Cimmeria have inspired countless editions, comics, a handful of movies and roleplaying games, several spin-offs and video games, and — more recently — a phenomenally successful board game. It is not the purpose of this toolkit to offer insight and critique to any one of these sources of Conan material; each one should be approached and judged on its own merits by the gamemaster and players alike.

As constantly reinforced throughout the corebook and this toolkit, the intent of **Conan** is to return to Howard's original writings and use them as a platform to create immersive tales of sword-and-sorcery. Rather than dissecting anything that has appeared in the wake of Howard's works, the passages that follow will seek to offer inspirational works from outside the world of Conan that perhaps might not have been considered otherwise.

PULP PACING AND DRAMA

Creating adventures that emulate the classic pulp tales that have been a popular form of storytelling since the late 19th century can seem a daunting prospect. Luckily, plenty of advice is readily available from many different sources, including — but not limited to — the magazines and tales themselves and a number of internet resources. Of course, these tools can aid in constructing a piece of pulp fiction, but are not necessarily designed to assist with designing a tabletop roleplaying adventure. Understanding the nuances of pulp writing, however, will certainly help to recreate the intense action and drama in a game.

There is a well-documented formula to pulp stories that has served authors of this genre unfailingly across the years. Luckily, the gamemaster and the players have two unique tools available to them that can be used to adjust the pacing and drama of an adventure in order to provide intense drama and pacing at the tabletop: **Doom** and **Momentum**.

DOOM

The gamemaster's mechanism to completely alter the pacing of a scene. Doom and its mechanics are covered within the **Conan** corebook, so the purpose here is to provide some insight into using the Doom pool as a storytelling tool. It should not be feared, but embraced.

When designing adventures or preparing for a game, it can be prudent to create a number of unique encounter spends to cater for the environments and challenges that the player characters will be facing during the session. For example, if the player characters are due for a frantic fight against a group of slavers on the dockside, spend some time beforehand designing some unique twists for the scene, such as making movement difficult due to a freak swell or spilt blood, swinging booms designed to shift crates becoming loose, or cutpurses attempting to steal the character's coin while they are distracted with the melee. Consider reinforcements also, especially as a means to uphold the pace or pile on the misery.

In the previous dockside case, unspent Doom could be used to summon the city watch, who themselves can be given a few options that are dependent upon the outcome: they could mistake the player characters' identities, or have been bought out and therefore bolster the slavers' forces if the fight has become one-sided. Alternately, the watch could wait out the fight and attempt to arrest the player characters once the fight concludes, which leads to a tense standoff or an additional combat, and possibly a visit to the cells.



Here are some further examples of preparations made before a game:

- **In Search of the Heart:** The gamemaster has chosen to involve the player characters in an adventure that mirrors the classic story “The Tower of the Elephant”. Beforehand, the gamemaster notes down several Doom spends that can be used to alter the pacing and encounters of the setting. Some simple Doom spends present themselves immediately in the form of animals that can raise the alarm by being startled from the shrubbery and loose coping stones on top of the wall that can cause a player character to fall. Some reinforcements in the form of a rival group of thieves inside the garden is also introduced, though they must all contend with the lions that are a planned part of the encounter. A torturous wind that induces a difficult climb is also included, before the gamemaster makes one final note to hold back some Doom for the demonic spider that guards the entrance at the top of the tower.
- **Mutiny!:** The player characters are part of, or have been captured by, a roving band of freebooters. A mutiny sparks during the voyage, embroiling the player characters in a desperate fight to overwhelm the opposing crew. Beforehand, the gamemaster plots some dastardly Doom spends that include: sharks appearing once bodies begin to fall overboard, the galley catching fire thanks to a cooking fire being untended, a number of critical sail positions becoming damaged and needing repair, and the ship’s wheel being wildly out of control, invoking Acrobatics tests due to the erratic sway of the ship — which pairs nicely with the shark-infested waters. As a final addition, the gamemaster notes down a special Doom spend in the form of a rival buccaneer ship that can be foreshadowed to later appear and be used to pile on or maintain the drama of a climactic encounter.
- **The Depths of Despair:** The player characters are deposited in the depths of a terror-filled dungeon, but rather than map every room and encounter beforehand, the gamemaster decides to note down a few key encounters and introduce others through clever use of Doom. Several nasty surprises in the form of traps are planned, as are Doom spends that alter the environment for the player characters: sluice gates that open to make the floor slick, gusts of frigid air that extinguish torches, poor masonry that collapses around a piton. Finally, the gamemaster introduces one or two reinforcement Doom spends that can be used to spice up other encounters, such as ghouls that arrive as the player characters are scaling a wall and rat things in search of carrion, attracted by the sounds of combat.

MOMENTUM

Momentum is used by the players to bolster their successes, fuel their drive forwards, and overcome the desperate odds that often stack against them. Many common Momentum spends and their associated costs are presented within the core rulebook, but again, it can be greatly beneficial to the pacing and drama of an adventure for the gamemaster to prepare a few Momentum spends specific to each intended encounter before beginning a game.

The gamemaster should also encourage the players to find creative ways to build a narrative using Momentum, so that the game feels more organic and has a sense of flowing like a story.

For example, two characters, Athala and Demetrius, are attempting to break free from a dungeon, but must first overcome the guards that block their route. Athala opts to stand ready and wait for the guards to move within range of her attack, while Demetrius uses her as a shield and begins to hurl rocks at the guards. Demetrius floors a guard with a cunningly hurled rock, but unfortunately for the player characters, the remaining guard decides to attack from range and looses a crossbow bolt in their direction. Athala attempts to dodge the incoming bolt and succeeds so spectacularly that she generates 3 Momentum. The gamemaster immediately informs Athala’s player that the Momentum can be used to not only roll within Reach of the guard that fired the shot, but will also allow her to take the attack against the guard that she had been saving as a Readied action. Athala’s character accepts and downs the remaining guard, which keeps the story flowing and launches immediately into a desperate escape before additional guards appear.

The following examples re-examine the Doom preparations above, but are taken from a Momentum perspective instead:

- **In Search of the Heart:** The gamemaster builds a Momentum spend into the encounter concerning the startled animals in the shrubs, and decides that Momentum can be used to potentially capture an animal. It can then be used as a diversionary tactic against the lions inside the garden. Additionally, the gamemaster decides to reward the successful application of a grappling hook to the tower’s roof by allowing the use of Momentum here to provide additional security to the climb; a couple of points of Momentum can be used to offset some of the Difficulty modifiers imposed by the torturous wind.
- **Mutiny!:** Some Momentum spends are built into the encounter that allow the player characters to use parts of the ship as a weapon: errant sail booms that

can be used to sweep enemies into the sea, barrels that can be hurled to knockdown foes, and similar effects. These can also work for the non-player characters, as additional Doom spends.

- **The Depths of Despair:** Here the gamemaster decides to introduce a few Momentum spends that tie in with the reinforcement options that have

been created. If they successfully resist the ghoul's attempts to dislodge them from the climb, the player characters can use Momentum to turn themselves into living weapons against the undead creatures, or if the player characters detect the approach of the rat thing while combating other foes, Momentum may be used to place their initial enemy between themselves and the new threat.

SUPPORTING CAST

Pulp adventures — including Howard's tales — are packed with supporting cast members that provide added depth and drama to the tale. The supporting cast are themselves a tool that can drive the plot forward or provide an additional moment of intense drama within a plot that is layered in tension: a princess snatched from the player characters' grasps, an able-bodied thief that blunders into a trap on the player character's behalf, or an accompanying mercenary captain who has sold out the player characters to the highest bidder.

Much like Momentum and Doom, non-player characters can be used to provide pacing and suspense to any adventure, though this should often be when least expected. If the player characters happily side-step the perils that are placed in their path, have the occasional non-player character blunder into the trap, emphasizing the danger they avoided. Likewise, if the player characters prefer to talk their way out of every fight, a fiery non-player character can dash their hopes by sparking a brawl.

Not every action that the player characters perform should be railroaded in this fashion — the players need to understand that they have actions will have an impact upon the storyline without it being trampled by a non-player character every time — but they should never be disregarded as a tactic to introduce tension and drama; after all, even non-player characters have their own thoughts and feelings within the context of the world that the gamemaster is unveiling. Play to each non-player character's strengths and exploit their weaknesses, but never let them take center stage and reduce the player characters to a side-show. The player characters are the protagonists of the adventure, the non-player characters the supporting cast.

Whether at the start of an adventure, or as a quick introduction during an unfolding scene, the following tables can be used to rapidly provide building blocks and answer a few questions about a non-player character to make them presentable at the tabletop. One or two rolls on the *Interesting Quirks* table should be sufficient to provide a memorable description, whereas the *Nationalities* table will immediately answer the question of ancestry.

NATIONALITIES	
Roll	Nationality
2	Hyperborea
3	Border Kingdom
4	Nordheim: Asgard or Vanaheim
5	Cimmeria
6	Bossonian Marches
7-8	Gunderland
9-10	Aquilonia
11-12	Koth
13-14	Nemedra
15-16	Ophir
17-18	Brythunia
19-20	Argos
21-22	Zamora
23-24	Shem
25-26	Stygia
27	Corinthia
28	Zingara
29	Khoraja
30	Khauran
31	Kush
32	Darfar
34	Keshan
35	Punt
36	Zembabwei
37	The Black Kingdoms
38	Turan
39	Iranistan, Ghulistan
40	Hyrkania



INTERESTING QUIRKS	
Roll	Quirk
2	Eye color is mismatched
3	Prone to bouts of twitching
4	Talks using as few words as possible
5	Appears to be constantly distracted
6	Has visible tribal scars or tattoos
7	Swears every other word during conversation
8	Always refers to a list of rules, which can be real or imagined
9	Constantly drinking, but never seems drunk
10	Slips as many quotes and figures of speech as possible into conversation
11	Is extremely flirtatious, but seems shocked if anyone responds
12	Abhors physical contact. Visibly cleans self if this occurs
13	Sports several piercings
14	Performs a superstitious tic to ward away bad luck
15	Can never comprehend jokes or sarcasm
16	Holds on to first impressions and discounts anything that contradicts that opinion
17	Always seeks to obtain and hold eye contact for an uncomfortably long time
18	Talks in sibilant whispers
19	Attaches a cost to everything
20	Missing a limb
21	Covered in warts and boils
22	Extremely hairy
23	Laughs nervously and inappropriately
24	Uncouth, vulgar, or spectacularly rude
25	Very possessive of an object or person
26	Persistently claims one-upmanship
27	Treats everyone with complete disdain
28	Always expects a negative outcome
29	Is a habitual gambler
30	Becomes aggressive when criticized
31	Claims to know someone in every town and city
32	Is a glutton (food, wealth, power, pleasure, etc.)
33	Has an obvious tell when lying
34	Can only talk by shouting
35	All conversations are drawn out and formal
36	Struggles to talk through a hacking cough
37	Badly disfigured by disease
38	Has extremely obscure tastes in food and drink
39	Has a terrible catchphrase
40	Constantly relates in the third person

ADVENTURE TITLE

This toolkit discusses how Howard's pacing keeps his readers enthralled, but has yet to address the actual titles of his stories. These short and often enigmatic titles served to appeal to the tastes of jaded pulp editors, encouraging them to read the submission, and to the magazines' readers, getting them to flip to his stories first. A great title often meant placement on the cover of the magazine, which was virtually guaranteed to lead to further sales, so Howard crafted his titles to be as catchy as possible.

The following tables assist the gamemaster in generating adventure titles in an appropriately Howardian fashion, and can be done before an adventure is created, providing an overall theme for the selection of elements from the

adventure generation system, or it can even be selected afterward and the adventure expanded or augmented so the title makes sense in the context of the adventure.

Whenever "The" is indicated before a title, roll a . A result of 1 or 2 means that "The" remains, and a roll of an Effect switch "The" with "A" or "An". Remove "The" on any other result. A singular result might be changed to plural, if desired.

Roll a  whenever indicated. Add a Descriptor to it if an Effect is rolled. Ignore other results.

When using this table, the gamemaster is encouraged to adjust the outcome if a nonsensical or grammatically incorrect result is reached. Repeated terms should merit a re-roll.

TITLE STRUCTURE	
Roll	Structure
1-2	The  [OBJECT] on the [OBJECT]
3-4	The  [OBJECT] of the [OBJECT]
5-6	The  [ENTITY] in the [LOCATION]
7-8	The [OBJECT] of [OBJECT]
9-10	A/an [ENTITY] Is/Will Be/ Shall Be [DISPOSITION]
11-12	The [DISPOSITION] of [ENTITY]
13-14	[ENTITY] [LOCATION]
15-16	The  [OBJECT]
17-18	 [OBJECT] in [LOCATION]
19-20	 [ENTITY] of [LOCATION]

OBJECT	
Roll	Object
1-2	Jewel/Gem/Amulet
3-4	Crown/Scepter/Throne
5-6	Skull/Bone
7-8	Thunder/Rain/Wind/Storm
9-10	Weapon (pick: Knife, Sword, Axe, Spear, Blade)
11-12	Night/Midnight/Shadow/Darkness
13-14	Kingdom/Empire/Land/Realm
15-16	Tribe/People/Folk
17-18	Flame/Fire/Pyre/Brand
19-20	Circle/Ring/Obelisk/Column

ENTITY	
Roll	Entity
1-2	Demon/Devil/Fiend/Horror
3-4	Ghost/Spirit/Specter
5-6	Monster (pick: Ghoul, Dweller, Serpent Folk, Abomination)
7-8	Animal (pick: Vulture, Serpent, Eagle, Wolf, Raven, Lion, Tiger, Owl, Ape, Rat, Eagle, Hound, Hawk)
9-10	Noble (pick: King/Queen, Lord/Lady, Emperor/Empress, Warlord, Prince/Princess)
11-12	Sorcerer/Witch
13-14	Priest/Priestess
15-16	God (roll on <i>Religious Tenets</i> , page 20)
17-18	Mythological Animal (pick: Phoenix, Dragon, Hydra, Mummy,
19-20	Undetermined (pick: Stranger, The One, Dweller, Lurker, Holder, Keeper)

LOCATION	
Roll	Location
1-2	Tower
3-4	Citadel/Castle/Fortress
5-6	Cave/Cavern
7-8	City
9-10	River
11-12	Pool
13-14	Forest
15-16	Temple
17-18	Pit
19-20	Tomb/Crypt

DISPOSITION	
Roll	Object
1-2	Born
3-4	Cursed
5-6	Haunted
7-8	Doomed
9-10	Lost
11-12	Damned
13-14	Spawned
15-16	Fallen
17-18	Broken
19-20	Forgotten

DESCRIPTOR	
Roll	Descriptor
1-4	Color (pick: Black, Ebon, Crimson, Red, Scarlet)
5-8	Age (pick: Ancient, Elder, Old)
9-12	Substance (pick: Iron, Steel, Silver, Gold/Golden, Stone, Bronze)
13-16	Temperature (pick: Cold, Fire/Fiery)
17-20	Appearance (pick: Shining, Gleaming, Jewelled, Shadowed)



ADVENTURE GENERATOR

The following tables can inspire a wide range of fraught and deadly adventures. The tables introduced here are meant to assist a gamemaster in designing a perilous and engaging tale that will be similar in construction and pacing to the classic pulp tales that Howard is renowned for. Almost all pulp adventures follow a tried and tested formula, which is something that these tables hope to help the gamemaster emulate at the tabletop.

Blazing a trail of renown, heroism, and fame — or infamy — across Conan's world is something that should be achieved at the culmination of dangerous and breathtaking adventures that involve the player characters thwarting dastardly plots and horrific, otherworldly powers. At their heart, these tales of fearless courage should involve overcoming a tangible and identifiable threat, though unveiling this menace will likely involve a few unforeseen twists and turns.

The tables that follow will almost certainly introduce their own convolutions, some of which may not fit the plot that is developing or the loose outline that a gamemaster had in mind — whether this was prior to rolling or as the tables unveiled the story arc. There is no requirement to accept every roll made or even to follow the process through until the end; specific elements can be cherry-picked to suit, re-rolled, or ignored completely. There is something to be said, however, to rolling with the punches and taxing the imagination to make the randomness work.

As an additional note, the tables presented here offer themselves as a useful tool during an actual play session, particularly if there is a need to quickly generate a mission objective, person, item, or place.

THE OPENING SCENE

Frequently, the opening scene of a pulp adventure places the heroes of the tale in a strange and exotic location that introduces an element of peril through its mere description. Every tale of heroism, adversity, or triumph requires a villain or obstacle as a core central element, regardless of whether that plot device is as direct as a long-slumbering sorcerer of unimaginable power awakening and seeking to rule over all he surveys, or as subtle as conspiracy of rival nobles seeking to overthrow the king. Beginning with the antagonist allows you to frame the context of the overarching plot.

Two d20s are rolled for the *Opening Setting* table, but the dice results are kept separate rather than summing them. The gamemaster is free to choose which column the dice results relate to, but should be sure to check both options before deciding. The gamemaster should ignore results that clearly do not match, although it may be an interesting practice in welding two elements together.



OPENING SETTING		
Roll	Setting	Descriptor
1	A jungle	Chaotic
2	An island	Frozen
3	A mountain range	Ominous
4	A back alley	Claustrophobic
5	A crypt	Eerie
6	A blood-soaked battlefield	Fathomless
7	A courtesan's chambers	Sprawling
8	A noble's villa	Malodorous
9	A sewer system	Vibrant
10	A ruined keep	Barren
11	A hidden temple	Oppressive
12	An execution chamber	Obscure
13	A slavers market	Brackish
14	A graveyard	Foggy or misty
15	A desert	Searing
16	A lake or ocean	Tempestuous
17	A forest	Empty
18	A swamp	Crumbling
19	A mine	Weird
20	A royal court	Roll twice and apply both

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS	
Roll	Identity
1-2	Royalty
3-4	Nobility
5-6	Militia
7-8	Natives
9-10	Mercenary soldiers
11-12	Porters
13-14	Slaves
15-16	Clergy (roll on <i>Religious Tenets</i> table)
17-18	Bounty hunter or hunter
19-20	Roll twice, with a separate roll on <i>Temperament</i> table for each

Once the setting has been established, the *Non-Player Characters* table can then be used to determine a troupe of non-player characters that might be present at the scene, supported by the *Temperament* table for their general attitude. The non-player characters determined by this table should be supporting the player characters in some way

TEMPERAMENT	
Roll	Temperament
1-4	Benevolent
5-8	Friendly
9-12	Indifferent
13-16	Unfriendly
17-20	Hostile

HOOKS AND DRAWS		
Roll	Plot Hook	Draw
1	A close friend	Delivered outrageous demands
2	A kidnapped relative	Sent an invitation
3	An anonymous letter	Lied to the player characters
4	A wizened scholar	Delivered sensitive information (roll on <i>Knowledge Objective</i> table)
5	An ancient prophecy	Offered a fortune
6	A fanatical layperson (roll on <i>Religious Tenets</i> table)	Asked for help
7	A dying man or woman	Attempted blackmail or extortion
8	A member of a secret society (roll on <i>Cult</i> table)	Funded an expedition
9	An old acquaintance	Has mistaken a player character's identity
10	A noble	Offered a contract of employment
11	Unwittingly caught between two opposing forces (ignore the second d20 roll)	Placed an artifact in a player character's safekeeping with their final breath
12	Stumble on a strange event or dangerous location (ignore the second d20 roll)	Performed a dangerous ritual
13	A wealthy entrepreneur	Called in a debt or favor
14	A seemingly freak accident	Sent a warning
15	A priest or priestess (roll on <i>Religious Tenets</i> table)	Has information on someone relevant who is missing or dead
16	A diplomat	Stole from the player characters
17	The local militia	Seeks revenge
18	A former enemy	Is worried for their life
19	A member of a royal family	Has been framed for crime or treason
20	A despotic tyrant	Offered details on another antagonist (roll on <i>Primary Antagonist</i> table)



rather than opposing them, although non-player characters that are hostile to the player characters will have run afoul of the circumstances that have placed the player characters at the scene and will likely begin blaming them for their current predicament once the dust has settled.

INVOLVING THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

Having established the setting and some of the other persons present, it is often time to unveil the reason behind the player characters' presence. This will establish the hook that has drawn them into their current predicament; their reason for being in the wrong place at the right time in the first place. This can be revealed as the action unfolds or delivered as part of the introductory dialogue — however it is addressed, revealing the hook will provide the player characters with their initial incentive for having been drawn into the plot.

The *Hooks and Draws* table can be used to aid in sketching the outline, though the gamemaster should further

embellish this with their own narrative based upon his knowledge of the player characters within the group. As with the *Opening Setting* table, two d20s are rolled, with the results kept separate rather than combined.

THE PLOT

Having established the opening scene and the primary reasons for the player characters being there, it is now important to establish exactly where their adventure will lead them and who is pulling the strings. Unravelling the overarching plot should begin to take place during the opening scene, but does not necessarily need to be revealed all at once; clues should be established from the outset, but plot devices such as non-player character motives or even their presence can readily be used to tease the plot reveal across several scenes.

The machinations of the villains central to pulp adventures tend towards the straightforward rather than the convoluted, but the gamemaster can roll multiple times

PLOT CONCEPT		
Roll	Plot Concept	Motivation
1	Overthrow the ruling elite	Vengeance
2	Complete an infernal ritual	Pure malice
3	Tear a gateway to an ancient era	Intense hatred
4	Foment a war	Envy
5	Destruction of a place, a group, or a creature	Being manipulated by someone or something (roll twice on the <i>Primary Antagonist</i> table, with the second roll as the true antagonist)
6	Gather information to prove the existence of something or someone	An ancient prophecy
7	Unleash the power of an otherworldly horror	The voices have spoken...
8	Protect a person or place	Forbidden knowledge (roll on <i>Knowledge Objective</i> table)
9	Gain control of a person or place	Dreams or visions
10	Break a deadlock	Protect interests
11	A secret coup	Greed
12	Dissection and experimentation	Spiritual or (un)ethical beliefs
13	Enact revenge for a wrongdoing (real or perceived)	To protect a person, place, or belief
14	Cover up a dirty secret	To strike first
15	Exploitation of a group of people	An ancient feud
16	The pursuit of knowledge	To divert attention from the true scheme (roll again for both the real plot and motivation)
17	Recover an ancient artifact	For the greater good
18	Recover an otherworldly relic	Repentance for a mistake
19	Resurrecting an ancient power	An unpayable debt
20	World domination!	Megalomania



on the *Plot Concept* table to generate several threads. As with the *Opening Setting* table, two d20s are rolled, but the results are read separately rather than totaled, with either roll applied to the column of the gamemaster's choice.

Once the driving focus has been determined for the plot, it is time to move on to the *Primary Antagonist* and *Plot Fulfillment and Location* tables to determine exactly who is behind the devilish plot and what they require to bring it to fruition.

THE ANTAGONIST

Every tale of triumph over adversity requires a villain or obstacle at its core. Sometimes this can be as basic in representation as the brutish and ape-like Thak from "Rogues in the House", or as enigmatic and devilish as Xaltotun from *The Hour of the Dragon*. The *Primary Antagonist* table will enable the gamemaster to determine not only who or what is driving the plot, but also the primary trait that dominates the villain's character, while the *Plot Fulfillment and Location* table will reveal what the antagonist requires to succeed and where it can be found.

Roll 2d20 for the *Primary Antagonist* table, but keep the dice results separate. The gamemaster can choose which

PRIMARY ANTAGONIST

Roll	Primary Malefactor	Trait
1	An otherworldly entity (<i>Ancient or Otherworldly Creatures</i> table)	Aggressive
2	A nefarious cult (<i>Cult</i> table)	Disgruntled
3	A villainous noble	Ambitious
4	A crime syndicate	Manipulative
5	A tyrannical overlord	Unpredictable
6	An evil priest or priestess	Obsessed
7	A crime lord	Maniacal
8	An infernal sorcerer	Tortured
9	A pirate king or queen	Cruel
10	A tribal chieftain	Psychotic
11	A guild leader	Impulsive
12	An unfeeling historian	Covert
13	An insane collector of antiquities	Disillusioned
14	A mercenary captain	Traitorous
15	A legendary gladiator	Conspiratorial
16	An intelligent beast	Intolerant
17	A corrupt judiciary	Vindictive
18	One or more royal advisors	Masochistic
19	One or more members of a royal family	Ineffable
20	A despotic king or queen	Layered quality (roll twice: first is actual, second is apparent)

PLOT FULFILLMENT AND LOCATION		
Roll	Antagonist's Requirement to Fulfill Plot	From/Where
1	Willing sacrificial victims	Mount Yimsha
2	Unwilling sacrificial victims	Atlantean ruins
3	Subjects for experimentation	Hyperborea
4	An ancient text	The Island of the Black Ones
5	Hidden knowledge (<i>Knowledge Objectives</i> table)	A lost island or ruin
6	A specific location (<i>Location Objectives</i> table)	A sacred temple
7	An otherworldly gateway	A concealed tomb
8	A relic of Acheron or Valusia	A pyramid lost to the desert
9	A lock of hair (<i>Primary Antagonist</i> table)	A cursed glade
10	The kidnap of a powerful figure	A sunken ship
11	A precious jewel	A trap-filled dungeon
12	An extract from the books of Skelos	The vault of a hidden cult (<i>Cult</i> table)
13	A strange and alien device	A pirate haven
14	A stone circle	The hidden depths of the Maul
15	A cursed object	An otherworldly gateway
16	A sorcerer's tome	An otherworldly entity's lair (<i>Ancient or Otherworldly Creature</i> table)
17	An alignment of the stars	A cursed and forgotten city
18	The blood of a royal	A sorcerer's lair
19	The heart of an otherworldly creature (<i>Ancient or Otherworldly Creature</i> table)	A royal vault
20	The horn of a living dragon	A dragon's lair

column the dice results relate to, but should check both options before deciding. From here, the gamemaster can continue to the *Plot Fulfillment and Location* table to reveal what the antagonist requires to fulfil their plans and where it may be found.

MISERY AND DOOM

Pulp adventures readily pile misery and doom upon the heroes before allowing them to triumph over adversity — which for the gamemaster will mean introducing obstacles, twists, and personal objectives that can be used to compound the hardships that must be faced throughout the adventure whilst providing a sense of achievement.

The *Obstacles and Twists* table should be used to generate both an obstacle and a plot twist that must be addressed by the player characters before reaching the adventure's conclusion. Once again, two d20s should be rolled, although the results are read separately.

The *Goals and Objectives* table can be used to determine some possible personal goals and objectives for the player characters. These may require completion to overcome the plans of the primary antagonist, or they may be

The Cimmerian, born in a hill country, could have run up it like a cat, but Olivia found the going difficult. Again and again she felt herself lifted lightly off her feet and over some obstacle that would have taxed her strength to surmount, and her wonder grew at the sheer physical power of the man.

— “Iron Shadows in the Moon”

secondary goals that are independent of the overarching plot; either way, it should be clear that there are personal ramifications to the player characters for not fulfilling this element of the plot.

The gamemaster may choose to roll once for the group or once for each character, but should consider the personal interests of the player characters and players when doing so. Two d20 are rolled, with one d20 used to decide a player character goal and the other d20 used to determine who or what is involved in its completion.

OBSTACLES AND TWISTS		
Roll	Obstacles	Plot Twists
1	On a short timescale	They must make a great personal sacrifice (one or more group members)
2	Considered an unreachable destination (lost island, deep underwater, inside a volcano)	They are the experiment (a group or faction is testing their abilities)
3	Numerous distractions along the way (side missions, rival factions, opportunities)	Led into a trap (they are the antagonist's missing ingredient)
4	Key knowledge is required (held in a location or by a person — usually guarded)	Into the jaws of death (no one is expected to leave alive)
5	Physically or environmentally challenging (frozen tundra, cloying swamp, dense jungle)	The antagonist is part of the group (if played right, maybe even a player character)
6	Another non-player character faction is also involved (use <i>Non-Player Characters</i> and <i>Temperament</i> tables to determine)	Intelligence leads them to believe there is only one to deal with (they were wrong!)
7	It is guarded by at least a Nemesis level entity or Toughened unit	Familial connections (the antagonist has close ties to a player character)
8	They must carry a hindrance (fragile asset, incompetent person, dangerous prisoner)	Snake in the grass (a traitor working for an independent faction — roll on <i>Non-Player Characters</i> table)
9	Battered by the elements (volcanic activity, sand or snow storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, etc.)	High body count
10	Must cross hotly disputed territory	Damned if we do... (letting the antagonist escape will save countless lives)
11	Famine	A person or object that is a required to foil the antagonist is also exactly what the antagonist needs!
12	Poverty stricken (rotten, stolen, corrupted, or faulty equipment)	To understand a villain, you must become the villain (they must do bad things to achieve their goal)
13	Extortionate cost (in something the character's value)	The antagonist is a patsy for the true villain (roll again on <i>Primary Antagonist</i> table)
14	Lesser of two evils (working with an uncomfortable ally)	The antagonist is performing heinous acts in the hope of preventing a greater evil
15	Civil unrest (riots, terrorists)	Fulfillment before their eyes (the group arrive too late or the event unfolds around them)
16	Extortion and bribery (a group member is bribed or held to ransom)	Cut off and left adrift (the group's supporters fall strangely silent and no longer provide support)
17	Sold misinformation	A key character of the plot is killed, only to return alive later (can be keyed to entries 2 or 8 of this table)
18	Problems with the authorities (arrested, bounty placed)	The player characters are working for the real villain and the antagonist is trying to stop them
19	Strange malady that requires the antagonists' plot fulfillment to cure	Tread dark paths (the player characters must open themselves to Corruption to achieve a greater good)
20	Ambushed!	Escalation (roll twice on this table, ignoring further results of 20)

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES		
Roll	Character Goal	Character Objective
1	Explore	An ally (<i>Person Objective</i> table)
2	Recover	An enemy (<i>Primary Antagonist</i> table)
3	Plunder	Identity of a person (<i>Primary Antagonist</i> table)
4	Destroy	An opponent (<i>Opponents</i> table)
5	Protect	An opponent (<i>Opponents</i> table)
6	Deliver	Documents or secrets (<i>Knowledge or Person Objective</i> table)
7	Capture	Documents or secrets (<i>Knowledge or Person Objective</i> table)
8	Find/Locate	An artifact (<i>Artifact Descriptors and Conditions</i> table)
9	Negotiate	An artifact (<i>Artifact Descriptors and Conditions</i> table)
10	Scout	A physical location (<i>Location Choice</i> and appropriate sub-table)
11	Divert	A physical location (<i>Location Choice</i> and appropriate sub-table)
12	Distract	An ancient map to (Roll on Sinister column of <i>Building Type</i> table)
13	Unveil	An ancient map to (Roll on Sinister column of <i>Building Type</i> table)
14	Hide	An otherworldly creature's body part (<i>Ancient or Otherworldly Creatures</i> table)
15	Understand	An otherworldly creature's body part (<i>Ancient or Otherworldly Creatures</i> table)
16	Prove	The current antagonist
17	Disprove	The current antagonist
18	Steal	A deadly or secret organisation (<i>Cult</i> table)
19	Infiltrate	A deadly or secret organisation (<i>Cult</i> table)
20	Rescue	A legendary character (<i>Legendary Characters</i> table)



PERSONAL OBJECTIVES

The following tables are used to further elaborate the requirements of the character's objectives. As already stated, these objectives can be used as personal goals or as devices to further the plot — by revealing the location of the antagonist for instance, or indicating an item that is vital to foiling the antagonist's plans.

The *Artifact* table requires that the gamemaster roll two d20s as before, selecting one d20 to determine the type of artifact in question and the second d20 to provide the artifact with a description or state of being. The *Knowledge* or *Person Objectives* and *Opponent* tables require the roll of a d20 on the relevant column.

KNOWLEDGE OR PERSON OBJECTIVES		
Roll	Knowledge Objective	Person Objective
1	Map (treasure, lost land, building plans, kingdom defenses)	Civilian
2	Crude alchemical discovery	Militia
3	Cure to a strange illness	Soldier
4	A weakness	Scholar
5	An ancient secret	Insane genius
6	Escape route	Fugitive
7	Conspiracy	Criminal
8	Strange formula	Spy
9	Criminal activity	Traitor
10	A legend	Mercenary
11	A lost language	Priest or priestess (<i>Religious Tenets</i> table)
12	Concerning an artifact (<i>Artifacts</i> table)	Noble
13	A cult secret (<i>Cult</i> table)	Historian
14	The truth to a cover up	Politician
15	What is at the location?	Sorcerer
16	What transpired?	Archaeologist
17	A traitor's identity	Heir/heirress
18	Historical data	Smuggler
19	Cartographical data	Wounded non-player character (roll again)
20	Otherworldly knowledge	Royal non-player character (roll again)

ARTIFACT DESCRIPTORS AND CONDITIONS

Roll	Artifact Descriptor	Artifact State/Condition
1	Book	Ancient
2	Scroll	Sentient
3	Key	Cursed
4	Religious icon (<i>Religious Tenets</i> table)	Fragile
5	Statue	Unstable
6	Rare plant or flower	Mutable
7	Jewel	Infectious
8	Precious ore	Blessed
9	Crystal	Incorruptible
10	Contraption	Locked
11	Otherworldly object	Frozen (iced)
12	Heirloom	Ethereal
13	Potion	Lucky
14	Armor and/or shield	Toxic
15	Drug	Broken
16	Priceless art object	Buried
17	Jewelry	Powerless
18	Weapon	Corrupt
19	Legendary weapon	Otherworldly
20	Legendary artifact (<i>Legendary Artifact</i> table)	Appears to be X, but is actually Y (roll twice, first result is X, second result is Y)

OPPONENT

Roll	Opponent	Roll	Opponent
1	Bandit	11	Pirate captain
2	Berserker	12	Savage
3	Bodyguard	13	Sorcerer
4	Cultist	14	Thug
5	Cult leader	15	Ghoul
6	Degenerate	16	Skeletal warrior
7	Degenerate warrior	17	Rat thing
8	Guard sergeant	18	Frost giant
9	Knight	19	Black One
10	Pirate	20	Otherworldly creature (<i>Ancient</i> or <i>Otherworldly Creature</i> table)

OLD HAUNTS AND NEW STOMPING GROUNDS

No story would be complete without a few sinister locations and exotic settings for the player characters to explore. The following tables can be used to generate any number of locations to fulfill the plot — there is no hard or fast limit, the gamemaster should use as many locations as they feel are necessary to propel the adventure to its conclusion. The location required by the antagonist to bring their plans to fruition should already be known thanks to the *Plot Fulfillment and Location* table, the tables presented here will provide any number of locations along the character's route from opening scene to epic climax.

As with any of the tables here, the gamemaster is free to pick and choose only the elements desired, or to ignore rolls if they do not suit the plot. The *Location Choice and Atmosphere* table requires two d20s, rolled separately. The first roll determines which sub-table to roll on (*Building Type*, *Rural or Marine Locations*, *Military or Otherworldly Sites*, and *Cult* tables) and the second roll establishes the location with an atmospheric descriptor.

LOCATION CHOICE AND ATMOSPHERE		
Roll	Location Choice	Location Atmosphere
1	Building	Derelict
2	Building	Ruined
3	Building	Peaceful
4	Building	Abandoned
5	Building	Windswept
6	Rural	Dreadful
7	Rural	Overgrown
8	Rural	Submerged
9	Sinister	Ancient
10	Sinister	Impossible
11	Sinister	Perched
12	Sinister	Mountain-top
13	Sinister	Cliff-top
14	Marine	Flooded
15	Marine	Underground
16	Marine	Remote
17	Military	Enigmatic
18	Military	Dripping
19	Ancient or otherworldly site	Frozen
20	Ancient or otherworldly site	Eerie

*The dark woods, masking slopes of sombre hills;
The grey clouds' leaden everlasting arch;
The dusky streams that flowed without a sound,
And the lone winds that whispered down the passes.*

— "Cimmeria"

As a final note, it is worth remembering that **Conan** often ran headfirst into the unknown with little regard for his own safety or the dangers that might be lurking around the next corner. His trials and tribulations sometimes took him to bizarre and dreadful locations filled with denizens that had no right to exist in the Hyborian Age. Although some dice results may seem untenable at first glance, the gamemaster is encouraged to spend a moment or two on linking seemingly unworkable elements together through nothing more than the art of storytelling. Not only is this a good exercise in creating engaging narrative, but also an enjoyable practice in creating unusual elements on the fly.

BUILDING TYPE		
Roll	Building Type	Sinister
1	Hovel	Castle
2	Tavern	Temple
3	Monastery	Stone circle
4	Warehouse	Church
5	Blacksmithy	Mansion
6	Prison	Cemetery
7	Shop or store	Cave system
8	Gambling den	Tomb
9	Noble's estate	Archaeological excavation
10	Library	Ruins
11	Hospital	Mine
12	University	Hospital
13	Temple	Monastery
14	Mansion	Museum
15	Museum	Swamp
16	Farmhouse	Stone circle
17	Inn	Ancient battlefield
18	Royal building	Gateway
19	Sanatorium	Island
20	Palace	Monolith

RURAL OR MARINE LOCATIONS

Roll	Rural	Marine
1	Old battlefield	Shipyards
2	Cavern	Cargo ship
3	Plantation	Warship
4	Jungle	Underwater ruins
5	Abandoned settlement	Deep sea ridge
6	River	Submerged wreck
7	Desert	Reef
8	Glacier	Lost island
9	Swamp	Pirate haven
10	Coastline	Merchant ship
11	Canyon	Open sea
12	Lake	Coastal waters
13	Forest	Coast
14	Mine	Port
15	Farm	Underwater caverns
16	Fields	Beached wreck
17	Hills	Deep sea trench
18	Mountains	Island chain
19	Delta	Sinking island
20	Snowfields	An armada

CULT

Roll	Cult
1-2	Black Seers of Mount Yimsha
3-5	Cult of Jhebbal Sag
6-7	Cult of Asura
8-9	The Spider Cult of Yezud
10-11	Cannibal Cult of Zamboula
12-13	Cult of Hanuman
14-16	The Black Ring
17-18	The Red Brotherhood
19-20	The Scarlet Circle

RELIGIOUS TENETS

Roll	Religious Tenets
1-3	Set
4-6	Jhebbal Sag
6-8	Asura
9-11	Ishtar
12-15	Mitra
16-18	Bel
19-20	The Spider-God

MILITARY OR OTHERWORLDLY SITES

Roll	Military	Ancient or Otherworldly Site
1	Command tent	Acheronian ruins
2	Knight's tent	Pre-Cataclysmic ruins
3	Squire's tent	Xuthal
4	Sentry post	Island of the Black Ones
5	War camp	Dweller's lair (submerged)
6	Supply camp	Ancient pyramid
7	Horse enclosure	Gateway to the Outer Dark
8	Border fort	Cyclopean tomb
9	Mercenary outpost	Primeval forest
10	Mercenary base	Pangaeian valley
11	Militia building	City of Alkmeenon
12	Small keep	Citadel of Tsotha
13	Castle	Haunted cairn
14	Wainwright's	Tunnels beneath sewers
15	Blacksmith's	Heart of a mountain
16	Naval ship	Stygian ruins
17	Naval dock	Island of Xapur
18	Military monument	Ruins of Kuthchemes
19	Ambush site	Mount Yimsha
20	Battlefield	City of Xuchotil

ANCIENT OR OTHERWORLDLY CREATURE

Roll	Creature
1-2	Abomination
3-4	Child of the Dark
5-7	Creature of the Far Reaches of the Skies
8-9	Devil of the Outer Dark
10-11	Forest devil
12-14	Malign plant
15-17	Mummified sorcerer
18-19	Werewolf
20	Winged One



LEGENDARY CHARACTER	
Roll	Legendary Character
1-2	Conan
3-5	Valeria
4-8	Amalric
9-11	Astreas
12-13	Thutmekri
14-16	Olgerd Vladislav
17-18	Taurus of Nemedra
19-20	Thoth-Amon

LEGENDARY ARTIFACT	
Roll	Legendary Artifact
1-2	The Heart of Ahriman
3-4	A lock of Atali's hair
5-7	Golden elixir of Xuthal
8-9	Headdress of Zogar Sag
10-11	Khemsas's Stygian girdle
12-14	The Bowl of Set
15-17	The Teeth of Gwahlur
18-19	The Heart of the Elephant
20	The Serpent Ring of Set



SUMMARY

Unless otherwise stated, the gamemaster should roll two d20, but do not total the results. Select a choice from either column using the most appropriate result to suit the requirements. Use the *Adventure Title* generator or come up with your own.

BEGIN THE ADVENTURE

- Roll for an Opening Setting and any non-player characters present — including their temperament (utilizing the *Opening Setting*, *Non-Player Characters*, or *Temperament* tables as necessary).
- Establish the Hooks and Draws that led to the player characters being present, then work on unveiling the Plot Concept. Roll on any additional tables as directed (*Primary Antagonist*, *Knowledge or Person Objectives*, *Cult*, or *Ancient or Otherworldly Creature* tables)
- Determine who is behind the plot (*Primary Antagonist* table) and what it is they're hoping to accomplish (*Plot Fulfillment and Location* table). Roll on any additional tables as directed (*Primary Antagonist*, *Knowledge or Person Objectives*, *Location Choice and Atmosphere*, *Cult*, or *Ancient or Otherworldly Creature* tables).

TWISTS AND TURNS

- Layer on some misery and doom by rolling for one or more plot twists (*Obstacles and Twists* table), but provide the player characters with some sense of achievement or overcoming the odds by introducing some personal goals and objectives (*Goals and Objectives* table). Building Type on any additional tables as directed (*Non-Player Characters*, *Temperament*, *Primary Antagonist*, *Goals and Objectives*, *Artifact Descriptors and Conditions*, *Knowledge or Person Objectives*, *Building Type*, *Cult*, *Ancient or Otherworldly Creature*, *Legendary Character*, or the *Legendary Artifact* tables).

LOCATIONS

- Roll any number of locations on the *Location Choice and Atmosphere* tables. Roll on any additional tables as directed (the *Building Type*, *Rural or Marine Locations*, and *Military or Otherworldly Sites* tables).

EXAMPLE OF ADVENTURE CREATION

The gamemaster decides to sit down and create a new adventure, using the adventure creation system provided to do so.

To start, the gamemaster rolls on the *Adventure Title* generator on page 9–10. For *Title Structure*, the roll of d20 results in a 4: "The ♀ [ENTITY] of the [LOCATION]". Since "The" is indicated, the gamemaster rolls a ♀ and gets a 4. This result of nothing means that "The" is removed from the title. Now the title is simply "♀ [ENTITY] of the [LOCATION]". Rolls for the *Entity* and *Location* tables result in 2 (Ghost/Spirit/Specter) and 17 (Pit). The gamemaster decides that "♀ Ghost of the Pit" sounds good, and rolls the ♀ to determine the *Descriptor*. A result of 12 indicates a substance, so the gamemaster looks at the list and decides "Iron" sounds the best. With these results, the scenario title is "Iron Ghost of the Pit", which seems a bit strange. Taking a step back, the gamemaster decides to rearrange it slightly, to "Ghost of the Iron Pit."

Now it's time to create an adventure, hopefully one that fits this enigmatic title.

From the *Opening Scene* (page 11) table, the gamemaster rolls 1d20 twice, and gets results of 13 and 15: "A slavers market" and "Searing". These both seem like they'll fit the scenario title nicely.

Rolling and consulting the *Non-Player Characters* and *Temperament* tables yields 6 and 20, for "Militia" and "Hostile". The player characters are beginning the adventure dealing with some trouble with a hostile militia in a slave market, likely somewhere in the desert. This sounds about right for a CONAN adventure. Are they slaves, or are they merely bystanders?

Now it's time to see why the player characters are involved, with two d20s rolled on the *Hooks and Draws* table. The results are 17 and 6, which (interestingly) indicate "The local militia" and "Asked for help". This seems at odds with the opening scene, but the gamemaster is intrigued and wants to see where the dice fall. Maybe something will indicate what happened, or perhaps there's more than one militia being indicated.

Two d20s rolled for the *Plot Concept* table yield 1 and 14. This means that somehow, the overall goal of the adventure is "Overthrow the ruling elite" and their motivation is "To strike first". Looking at these results, the seeds of rebellion seem to be pushing up through the sands.

The *Primary Antagonist* rolls are near-perfect (14 and 10), resulting in "Psychotic" and "Mercenary captain". This adventure is writing itself.

Rolling 2d20 separately for *Plot Fulfillment* and *Location*, the results are 11 ("A precious jewel") and 17 ("A royal vault"). Suddenly the gamemaster has the inkling of an idea, and looks at the adventure's title again and puts some things together.

Two more d20 rolls on the *Obstacles and Twists* table provide results of 7 ("It is guarded by at least a Nemesis level entity or Toughened unit") and 3 ("Led into a trap [they are the antagonist's missing ingredient]").

On to the *Goals and Objectives* table, the gamemaster decides to keep things simple and have a single goal for the entire group (versus rolling for each player character) and gets results of 2 ("Recover") and 9 ("An artifact"). This calls for another roll on the *Artifact Descriptors and Conditions* table, and given the prior mention of a jewel, the gamemaster decides to just pick result 7 ("Jewel") and roll for the *Artifact State/Condition*, getting 16 ("Buried").

Rolls on the *Location Choice and Atmosphere* table yield results of 5 and 15, for "Building", and "Underground". Rolling another d20 for the *Building Type* table gets an 18, a "Royal Building".

Though this adventure feels all but written, the gamemaster determines that there should be some supernatural element in the form of a guardian creature, to enact the "Led into a trap" aspect, so a roll on the *Ancient or Otherworldly Creature* table provides a result of 17 ("Mummified sorcerer"). This feels fortuitous, and the gamemaster decides that the royal castle complex is an ancient necropolis, where a mummified sorcerer was entombed, the priceless ghost sapphire clutched to its wizened breast.

Now the gamemaster decides that it's time to tie some of these threads together, and see how it can become a real adventure.

Looking at the ideas presented, the gamemaster decides the following:

- The "Ghost" in the title is a famous magical jewel — a white star sapphire reputed to have magical properties, ensuring victory to the ones who carry it.
- The "Iron Pit" is an ancient treasure hoard, buried somewhere beneath the city, in an ancient royal castle complex, long since buried and built over.
- The newer city, built around a slaver's market, is somewhere "searing", so the gamemaster decides it's set in the south-eastern deserts of Shem, near the Styx River.

Continued on next page...

...continued from previous page.

- The second militia is a group of Stygian mercenaries, led by a psychotic mercenary captain.
- These mercenaries have been hired by ruling elite, a group that traffics in slavery, an elite desperately trying to hold onto their control of the city.
- Meanwhile, the town's former militia, all loyal Shemites, have fallen in with the rebels, and skirmish with the Stygian mercenaries in support of the Shemite citizens.
- The rebellious citizens are seeking "the Ghost" as a symbol, a talisman to help throw down their oppressors. With it, they intend to strike first, using the jewel as a rallying cry for their people.
- The player characters have been captured as slaves, but are due to be sold just as the rebel militia strikes at the Stygian mercenaries guarding the slave auction. In the combat, they'll be freed by the rebels (or will be aided by them as they free themselves!), and will be asked to help overthrow the tyranny of the slave-lords and their Stygian lackeys.
- The rebels impress upon the player characters that they must go into the ancient necropolis beneath the city and recover the jewel, as a symbol for the downtrodden folk of this remote city.
- The player characters, however, may have goals of their own...

Now it's time to start naming things, using the name lists provided in the core rulebook, and using some of the non-player characters and monsters described in the CONAN rulebook to flesh out the encounters. In a short while, "Ghost of the Iron Pit" is ready to be played through!

"As for Conan's eventual fate — frankly I can't predict it. In writing these yarns I've always felt less as creating them than as if I were simply chronicling his adventures as he told them to me. That's why they skip about so much, without following a regular order. The average adventurer, telling tales of a wild life at random, seldom follows any ordered plan, but narrates episodes widely separated by space and years, as they occur to him."

— Robert E. Howard, letter to P. Schuyler Miller



REFERENCE

HAZARDS		
Effect (Damage or Quality)	Doom Cost	Examples
2  damage	2	The player character stands on a sharpened spike or takes a punch from behind.
3  damage	3	A booby-trap constructed from small sharp blades; spears that spring from the walls.
4  damage	4	A hidden man-trap; small rockslide.
5  damage	5	A more lethal trap; a mid-sized rockslide.
6  damage	6	A large and deadly trap; a large rockslide.
Area	2	A complicated trap that fires multiple darts or stones.
Incendiary X	Equal to half X, rounding up	A fire spreads around the player character; the roof catches fire and starts to cave in; molten lava in close proximity.
Intense	2	A massive boulder; a sharpened man-trap.
Knockdown	1	A log swung at shoulder height; a small pitfall.
Nonlethal	Reduce overall Doom Cost by two	A sand dune collapsing on the player character; a fall onto soft ground.
Piercing X	Equal to half X, rounding up.	Sharpened stakes or rocks.
Stun	1	A gas stirred up by the opening of ancient doors; a trap that drops rocks.
Persistent X	Equal to half X, rounding up	Long narrow blades that leave bleeding wounds.
Vicious X	Equal to X	Traps set by master trap makers.

HAZARD DIFFICULTIES		
Test Difficulty	Doom Cost	Examples
No skill test required	—	Instant effects.
Average (D1)	Reduce overall Doom Cost by three	A river bank with an obvious ford.
Challenging (D2)	Reduce overall Doom Cost by one	A river bank with no ford.
Daunting (D3) or greater	—	A whitewater rapid.

DISPLAYS OF MIGHT AND POWER				
Name	Skill	Range	Damage	Qualities
A Mighty Name	Command or Discipline	Close	X 	Area
Dead Man's Stare	Melee	Close	3 	Area, Vicious 1
Flaming Brand	Survival	Close	3 	Stun, Vicious 1
Impossible Feat of Might	Athletics	Medium	5 	Area, Stun
Knife to the Throat	Melee or Stealth	Reach	4 	Stun, Vicious 1
Sorcerous Might	Sorcery	Medium	5 	Area, Intense
Stain the Soil Red	Melee or Ranged Weapons	Close	X 	Area
Steely Glare	Persuade	Close	2 	Stun

KITS					
Skill	Item	Type	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Alchemy	Laboratory	Facility	5	25	—
Alchemy	Laboratory, Field	Kit	3	8	5
Alchemy	Library, Academic	Library	5*	30	—
Alchemy	Library, Personal	Library	2	10	5
Alchemy	Library, Reference	Library	5*	15	—
Alchemy	Ingredient	Resource	1	2	1
Alchemy	Test Kit	Tools (1 use)	2	3	1
Animal Handling	Handler's Kit/Bridle/Tack	Kit	2	2	5
Animal Handling	Rewards	Resource	1	1	1
Animal Handling	Stable/Menagerie	Facility	3	50	—
Athletics	Climbing Gear (climbing only)	Kit	1	4	2
Athletics	Spikes	Resource	1	1	1
Counsel	Calming Herbs and Perfumes	Resource	2	2	1
Counsel	Private Chambers	Facility	3	22	—
Craft	Coal	Resource	1	2	1
Craft/Thievery	Tool Kit	Tools	2	8	5
Craft	Workshop	Facility	3	15	—
Healing	Healer's Bag	Kit	2	8	5
Healing	Chirurgeon's House	Facility	3	22	—
Healing	Ligation Kit	Kit (1 use)	1	1	1
Healing	Medicine	Resource	2	2	1
Ranged Weapons	Arrows, Bolts, etc.	Reload	1	1	1
Sorcery	Sorcerous Garb and Talismans	Tools	4	11	5
Sorcery	Circle of Power	Facility	5	30	—
Sorcery	Library, Academic	Library	5*	50	—
Sorcery	Library, Personal	Library	4	20	5
Sorcery	Library, Reference	Library	5*	30	—
Sorcery	Offerings	Resource	2	3	2
Stealth	Appropriate Clothing (by region/season)	Tools (1 use)	1	2	1
Stealth	Makeup and Scent Oils	Resource	1	1	1
Stealth	Wardrobe of Appropriate clothing (by region/season)	Tools	1	6	3
Survival	Day Bag (by region)	Kit (1 use)	0	1	1
Survival	Outpost (by region)	Facility	2	8	—
Survival	Provisions	Resource	1	1	1
Survival	Survival Kit (by region)	Tools	1	4	5
Thievery	Thief's Kit	Tools (1 use)	2	2	1
Any one skill	Library, Academic	Library	5	15	—
Any one skill	Library, Personal	Library	1	5	5
Any one skill	Library, Reference	Library	3	10	—

SWORDS

Weapon	Reach	Damage	Size	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Broadsword	2	5 	Unbalanced	Parrying	1	5	1
Cutlass	2	4 	Unbalanced	Vicious 1	1	5	1
Scimitar or Saber	2	3 	1H	Cavalry 1, Parrying	1	5	1
Shortsword	1	4 	1H	Parrying	1	5	1
Sword	2	4 	1H	Parrying	1	5	1
Tulwar	2	4 	Unbalanced	Cavalry 1, Parrying	1	5	1
Two-handed Sword	3	5 	2H	Vicious 1	1	8	2

DAGGER AND KNIVES

Weapon	Reach	Damage	Size	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Dagger, Dirk, Poniard, or Stiletto	1	3 	1H	Hidden 1, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1	1	5	—
Ghanata Knife	1	3 	1H	Hidden 1, Vicious 1	2	4	—
Knife	1	3 	1H	Hidden 1, Improvised, Unforgiving 1	1	2	—
Yuetshi Knife	1	3 	1H	Hidden 1, Intense	1	5	—
Zhaibar Knife	2	4 	1H	Unforgiving 2	1	5	1
Throwing Knife	C	3 	1H	Hidden 1, Volley	1	5	—

CLUBS, FLAILS, AND WARHAMMERS

Weapon	Reach	Damage	Size	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Club	2	3 	1H	Stun, Knockdown	0	2	1
Flail, Farming	2	4 	2H	Improvised, Knockdown, Piercing 1	1	2	1
Flail, Military	2	4 	Unbalanced	Knockdown, Piercing 1	1	5	2
Great Hammer	2	4 	2H	Improvised, Knockdown, Stun	1	2	2
Mace	2	3 	Unbalanced	Knockdown, Stun, Piercing 1	1	5	1
Maul	2	5 	2H	Knockdown, Stun	1	5	2
Morning Star	2	3 	1H	Vicious 1	1	4	2
Pick, Horseman's	2	3 	1H	Vicious 1	2	6	1
Pickaxe	2	5 	2H	Improvised, Vicious 1	1	4	1
Sap	1	3 	1H	Hidden 1, Stun, Unforgiving 1	0	0+	—
Staff	2 or 3	4 	2H	Knockdown	0	3	1
Warhammer	2	4 	Unbalanced	Knockdown, Vicious 1	2	5	1



AXES							
Weapon	Reach	Damage	Size	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Axe, Throwing	2	3	1H	Thrown, Vicious 1	1	5	1
Axe, Wood	2	4	2H	Intense, Vicious 1	1	4	1
Battleaxe	2	4	Unbalanced	Intense, Vicious 1	1	5	1
Hatchet	2	4	1H	Vicious 1	1	5	1
Poleaxe or Halberd	3	4	2H	Intense, Piercing 1, Vicious 1	2	6	2

FLEXIBLE WEAPONS							
Weapon	Reach	Damage	Size	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Chain	3	3	Unbalanced	Grapple, Improvised, Knockdown, Vicious 1	1	5	1
Net	2	3	1H	Grapple, Non-Lethal, Parrying, Thrown	1	5	—
Whip	3	3	1H	Fearsome 2, Grapple	1	5	—

SPEARS AND POLEARMS							
Weapon	Reach	Damage	Size	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Spear	3	4	Unbalanced	Piercing 1	1	5	2
Javelin	2	3	1H	Fragile, Piercing 1, Thrown (Medium)	1	3	2
Lance	3	4	Unbalanced	Cavalry 2, Fragile	2	7	2
Pike	4	4	Unwieldy	Piercing 2	2	6	3
Polearm	3	4	2H	Knockdown, Vicious 1	1	5	3

MISSILE WEAPONS							
Weapon	Range	Damage	Size	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance*
Arbalest	M	5	2H	Unforgiving 1, Vicious 1	2	10	3
Bow, Hunting	C	3	2H	Volley	1	6	2
Bow, Hyrkanian Horse	C	3	2H	Volley	3	6	2
Bow, Shemite	L	3	2H	Piercing 1, Volley	2	7	2
Crossbow	M	3	Unbalanced	Unforgiving 1, Volley	1	6	2
Longbow, Bossonian	M	5	2H	Piercing 1, Volley	4	8	2
Short Bow, Stygian	C	3	2H	Volley	2	6	2
Sling	M	3	1H	Stun, Volley	1	1	1

*For each of these weapons, the Encumbrance value and cost includes the weapon as well as quiver containing 1 Load of arrows or bolts, or a pouch of slingstones or bullets. The arbalest comes with a quiver of five bolts. Additional pouches, loads, and quivers can be purchased for 2 Gold and have an Encumbrance value of 1.



SHIELDS

Weapon	Reach	Damage	Size	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Buckler	1	3 	1H	Parrying, Stun	1	4	1
Shield	2	2 	1H	Knockdown, Shield 2	1	5	2
Shield, Tower	2	2 	Unbalanced	Knockdown, Shield 4	2	6	3

ARMOR

Armor Type	Item	Hit Locations Covered	Armor Soak	Qualities	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Heavy Clothing	Padded Gambeson	Torso and Arms	1	—	1	2	1
Heavy Clothing	Trousers	Legs	1	—	1	1	1
Light Armor	Brigandine Jacket	Torso and Arms	2	—	2	8	3
Light Armor	Brigandine Vest	Torso	2	—	2	4	2
Light Armor	Brigandine Sleeves or Trousers	Arms or Legs	2	—	2	4	2
Light Armor	Brigandine Sleeve or Legging	Single Limb	2	—	2	2	1 each
Heavy Armor	Heavy Hauberk or Coat	Torso, Arms, Legs	3	Heavy or Noisy	3	18	3
Heavy Armor	Heavy Vest	Torso	3	Heavy or Noisy	3	6	2
Heavy Armor	Heavy Shirt	Torso and Arms	3	Heavy or Noisy	3	12	2
Heavy Armor	Heavy Sleeve or Legging	Single Limb	3	Noisy	3	3	1 each
Very Heavy Armor	Cuirass	Torso	4	Very Heavy	4	8	3
Very Heavy Armor	Arm or Leg Plates	Single Limb	4	Very Heavy	4	4	1 each
Very Heavy Armor	Full Plate Armor	All	4	Very Heavy	4	28	7
Heavy Clothing	Leather Cap	Head	1	—	1	1	—
Heavy Armor	Helmet or Coif	Head	3	Heavy	3	3	2
Very Heavy Armor	Great Helm	Head	4	Very Heavy	4	4	2

BARDING

Item	Hit Locations Covered	Armor Soak	Armor Type	Availability	Cost	Encumbrance
Light Barding	Body, Neck, Head	1	Light Armor	3	5	8
Heavy Barding	Body, Neck, Head	2	Heavy Armor	4	8	12
Very Heavy Barding	Body, Neck, Head	4	Very Heavy Armor	5	12	16

MOUNT OR VEHICLE HIT LOCATIONS

 Roll	Location Struck
1 or 2	Animal(s): Roll for damage normally against the creature(s) pulling the vehicle.
Effect	Driver: Roll for damage normally against the driver. If there is more than one driver, roll randomly to determine which is struck.
Any other Result	Vehicle: The mount or vehicle is instead struck. For mounts, damage is taken as per humans, while the gamemaster should determine the effects of damage to the vehicle.

MASTER AN AGE UNDREAMED OF

“THEN THE MAN CONAN SEEMED SUDDENLY TO GROW UP IN MY MIND WITHOUT MUCH LABOR ON MY PART AND IMMEDIATELY A STREAM OF STORIES FLOWED OFF MY PEN OR RATHER, OFF MY TYPEWRITER ALMOST WITHOUT EFFORT ON MY PART.”

— ROBERT E. HOWARD

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