Magic And Steel

A fantasy Role Playing Game

By Roberto Grassi

LICENSE

INTRODUCTION

The more I think about "*Magic and Steel*", the more it feels like a game that looks both to the past and to the future. It's my personal tribute to a genre of games that didn't lose its charm in my eyes.

It owes a debt to the past because I cannot forget my fascination with Red Box D&D and the countless other traditional games that have come out over the years. "*Magic and Steel*" aims to recreate the immediacy, the improvisation, and the simple charms of those games.

It looks to the future because it's a game born in the twenty-first century. Narrative games have become more sophisticated (or simpler, depending on the point of view of the observer) and "*Magic and Steel*" tries to merge some of the "old" concepts with some of the "new" ones in a simple and effective way.

Therefore, above everything else, "*Magic and Steel*" was born because I felt the necessity for a game system supporting roleplaying without the need for any preparation while still allowing for satisfying sessions, for a "modern" play style when I choose but with the feel of the "old ways" whenever the table wants to jump back in time.

I hope that I got it, but, as always, you will be the judge.

Roberto Grassi

Game Philosophy

"*Magic and Steel*" is a "classic" roleplaying game because it takes the fundamental characteristics of the games from the eighties: clear separation between players and game GM (GM), class-based character creation, and campaign length. It expands those characteristics with new mechanisms and thoughts from the first decades of the 21st century, such as objective-focused conflict, creating a hybrid structure that will appeal to both old and new players.

In "*Magic and Steel*," the players and the GM are two sides of the same coin: no participant can do without the others, because nobody is more important than anybody else. The game is always transparent and play doesn't require a GM's screen. The die rolls must always be open and nothing should be decided by absolute authority (unless specifically stated by the game itself).

The GM narrates game situations and then asks the players what their characters will do. The players declare their intentions, much like in a traditional RPG. The game GM then evaluates the players' moves and responds accordingly, following the rules. The rules are flexible enough to cover any situation. The GM will never be left on their own.

This does not mean that there is no room for imagination. In fact, the more efficient the rules, the more freedom and GM and players have to put their imaginations to the test.

"*Magic and Steel*" gives players the chance to take on the roles of fantasy characters who perform astonishing deeds, including feats aided the gods in which they believe when their own abilities are pushed to their limits. Dramatic successes allow the characters to evolve and become ever better, becoming legends. The GM can approach their role in two different ways: either by presenting an individual adventure or a campaign made of multiple connected adventures (just as they would with a classic system) or by preparing very basic initial situations and then elaborating on them through improvisation and player input as in many "modern" games.

The players always want to achieve their characters' goals, and are willing to pay whatever price is necessary.

The GM, on the other hand, must hinder their successes, but just enough to make the challenges unforgettable and the story memorable. They will have all the power they need to do so, as you will soon see, but must remember to act in the interest of the story and the game.

As always, with great power comes great responsibility.

Contents

Game Components

1 Character Sheet(*) for each Player

12 dice for Players and 12 dice for GM
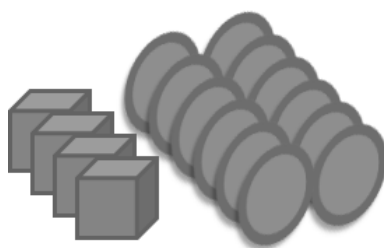
4 Counters and 12 tokens for each player
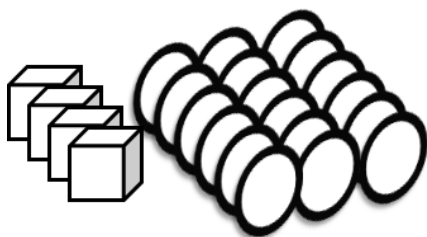
GM: 4 Counters and 6 tokens per player
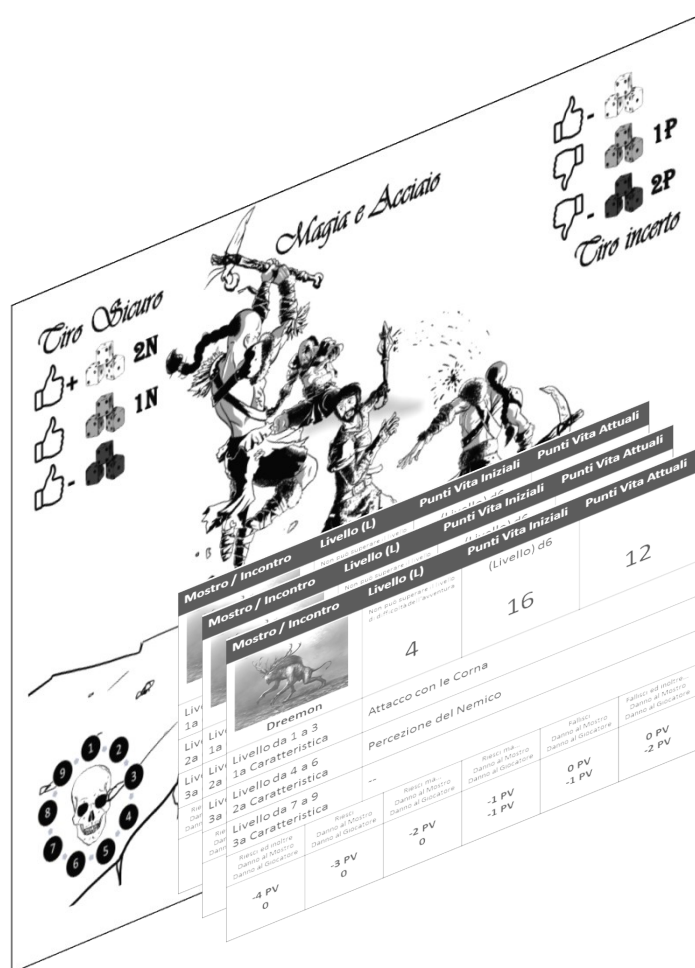
1 Main Gameboard (*) Monster Sheets (*)

(*) These components are available on the Magic and Steel website.

Part I
Game Preparation

"*Home is behind, the world ahead, And there are many paths to tread*
Through shadows to the edge of night, Until the stars are all alight.
Then world behind and home ahead, We'll wander back and home to bed.
Mist and twilight, cloud and shade , Away shall fade! Away shall fade!"

– J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Lord of the Rings"

PREPARING FOR THE GAME

Place the Game Board at the center of the table: it will help players and the GM quickly visualize the rules and track tokens spent during the game.

The Game Board is customizable, so you can tailor it to suit your dreams and adventures.
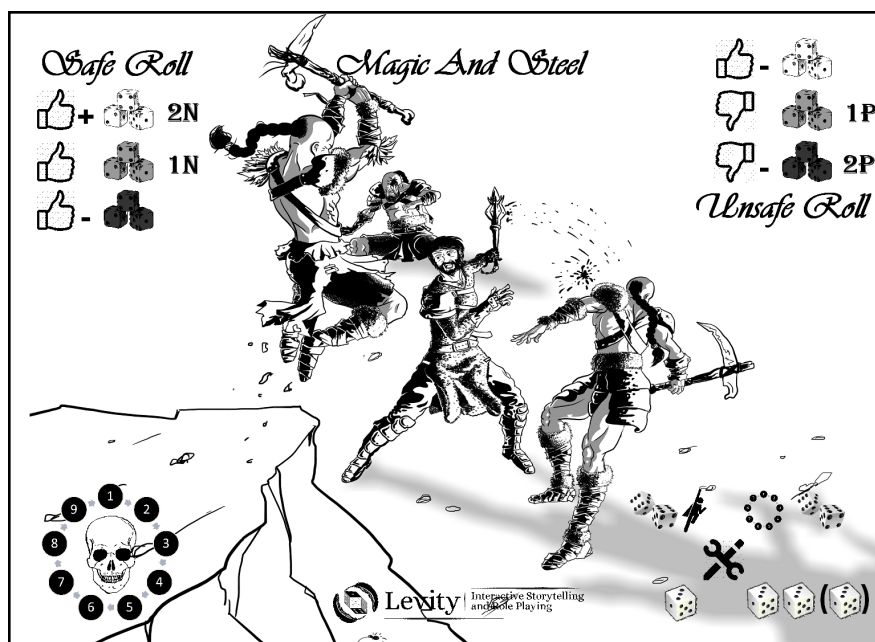
You can personalize your board.

Contact me and I'll show you how.

Simply choose an image that represents your setting or story.

The non-customizable parts include the name "*Magic and Steel*" and "*Levity*". It is advisable not to modify the parts that refer to the rules, because they are references in this handbook and serve as a guide for the interpretation of actions and events.

Players take 12 tokens and 4 counters each. The GM takes 6 tokens for each player and 4 counters. (*Note: if you are reprising an adventure you already started, continue with the tokens you had when the previous game was interrupted and position the counters on the game board as they were at the end of the last game*).
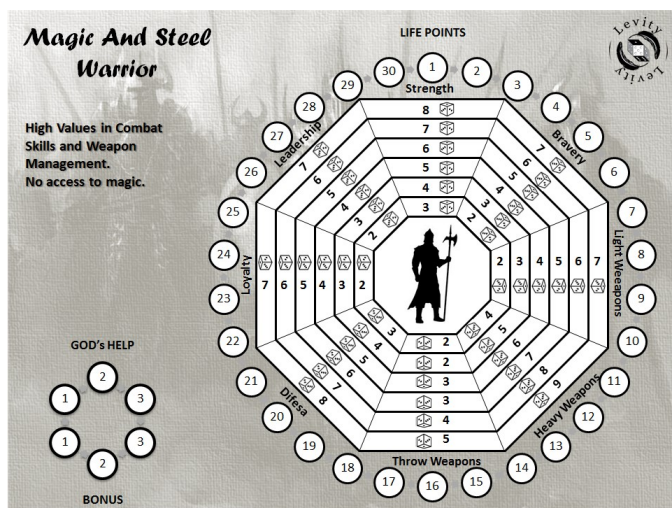

Players choose character sheets. The rulebook provides six classes of fantasy characters ready for use, but, of course, you can create your own using the suggestions contained in the final sections of this manual. The figure on the left shows a sample character sheet.

The central portion records Health Points and the eight descriptive skills of each character. Four skills are common to all classes. You will find a more detailed description later in this manual.

Loyalty – Leadership: skills that relate the character to the group.

Strength – Bravery: skills personal to the character.

The other four skills are specific to each class.

On the left part of the sheet, besides a brief description of the class (useful to the GM should there be no other elements on which to base decisions during the game), two sections track God's Help and Bonus Items.

God's Help: Divinities help you do something seemingly impossible. Each character can be helped by the gods no more than three times.

Bonus: Benefits derived from the possession of special items. They provide additional dice during rolls, up to a maximum of three.

The six classes provided by this handbook are the classic archetypes of fantasy roleplaying games and should cover all the standard needs for the characters.

Warrior: Highly skilled in combat techniques and weapon use. No access to magic.

Ranger: Highly skilled in rural environments. They fight cunningly but not as powerfully as a Warrior. They can use thrown and ranged weapons. No access to magic.

Adventurer: Highly skilled in social attributes and very adaptable in urban settings. They can fight but they are not as powerful as the Warrior. No access to magic.

Cleric: They have access to defensive spells and attack spells effecting sentient beings. Their magic has no effect on the natural and supernatural worlds. They can fight but they are not as powerful as the Warrior.

Arcanist: They have access to defensive spells and attack spells affecting the natural world. Their magic has no effect on humans and the supernatural world. They can fight but they are not as powerful as the Warrior.

Wizard: They have access to defensive spells and attack spells effecting sentient beings, the natural world, and the supernatural. They do not know how to fight well.

For their part, the GM will decide whether to prepare a scripted adventure--perhaps using some adventure from other systems as an inspiration--or to improvise from start to finish. Magic and Steel can also be used to build long narrative campaigns: giving room for character growth. In any case, at the beginning of each adventure the GM must do two things:

(1) – . Set the difficulty level of the adventure by placing a marker on the numbered wheel. In the example on the right, the adventure will have a difficulty level of 6. The level of difficulty is related to:

(a) The maximum number of dice that the GM rolls in opposition to the players.

(b) Health Points and skills of monsters and enemies. In a nutshell, the greater the difficulty level, the more difficult it will be to defeat monsters and enemies.
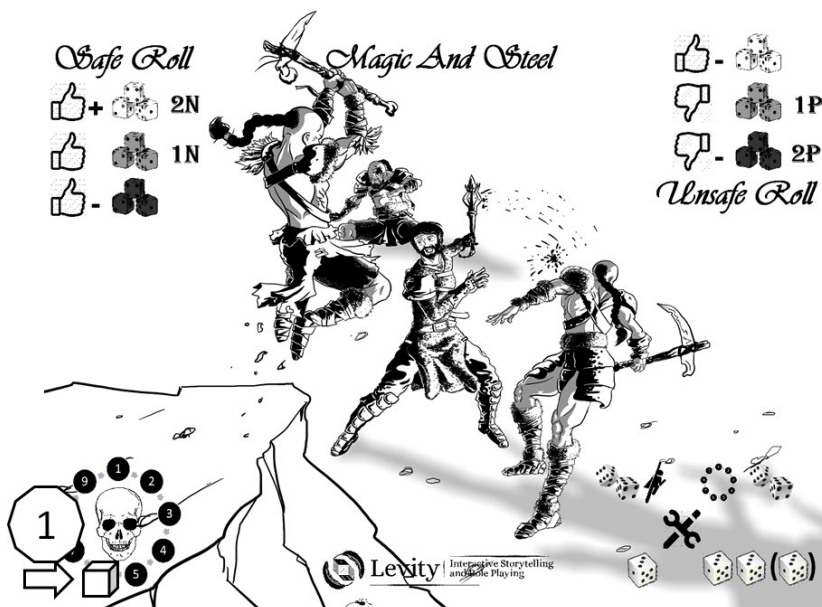
(2) – Declare whether the adventure will be lethal or not. If the characters are at risk of dying, the GM must place a marker on the skull image. If the GM chooses a non-lethal approach, leave the skull uncovered and ignore the health management mechanics for the course of the story.
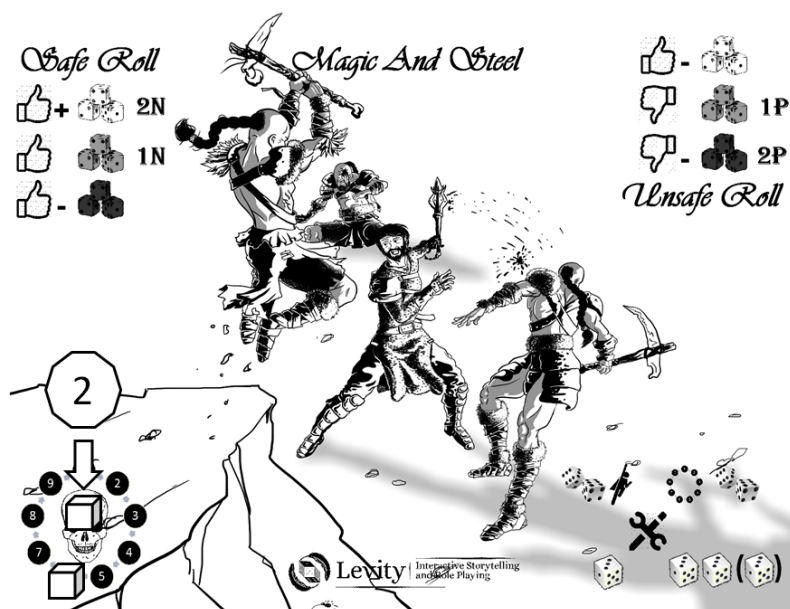
To prepare for any conflicts with unusual monsters or notable enemies the GM

will need to prepare sheets similar to the one below. In the final sections of this handbook you will find a brief tutorial on how to create monster sheets.

A monster sheet is made up of:

(A) – An image (if necessary) and the difficulty level of the monster (which cannot be higher than the difficulty level for the adventure).

(B) – Initial Health Points determined by the roll of as many dice as the level of difficulty for the adventure (or arbitrarily decided by the GM, without exceeding the maximum) and the current Health Point value during the game.

(C) – The particular monster's skills, which are used as descriptors during encounters. A monster gains a peculiar feature every three levels.

(D) – A section listing the damage done to the monster or characters for each possible result for a Safe or Unsafe Roll.

Magic And Steel

Monster / Encounter	Level (L)	Initial Life Points	Current Life Points
Giant Spider	Can't be higher than adventure difficulty level 7	(Level) d6 28	24

Level 1 to 3 1st Characteristic	Surprise Attack	M
Level 4 to 6 2nd Characteristic	Acid Canvas	M
Level 7 to 9 3rd Characteristic	Mind Reading	M

You win and... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose and... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)
-7 LP -1 LP	-5 LP -2 LP	-3 LP -3 LP	-1 LP -4 LP	0 LP -5 LP	0 LP -7 LP

Part II
Main Elements

"*Fantasy is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity. On the contrary. The keener and the clearer is the reason, the better fantasy will it make...*"

– J.R.R. Tolkien, "Fairy Stories"

PLAYING "MAGIC AND STEEL"

Every roleplaying game is, at its core, a game of narration.

For this very reason, always remember that every time you play Magic and Steel **you are doing nothing but telling a story together**. That is exactly the focus of these rules: to regulate the narration happening among the players.

You will not find any long tables or statistics. They are not needed for this kind of play. Always remember that, even in the most complex of cases, **what the players are saying explicitly is of utmost importance**.

This simple sentence is the foundation of the game: the most important aspect is not what the player might be thinking or what a character can do based on a character sheet.

In "Magic and Steel", each player can declare what they want even if it does not concern their character. Afterwards these statements can be challenged based on **inconsistencies or aesthetic criteria**, or questioned by the GM via special mechanics.

In order to play Magic and Steel, you need to understand the tools of shared narration listed in the following sections.

THE GAME FLOW IN SYNTHESIS

Narration by Consensus (page 16): The players and GM narrate actions and outcomes without interruption. Everyone at the table agrees with what is being said and no one opposes the narration. When something breaks this consensus, the other techniques come into play.

Vetoes (page 19): Someone who does not like what is said or feels that the internal coherence of the story has been broken can propose an aesthetic or consistency veto. Vetoes are resolved by voting. In the case of a tie, the GM decides the outcome.

Constraints (page 20): The GM can impose a constraint (free) if you are playing a preset adventure, or by spending two tokens to introduce one during more improvised games. The Constraints have no limits. The GM could kill the whole group of adventurers with one move.

Unsafe Roll (page 24): The GM asks for a roll because they do not feel the success of an action is a given. To buy a Safe Roll, players must spend tokens. If players do not buy a Safe Roll, the favorable outcome is at risk. During Unsafe Rolls the game GM moves the marker on the wheel of difficulty levels, eventually moving it to the center of the game board.

Safe Roll (page 32): The GM can ask for a Safe Roll if a positive outcome is not in question the chance for a complication or dramatic success would make the action more interesting. No one spends tokens when a Safe Roll is played immediately.
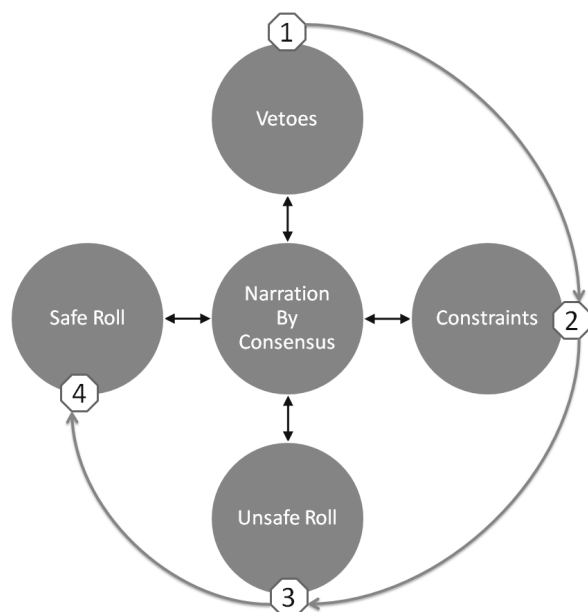
NARRATION BY CONSENSUS (IS NOT ENOUGH...)

Narration is the foundation roleplaying games, allowing each participant to tell part of the story.

Since this game aims to reproduce a classic playing style, the GM will primarily control non-player characters, the setting, and the development of the story arc. Players will control the thoughts, words, actions, and reactions of their characters.

The GM presents the players with a situation and then asks what they want to do, offering to the players an interesting world to explore made up of dangerous and abandoned places, exotic cities, interesting characters, intrigues, and conspiracies.

Players, on the other hand, have to blaze a trail into this exciting situation: they will explore those dangerous and exotic places, take part in intrigues and conspiracies, and have fun, all the while engaging with what the GM proposes to them.

As long as everyone agrees, narration is done by consensus

This means that, in theory, you could play an entire gaming session in which a shared story emerges through improvisation and the way the players and GM respond to one another's suggestions (see the example on the next page).

But we all know that this is not what makes roleplaying interesting. What makes it interesting is the ability of the players to use their characters to challenge the GM in creative ways, or, vice versa, when the GM creates challenging and interesting dangers for the protagonists.

EXAMPLE

NARRATION BY CONSENSUS

GM: ...so you slip down this long and twisting tunnel. The descent lasts for what feels like an eternity. Until, suddenly, you drop a couple of meters and land on a hard surface. You do not know where you might be. You are immersed in darkness

Player A: (whispers) "Nobody make a noise." As my eyes adjust to the darkness, my Ranger's instincts tell me this must be one of those underground caves I've visited thousands of times. I do not hear the noise, but I know in my gut that there must be some water.

GM: In fact you feel the presence of much stagnant water. The smell of it seems to permeate the surrounding environment.

Player B: I get up. I did not hurt myself, just a scratch. I also start to sense the stale smell. And ...that's not it. I hear a noise, a ticking of some sort, and ...a childish voice?

GM: Not exactly. You hear a voice but there is no ticking.

Player B: Fine with me.

GM: There is a voice in the darkness. She's whispering something. It is indecipherable, but the words seem sweet and harmonious. You feel your bodies starting to relax, more and more. You wish this mantra would never end.

Player A: I let myself be cradled and keep listening. I'm very tired since we have been trudging down into this cave system for at least two days so I no longer have the strength to resist its allure.

Player B: I do the same. I'm too tired to resist and then ...I start seeing that in the center of the cave there is the image of a face. It looks like my father's. The mantra continues and the longer it goes the clearer the image becomes.

GM, sometimes--when you think it's appropriate and if the players do not do it autonomously-- **you should stop the game and ask the players what they want to do with their characters. Do not accept vague answers** from your players such as "I try to search for clues" or "I try to convince him that I'm innocent" but push them to say "I find a wine stain on the tapestry" or "I convince him that I was at the Silver Boar Inn all evening." Always ask them to tell you explicitly what they want. This will help you make decisions regarding Safe or Unsafe Rolls.

(Note: some players, especially at the beginning, may have difficulties declaring their actions. Should this be the case, simply encourage them and continue by evaluating what the player explicitly says. They will get used to playing time in the new way)

On the other hand, players, **you should not be afraid of saying what you want to be true for your characters; also remember that you have absolute control over what your character thinks, feels, says, and does, so you can safely tell what's going on with their senses, and if you want, you can declare things that don't pertain directly to the character**. In such a case, the GM and other players may accept your narrative, modify it with constraints, or modify it with vetoes, as described later in the rules.

Given these basics, each time something is said that does not get everyone's consent, you will need to fall back on one of the other techniques outlined in the following chapters, which we shall consider in the sequence shown in the diagram on page 15.

VETOES

During the game, everyone always has (even when it is not their turn) the right to say if they do not like something that is being narrated (an Aesthetic Veto) or if something contradicts the story's tone or established facts (a Coherence Veto). **No tokens are spent to use the vetoes**, which are resolved by a vote. Majority wins. In the case of a draw, the game GM decides.

EXAMPLE
AESTHETIC VETOES

Player A: ""Come out, you damned vermin!" I force the giant spider out of its den and throw it to the center of the room.

Player B: : I take the boulder and throw it on the spider. The boulder crushes it and blood gushes out. Our bodies are covered with the blood of that ugly beast. Black blood, mixed with viscera. The smell is strong...

Player C: That's awful! I want an Aesthetic Veto. I can't stand it. There has to be a less offensive way of killing this spider!

GM: Let's vote.

The players vote. The veto passes by majority. In the case of a draw, the GM decides. Remember that each player can always raise Aesthetic Vetoes, even when it is not their turn. Of course, what the GM says can also be subject to an Aesthetic Veto.

EXAMPLE
COHERENCE VETO

GM: You silently approach the creatures' camp, keeping a safe distance. It appears that a fire has been lit.

Player A: Didn't you tell us that those creatures fear fire?

GM: Really? I did not remember.

Player A: Sure. Coherence Veto.

The players vote. The veto passes by majority. In the case of a draw, the GM decides the outcome. Remember that each player can always raise Coherence Vetoes, even when it is not their turn. Of course, what the other players say can also be subject to a Coherence Veto.

Constraints

Constraints are the instruments with which the GM guides the game and limits what can be said by the players. There are two types of Constraints: Free and Paid.

The GM does not pay any tokens for **Free Constraints**, which only apply if you are playing a prewritten adventure or an established environment. For example, during a game, one of the players says their character explores the room and finds a secret passage. The adventure notes, however, do not contain a hidden passage in that room; at that point, the GM has the ability to impose a constraint, **free of charge**, by justifying that what was said was not part of the story.

EXAMPLE
FREE CONSTRAINT

Remember that free constraints only apply if you are playing prewritten adventures and campaigns. You can write one yourself, download one from the Magic and Steel website, or adapt one from other systems. In this example, the players are playing an adventure module that they have adapted for their game with Magic and Steel.

GM: It's a trap! The goblins were waiting for you in the small canyon and watching from above. There seems to be no hope. The princess's life, which was entrusted to you, is now at risk!

Player A: I prepare the bow and aim for the head of one the goblins. "Don't even think about touching her!" As I say this, I check the passage from which we arrived for obstacles. I signal for my companion to take the princess and run through the passage, avoiding their arrows.

GM: [reading that the encounter is key to the story] No. You cannot get out of the canyon. Too many goblin archers are overlooking the passage.

The GM declares the free constraint and then play goes on.

Paid Constraints, on the other hand, are tools for the GM to shape events in order to move the adventure the way they want. Forcing events is the most powerful weapon that the GM has at their disposal.

To achieve this, the GM must spend two tokens, moving them on the game board. Keep in mind that the game GM can force whatever they want: even the immediate death of the whole group of adventurers. When the GM imposes an event no one can oppose it.

This is the main tool with which the game GM can control fiction in "on the fly" adventures.

The picture on the right gives an example of a Paid Constraint, showing the movement of two tokens on the Game Board. In time the GM will learn how to use them more effectively in order to spend the fewest tokens to shape the fiction in the most dramatic way.
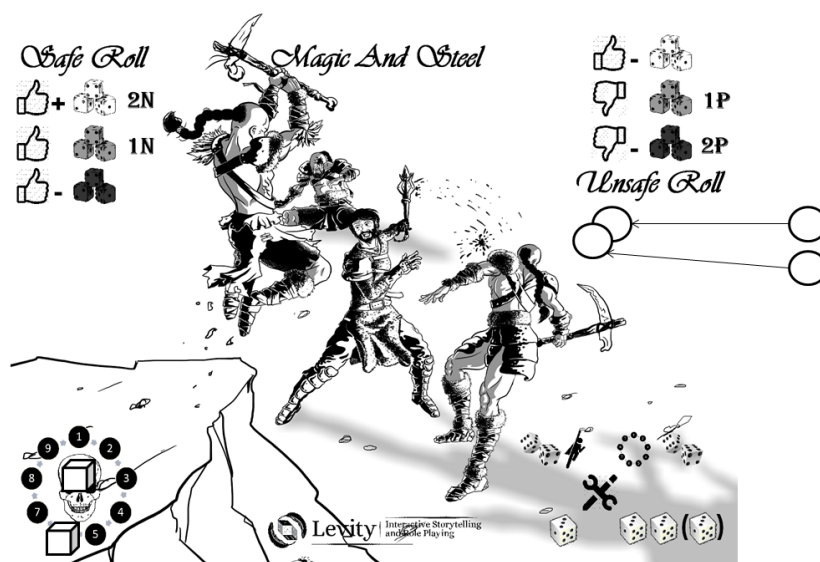
EXAMPLE
PAID CONSTRAINT

GM: The creature is beginning to control your thoughts and while you are lost in contemplation of the images projected into your mind, it suddenly launches itself towards you! You're completely unprepared!

Player A: I quickly regain consciousness and draw a sword, keeping the beast far from me.

GM: The creature is faster than you are. It lunges swiftly under your sword and attacks, throwing you to the ground.

Player A: Is there any way to oppose it?

GM: No, it happens just like I said.

The game GM spends two tokens, putting them at the center of the Game Board, and the game continues. Remember that the GM can force events or facts of any kind. ***They can also decree the death of the whole group, should they decide it****.*

THE TWO KINDS OF DIE ROLLS

Some situations you will face at the table require a random element that's absent in consensus storytelling or the system of vetoes and constraints. Actions narrated by players for their characters, in particular, often call for a more random response.

At these points, the GM must judge whether the player must make one of the two kinds of rolls in Magic and Steel: **Safe Rolls** and **Unsafe Rolls**.

Unsafe Rolls do not guarantee success for the character. Therefore, players will desire Safe Rolls in order to succeed. However, Safe Rolls can give the GM additional tokens, making them a little less desirable to players.
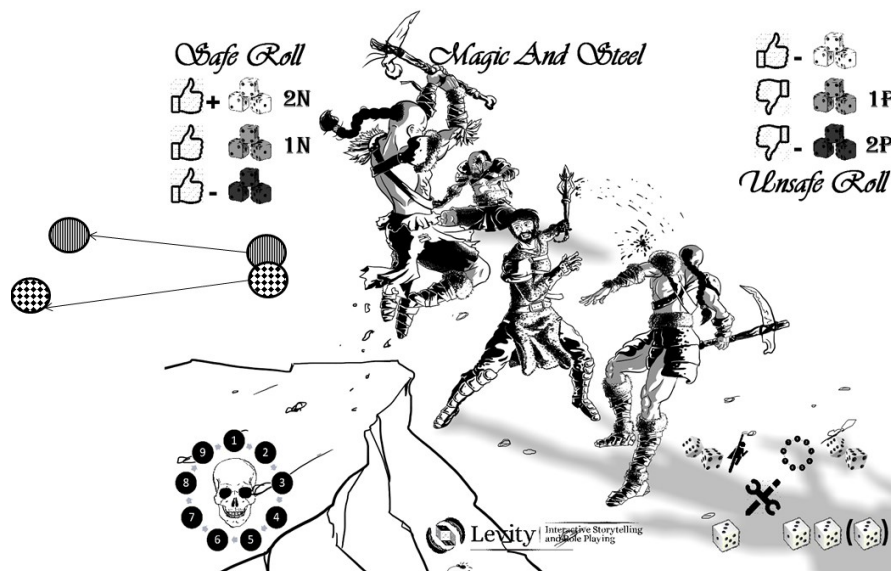
Safe Rolls guarantee the success of the action or the achievement of a goal with different gradations in the outcome.

👍 - 🎲🎲   *Safe Roll*
👎 🎲🎲 1P   👍+ 🎲🎲 2N
👎 - 🎲🎲 2P   👍 🎲🎲 1N
Unsafe Roll   👍 - 🎲🎲
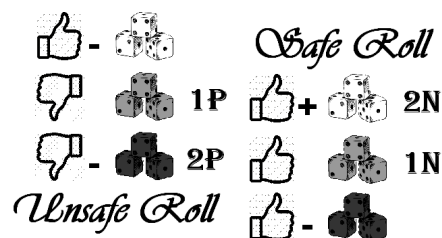
THE GM ASKS FOR AN "UNSAFE ROLL"

If the GM believes that what the player wants is unlikely or difficult, regardless of the skills their character has, they will ask the player to make an Unsafe Roll. First, **though, ask if the player wants to buy a Safe Roll.**

If the player decides to buy the Safe Roll, two tokens must be spent. One token is spent by the player who wants to get the positive outcome and another by a different player, otherwise the Safe Roll cannot be purchased (in games with only one player and a GM the player can spend two tokens to buy the roll). The picture above shows two tokens being placed on the board to purchase a Safe Roll.

At this point you have to decide which of these conditions apply:

> **(A) . If the character of the player purchasing the Safe Roll has at least one skill that applies to the action in question**--or if the action does not require the possession of

any special skills because it is an action that doesn't pertain directly to any particular class--the players only have to pay two tokens and then they make a Safe Roll, as described below.

(B) If, on the other hand, the character does not have any skill that applies to the action in question, in addition to the payment of two tokens the player may be required to place a marker on the God's Help box (or move it forward). This represents the help of the gods in the achievement of the action. The player forever gives up the tokens that have been paid for this transaction. After three uses of divine help, the player will no longer be able to buy Safe Rolls for actions with no relevant ability unless the GM allows for a reset of the God's Help counter.
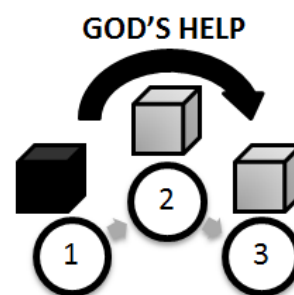
If divine intervention would not fit the tone of the story at that moment, the game GM may allow the player to buy a Safe Roll for an unskilled character without using divine help. On the other hand, the GM may spend a token to impose the use of divine help, leaving the characters to face the unexpected appearance of a messenger from the heavens. After meeting these requirements, you can proceed to make a Safe Roll as described on page 32.
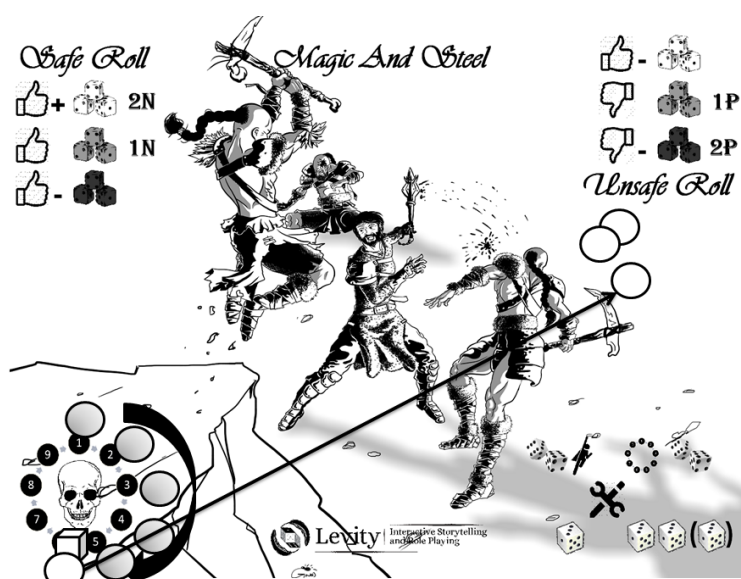
If, on the other hand, players decide not to buy a Safe Roll they must face the outcome of an Unsafe Roll.

The GM places a token on the difficulty level grid (pictured on the left), starting at the lowest free level.

For later Unsafe Rolls, if there are no free spaces left on the grid, the game GM can decide whether to position the token in the starting spot (if free) or if to advance one token already on the grid. **When a token reaches the difficulty level of the adventure it must be mo-**

ved to the center of the Game Board and will be considered spent.

Next it's finally time to roll the dice:

(A) – If the character has a relevant skill, the player can roll the number of dice specified on their character sheet. If more than one skill applies, then the player may choose the skill granting the higher number of dice. **The GM always rolls a number of dice equal to the adventure difficulty level.** The icons on the game board provide helpful reminders of the difficulty level and roll outcomes. The player and the game GM will then roll the dice and arrange their results from highest to lowest, comparing each result. In case of a draw the player's result wins. Below you will find an example of an Unsafe Roll in which the player has a relevant ability and rolls five dice; the GM rolls four dice (since that's the difficulty level for the adventure).

1 Player's roll, before it is ordered

Master's roll before it is ordered

2 Player's roll, after it is ordered.

Master's roll after it is ordered.

3 The Player wins with three dice

The Master wins with one die.

4 The excess die is not considered

(B)

(B) – If the character has no relevant ability, the player will roll a single die versus three dice rolled by the GM. The second example shows an Unsafe Roll in which the player does not have any relevant skill and rolls one die versus the GM's three dice. **When the results are compared the player's die is compared to all the GM's dic**e. Include the game GM's extra dice.

Players   Master

1 | Player's roll, before it is ordered.

Master's roll before it is ordered.

2 | Player's roll, after it is ordered.

Master's roll after it is ordered

3 | Il Giocatore batte 2 dadi del Master.

Il Master vince solo con il 6.

The game board shows the possible results:

(1) – All the player's dice beat or tie the GM's dice: "You win, but…"

(2) – Some of the player's dice beat or tie the GM's dice: "You lose."

(3) – None of the player's dice beat or tie the GM's dice: "You lose, and…"

Based on the result the player can take one or two tokens from the game board. **It is not required that the player who made the roll take the tokens.** The players will have to decide among themselves. Narration of an Unsafe Roll's results is in the hands of the game GM, although they may choose to allow the players to describe the outcome.

EXAMPLE

PURCHASING A SAFE ROLL WITH THE RELEVANT SKILL

Here I deliberately created an example where I do not reveal the character's class in order to avoid focusing too much attention on character sheets. The players should always try to move instinctively and only afterwards they should consider whether their character possesses a relevant skill.

GM: The giant lizards are approaching fast! It looks like the only escape is to jump across the chasm and hope for a handhold on the opposite wall.

Player A: : I take a short run-up and jump into the void, hoping for something to hold onto. While I'm flying through the air, I throw a grappling hook upwards hoping that it locks onto one of the wall protrusions.

GM: Hmm ...I think this should be an Unsafe Roll. Do you want to buy a Safe Roll?

Player A: Let's see. We need to spend two tokens. I have to put in one myself. Could someone give me another one?

Player B: Here you go.

Player A: Done! I am able to climb up.

GM: Awesome. Do you have any relevant skills?

Player A: I think i could use "Strength".

GM: Great.

Player A has bought a Safe Roll.

EXAMPLE

PURCHASING A SAFE ROLL WITH NO RELEVANT SKILL AND WITHOUT RESORTING TO GOD'S HELP

This example shows how to handle a situation in which the GM offers an Unsafe Roll and the player purchases a Safe Roll even though the character lacks any useful skills. Even though the situation is dangerous, the threat is not enough to warrant spending a token to invoke divine help.

GM: Now that you have acquired the jade knife, the curse has started! Suddenly the sarcophagi open and the undead rise out of them prepared to attack you. They turn their attention to you in particular! A sword lies on the floor some meters away! One of them throws a mass of something gelatinous in your direction. It is very fast!

Player A: I dodge the ball and try to grab the broadsword.

GM: : Hmm… it feels unlikely. I could call a Coherence Veto on this narration but I'll give it a pass. It's an Unsafe Roll, then; it will be very difficult.

Player A: I buy a Safe Roll. Here are the tokens. (Another player helps them in the purchase).

GM: What relevant Skill do you have?

Player A: As an Arcanist I could use "Light Weapons".

GM: Okay, but that's an old and heavy broadsword. Also, you are not that strong and fast in combat. You don't seem to have any ability that really fits. To succeed in this desperate action I could make you spend a divine point. But I don't want to force you to waste it for this. Let's go with a Safe Roll, then.

Player A has bought a Safe Roll without adding a token to God's Help.

EXAMPLE

PURCHASING A SAFE ROLL WITH NO RELEVANT SKILL AND RELYING ON GOD'S HELP

This second example shows how to handle a situation in which the GM offers an Unsafe Roll and the player purchases a Safe Roll without any relevant skills and in a situation dire enough to require some help from "up above."

GM: There are far too many giant bugs, and they are now surrounding you. You start feeling their weight upon you. A couple of you fall to the ground and begin to be swarmed!

Player A: : I recite an ancient spell and blast a sphere of light that lures away the insects.

GM: Definitely an Unsafe Roll. Want to buy a Safe Roll?

Player A: Of course. Here are the tokens (Another player helps them in the purchase).

GM: Do you have any relevant skills? You're a Cleric, so I don't think you do.

Player A: No, but this cannot be the way we die.

GM: All right. Your deities will help you. Mark a Divine Point and let's go to the Safe Roll.

The player marks a divine point. Remember, every character has a maximum of three points of divine help to use (unless the GM decides to reset the counter). After marking the divine point the players execute a Safe Roll.

When divine help is used, the person narrating the outcome must describe in fiction how the divinities intervened. This can be a powerful, moving moment for the character involved.

Player A has bought a Safe Roll

EXAMPLE
UNSAFE ROLL

The game GM has proposed an Unsafe Roll and the players either decides not to buy or cannot afford a Safe Roll

GM: The giant lizards are approaching fast! It looks like the only escape is to jump across the chasm and hope for a handhold on the opposite wall.

Player A: I take a short run-up and jump into the void, hoping for something to hold onto. While I'm flying through the air, I throw a grappling hook upwards hoping that it locks onto one of the wall protrusions.

GM: Mmm... I think this should be an Unsafe Roll. Do you want to buy a Safe Roll?

Player A: What should we do? Do we want to buy it?

Player B and C: We don't have that many tokens. We cannot spend them all here. Maybe it will be okay anyway. Even if it doesn't work out there's a chance we might find another solution.

GM: Great. Make an Unsafe Roll.

Remember, when you make an Unsafe Roll the GM must move the tokens on the difficulty level grid. When a token reaches the adventure's level of difficulty the coin is spent and should be put in the center of the game board. After doing this the player and the GM roll the dice, taking into consideration whether there are any relevant skills.
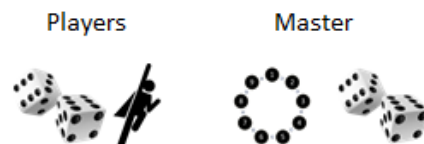
If there are relevant skills the player rolls as many dice as specified by the skill, while the GM rolls as many dice as the difficulty level of the adventure. If the character has no relevant ability the player rolls one die and GM rolls three.

THE GM ASKS FOR A "SAFE ROLL"

If the GM thinks that the character is doing something straightforward based on their abilities, but wants to introduce a random element in the narration, they can call for a Safe Roll. The players will get what they want, but something could go wrong. In the worst case, they will partially reach their goal. **Nobody spends any tokens when the game master calls for a Safe Roll.**

After the GM calls for the roll, you must determine if the characters have a skill relevant to the situation or not.

(A) – If the character has a relevant skill, the player can roll as many dice as written on the character sheet. If any other skills are relevant, the player can use the one with the highest value. The GM always rolls a number of dice equal to the difficulty level.

(B) – If the character has no relevant skill, the player rolls one die while the GM rolls two. The player and the GM roll the dice, organizing the results in descending order and comparing them, as shown on page 27. In case of a draw the player wins.

Possible results are:

(1) – All of the player's dice beat or tie the GM's dice: "You win and…"

(2) – Some of the player's dice beat or tie the GM's dice: "You win."

(3) – None of the player's dice beat or tie the GM's dice: "You win, but…"

Depending on the result, the GM can take one or two tokens from the board

The game master narrates the result of a Safe Roll, although they may decide to allow the players to describe the outcome.

EXAMPLE
SAFE ROLL

GM: You are 35-40 meters away from your target. You've got a clear view and there are no obstacles.

Player A: I want to kill it with a single arrow. We don't want to be heard or seen.

GM: You're a Ranger, right?

Player A: Yes.

GM: Then it's a "Safe Roll".

Player A: Perfect!

At this point both the player and the game master roll their dice based on the character's skill and the adventure's difficulty and proceed as described above.
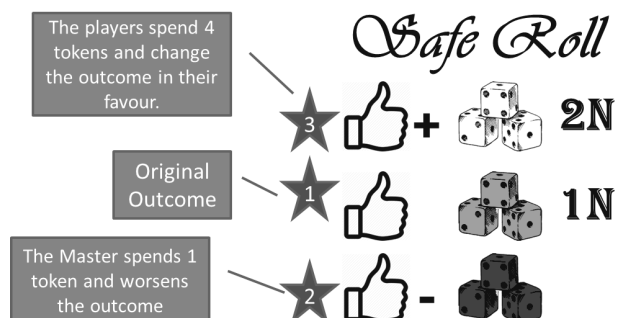
CHANGING THE OUTCOMES

If the adventure's difficulty is six or higher, the GM can spend a token to change the outcome by one level **after the dice have been rolled**.

The players can spend two or four tokens to change the outcome one or two levels, respectively. **This is done after the GM has decided** whether or not to spend a token to change the outcome.

It is not possible to move from Unsafe Roll outcomes to Safe Roll outcomes and vice versa.

The players spend 4 tokens and change the outcome in their favour.

Original Outcome

The Master spends 1 token and worsens the outcome

Safe Roll

★3 👍 + 🎲🎲 2N

★1 👍 🎲🎲🎲 1N

★2 👍 - 🎲🎲🎲

EXAMPLE

CHANGING THE OUTCOME

The players are facing an eighth-level adventure and have a limited pool of tokens; the others are already on the board.

Player A makes a Safe Roll and gets the result "You win and… The GM decides to reduce the outcome to "You win," spending a token and moving to take one token from the board

Now the players can spend two tokens to change the result back to "You win and…," letting the GM claim two tokens from the board, or change it to "You win, but...," preventing the GM from taking any tokens.

Part III
Other Tools

"What have I got in my pocket?" he said aloud.

– J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Hobbit"

The Token Pool

At this point, you know that the Safe Roll assures a good outcome for the players, but gives some tokens back to the game master, while Unsafe Rolls assure good outcomes for the GM, but gives some tokens back to the players. **The general strategy of the game consists of deciding if it is favorable to spend the tokens or accept a negative outcome to recover them**, because the players and GM can't keep spending their tokens without becoming too weak to shape the game.

During the game, it is good practice to keep an eye on the ratio of players' tokens to the GM's tokens on the center of the game board. The players' tokens give an idea on how often they tried to turn the action to their favor, while the GM's tokens give a rough evaluation of often the characters have faced obstacles and twists. The ratio shows who is shaping the fate of the heroes.

The GM and players should always have tokens, otherwise they won't be able to force negative outcomes or change them into positive ones.

Also keep in mind that the ratio of tokens on the board determines whether or not the characters advance at the end of the adventure.
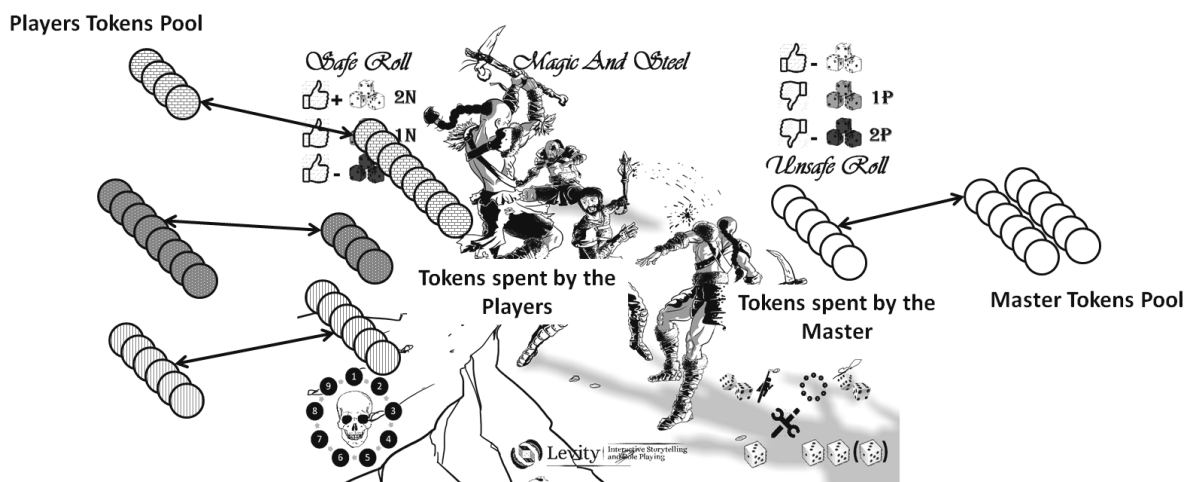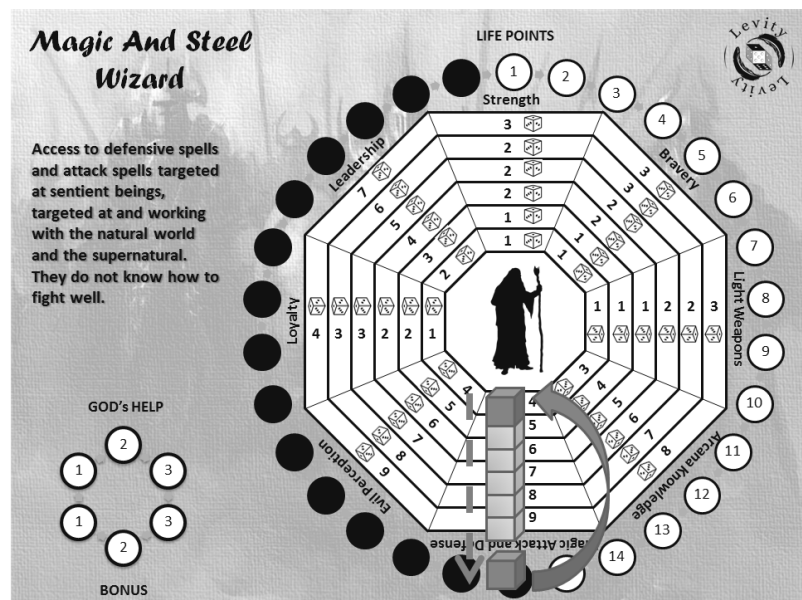
CONTINUOUS AND PERIODIC USE OF SKILLS

During your games, the GM might want to manage the player characters' skills in a more refined way. In particular, the tone of the story might make it necessary to highlight how certain abilities are exhausting to the characters, forcing them to rest. The GM may also want to simulate how other abilities need to be recharged. These two categories could include combat skills or casting spells. "*Magic and Steel*" solves the problem in a simple and intuitive way.

Place a token on the current level of the skill. After using the skill, move the token up of one level, then at every turn (or after any time unit you choose) move it again towards the highest level. When it leaves the last level the token moves back to the current level and you are free to use the skill again. In the example the Wizard has Magic Attack and Defense at the first level.

Magic And Steel
Wizard

Access to defensive spells and attack spells targeted at sentient beings, targeted at and working with the natural world and the supernatural. They do not know how to fight well.

LIFE POINTS

GOD's HELP

BONUS

GM: The sudden ghoul attack took you by surprise. You were able to kill it, but now your arm is injured.

Player A: My arm is aching.

GM: : We need to remember if you try to do something that requires that arm. It's in bad shape.

Player B: : I'm a Cleric. I have some herbs with me, which I use to heal him.

GM: Okay. [The GM accepts this without asking for a roll].

Player B: I dress the injury with some herbs and a bandage and perform a healing ritual.

GM: Okay, but for some time you won't be able to heal anybody. Put a counter on your sheet on the current level of the skill. We will agree on when to move it towards the border of the sheet, and when it leaves the board move it back to its current level. Until then you won't be able to heal anybody

With this rule, high-level characters will have a reduced recharge time for their skills.

BATTLE, HEALTH POINTS AND CRITICAL HITS

Now we come to an especially interesting chapter. Every old school game highlights finding a way to kill monsters. Magic and Steel deals with this in a simple and fast way.

Remember, **if you are playing in non-lethal mode** you don't need to manage Health Points, simply describe what happens, however you prefer, keeping in mind that the protagonists can't die.

You'll manage everything in a narrative way (And you will probably like it), this doesn't

You'll manage everything in a flexible and enjoyable narrative way. Non-lethal play doesn't mean that characters can't get injured or find themselves in a near-death situation-- they will face poison, venom, broken bones, and everything else, without ever receiving the final blow. It may appear strange never to risk losing your characters, but you will find that pushing them on regardless of their injuries can be interesting and amusing.
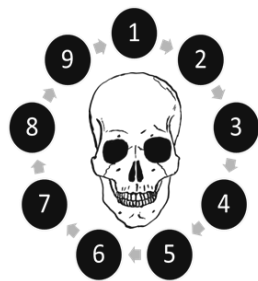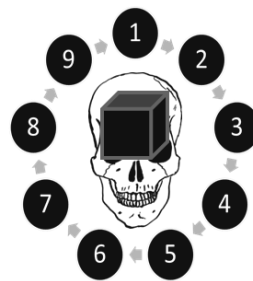
Non Lethal Mode   **Lethal Mode**

The following rules come into play in lethal mode

Remember to enrich the descriptions of battles by adding details on what happens, the characters' reactions, and ways they try to get an upper hand as they face their enemies.

A fight follows the same rules used for the other parts of the game: the GM describes the situation and the actions of the enemies, the players tell what their characters do and describe their goals.

You should never use simple sentences like "I hit it" or "I evade the attack," but you should always add dramatic details: "I cut one of the tentacles with a powerful blow!" or "with my shield I block the blow and the axe gets stuck in it".

Of course, the players and GM will not agree on the outcome of every battle .

If the conflict is well within the character's abilities, the player will need to make a Safe Roll to determine the outcome, or an Unsafe Roll if the situation is more dire, just as for other actions.

The Monster/Enemy sheet includes a chart showing the six possible outcomes of these rolls and their effects in terms of Health Points.

You win and… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose and… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)
-7 LP **-1 LP**	**-5 LP** **-2 LP**	**-3 LP** **-3 LP**	**-1 LP** **-4 LP**	**0 LP** **-5 LP**	**0 LP** **-7 LP**

After rolling the dice and describing the outcome, players and the GM adjust the Health Points on their respective sheets. Obviously, **you won't always lose Health Points during a battle**, and it is possible to escape damage by avoiding the heat of the action.

Characters die when they reach zero Health Points. The game master may allow clerics or mages to use spells to help party members recover Health Points, and potions, charms, and other arcane methods may be able to heal characters.

Level 1 to 3 1st Characteristic	Surprise Attack	M
Level 4 to 6 2nd Characteristic	Acid Canvas	M
Level 7 to 9 3rd Characteristic	Mind Reading	**M**

In addition to a generic descrip-tion of a monster or enemy, **the GM can bring the creature's peculiar skills into play**. These abilities help give a sense of how to describe the foe's ac-tions in order to make the battle more detailed and exciting. Remember, **a dark M icon means that the ability can be opposed only by a character with magic skills**.

For example, if a monster uses Perception of Enemies, a character without magic skills won't be able to detect or block it. In other words, a Warrior, Ranger, or Adventurer couldn't do anything, nor could a Cleric who can't use magic on non-humans.

Finally, during a battle a character can kill a foe with a critical roll. The critical roll can be used only after a "You win and. . . " outcome.

Subtract the number of Health Points for the success. If the number of Health Points remaining is lower than the maximum damage the characters can inflict with a single action, the players can spend a token to roll two dice against one die for the master. The difference between the results determines additional damage—including the possibility of death.

EXAMPLE
BATTLE AND CRITICAL HIT

GM: Despite losing a leg the giant spider scurries up the wall of the cave and hides in a fissure.

Player A:: I shoot an incendiary arrow in that direction, to make some light and see where it's hiding.

GM: The cave is large and dark. It'll be an Unsafe Roll. [The player follows the rules for an Unsafe Roll and the outcome is "You win, but. . . . " The GM decides not to remove any Health Points].

GM: You shoot your arrow and light up the fissure where the spider is hiding, but the fire scares it and the creature lunges out to attack again, followed by another one. The first spider—the injured one—shoots its acid web towards your eyes.

Player B:I put myself between them and cast a protective spell, creating a sphere of plasma.

GM: Uhm… It's an Unsafe Roll.

Player B: We buy a Safe Roll.

The players follow the rules for a Safe Roll, and the outcome is "You win, but. . . . " The game master checks the table on the spider's sheet to evaluate the damage.

You win and… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose and… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)
-7 LP **-1 LP**	**-5 LP** **-2 LP**	**-3 LP** **-3 LP**	**-1 LP** **-4 LP**	**0 LP** **-5 LP**	**0 LP** **-7 LP**

GM: The spider loses three Health Points, but so do you, how do you split the damage? I think the Cleric should be the one most affected. .   ------->

Player B:Okay, I take all the damage. Losing three I still have twelve left. Can we do a critical roll?

GM: No, to do it you need a "You win and . . ." and the spider must have seven Health Points or less. In that case you would roll two dice against one of mine, and the spider would take the difference in damage. If the spider gets to zero Health Points it dies and you would get to describe how.

Special Items

During their journeys, the characters may find wondrous and and magical items.

BONUS

Special items could be used to heal or increase one's strength in battle, or to grant bonuses for a wide range of other occasions. **If the item gives a bonus, the players will put a token on a bonus box for each special item they have, keeping in mind which item gives which bonus**. Each time that a special item is used, the player can roll an additional die .
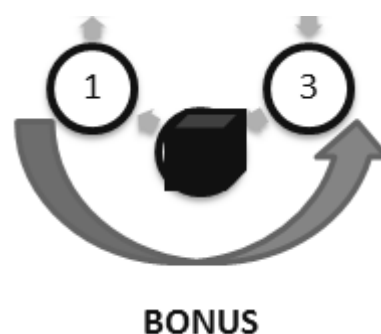
What about inventory? The game assumes that the characters are always equipped with any common item they could need, such weapons, armor, ropes, and so on. If you are in doubt about a particular item (e.g., an ancient tome that could help translate the mysterious inscription) you can resolve it with a Consistency or Aesthetic Veto.

EXAMPLE
SPECIAL ITEMS

The atmosphere is tense. The king doesn't want to give in and doesn't want to listen.

Player A: "Your Majesty, you must do it! The kingdom will fall!" **I show the Amulet of Karadan** .

GM: Hmm . . . still an Unsafe Roll. Do you buy a Safe Roll?

Player A: Yes and I also use the Amulet as a special item.

GM: Okay then. Make a Safe Roll and you have an additional die.

Synchro Mode

The game master has the option of activating synchro mode, which allows the players to move all the party as it was a single character. This will let the character save a lot of time in fiction and will help you in creating spectacular scenes.

To activate synchro mode, the GM places a counter on the corresponding symbol.

When the GM activates synchro mode, every character in the scene can be moved with the others and a single roll will be sufficient to resolve all actions.

With synchro mode active, the GM decides on Safe Rolls and Unsafe Rolls based on the values of all the relevant skills of the involved characters. The **character with the highest value for a relevant skill will roll the dice.**

Remember: synchro mode is very convenient for the players, for they will spend fewer tokens to achieve their goals while the GM spends the usual number of tokens.

EXAMPLE
SYNCHRO MODE

GM: Synchro mode is now active. You are surrounded by pirates, there isn't much hope for you.

Player A:I scream and run towards the rope to climb the flagpole!

Player B:I sprint towards them, grab a rope and run towards the stern.

Player C: It is time to cast an ice ball! I pull my hands out of my tunic and start chanting: the pirates are terrified.

In Synchro Mode, the GM considers the plausibility and difficulty of all of the proposed actions, and then calls for a Safe or Unsafe Roll.

GM: Um . . . I would have given you a Safe Roll, but you want to cast a spell and terrorize them at the same time . . . Unsafe Roll. Do you buy a Safe Roll?

Players: Yes, here are the tokens.

The players follow the rules for a Safe Roll and then narrate the outcomes. There are many possibilities because there are a lot of events to narrate. So a "You win, but . . . " could mean that some actions were successful, but another wasn't, or could mean that all are successful, but not one hundred percent successful.

Player versus player Conflicts

If a situation emerges where a player character wants to challenge another character in the party, the player describes what they want to do and pays a token. The GM decides if the action is a Safe or Unsafe Roll. **In the latter case, nobody can buy a Safe Roll.**

The game proceeds as described above, with the second player rolling the dice rather than the game master. The players will roll a number of dice equal to their skill levels, or one die against two or three dices for the other character if it is an unskilled action. The loser of the roll narrates the outcome.

ADVANCEMENT

At the end of the adventure count the players' tokens on the board and divide it by the number of the GM tokens still on the board. If the result is less than two, the characters can advance by increasing the level of a skill by one.

In the following drawing, the players have eight tokens on the board while the GM has three. Eight divided by three is greater than two, so the characters can't advance.

46
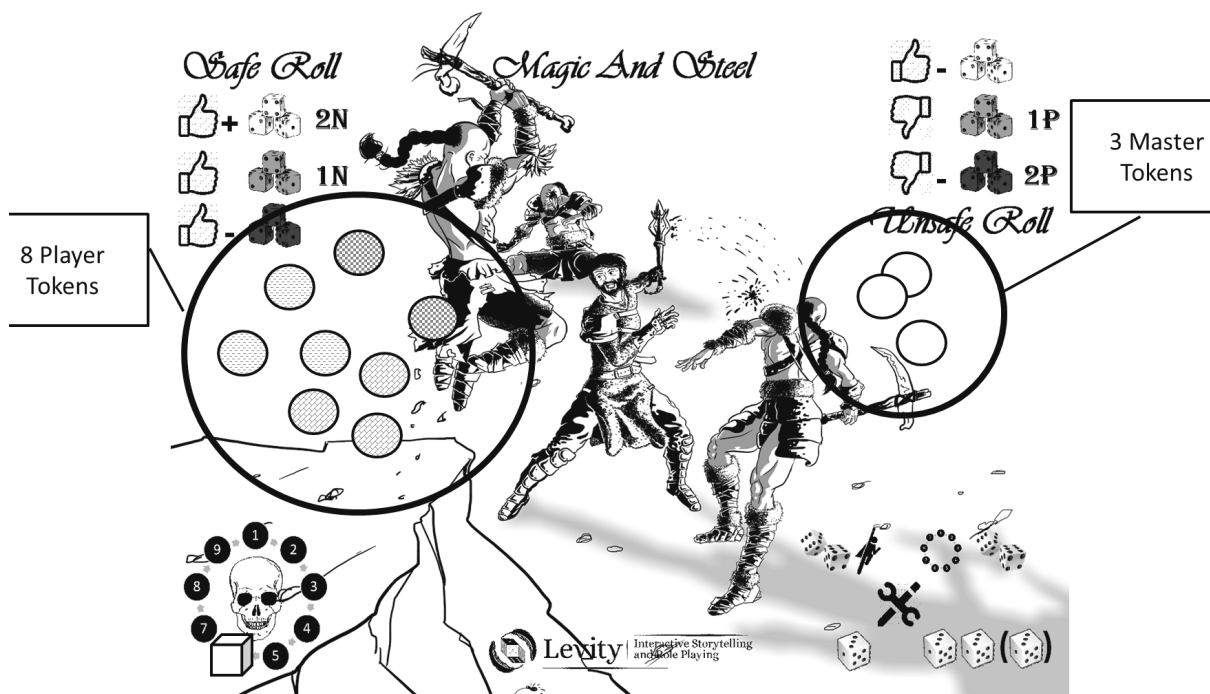
Part IV
CLASSES AND BESTIARY

"*Monstruous and abominable eyes they were, bestial and yet filled with pur-*

pose and with hideous delight, gloating over their prey trapped beyond all

hope of escape."

– J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Lord of the Rings"

Classes

The basic rules include six character classes. You can personalize these or use them as inspirations for new classes, but try them in a game first to get a feel for how they work. The classes reflect different abilities and are balanced in terms of their magical skills, strengths, and social skills, but you can create new ones to reflect your campaign and interests. There are no limits!

The 6 classes are: **Warrior, Ranger, Adventurer, Cleric, Arcanist and Wizard**.

Each class has eight skills. Four skills are common to all characters and are divided into party skills (Loyalty and Leadership) and personal skills (Strength and Bravery).

Loyalty: indicates how loyal the character is to the objectives and choices of the party. It grows over time, bringing the party together. Nevertheless, the GM can use low levels of loyalty to sow doubts in the party and compromise its bonds, and the skill comes into play when the GM wants to tempt one of the characters to betray the party, or when events and tensions undermine the cohesion of the party. It can also be used to determine who is more loyal to the party and its objectives, or who is prone to question the direction of the group.

Leadership: reflects the individual character's standing within the party. When disagreements about a course of action take place, the GM needs to take into account the leadership levels of the characters when asking for a roll. Leadership can be used to resolve arguments within the party. The adventurers are more likely to follow the character with the highest leadership value. However, other characters can try to use their leadership skills to challenge this presumptive commander .

The personal skills are **Strength** and **Bravery**.

Strength is a broad indicator of the strength and endurance of the character, as well as their prowess in purely physical actions.

Bravery represents courage and the strength of will needed to face impossible odds. It can be used also as a social skill, representing the ability to relate to other people.

Strength and Bravery are innate skills. The first covers most physical actions. The second can be used every time the GM needs to consider a character's ability to face unknown or frightening situations. The remaining four skills are specific to each class .

NOTES ON THE COMMON SKILLS

"Loyalty" can be used by the GM when it is needed to tempt one of the characters to betray the party, or when the cohesion of the party gets undermined. It can also be used between party members, to determine who is more loyal to the party and its objectives, or who is prone to question them.

"Leadership" can be used to solve situations in which the characters can't find a solution to an argument. In that case is plausible that the party follows the character with the highest leadership value. However, the GM can use it to challenge the character with the highest value in order to undermine the party's stability.

"Strength" and **"Bravery"** are intuitive skills. The first is to be used for each "physical" action. The second can be used every time in which it is necessary to consider the capability of a character to be the first to face unknown or frightening situations, while the others aren't ready to face them.

WARRIOR

Light Weapons: includes small melee weapons, like daggers, clubs or hatchets .

Heavy Weapons: includes swords or similar melee weapons, but also more destructive weapons like two handed swords, poleaxes or axes.

Throwing Weapons: covers ranged attack, be it with knives, darts, or arrows

Defense: reflects the ability to hold your ground and defend yourself or others even if it means risking your own life.
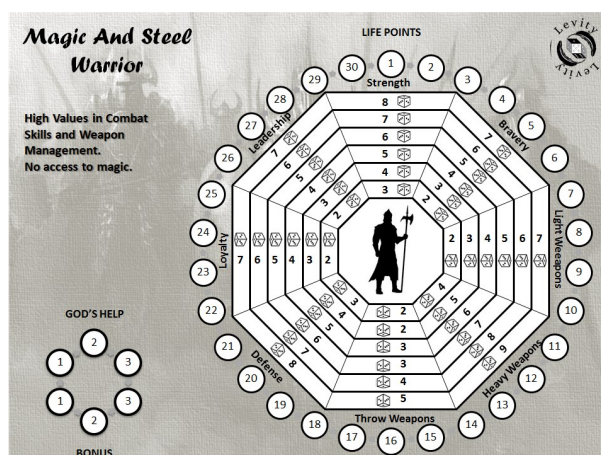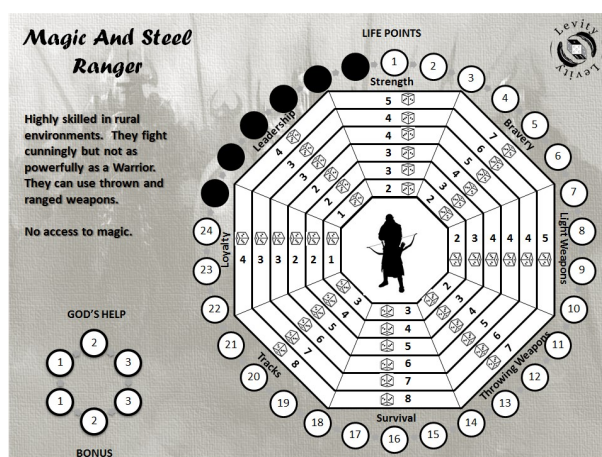

Ranger

Light Weapons: includes small melee weapons.

Throwing Weapons: includes every type of ranged weapon; Rangers quickly improve in accuracy.

Survival: reflects the ability to endure hostile environments and survive over long periods of time.

**Tracks:** allows the character to find and follow any kind of tracks left by any creature.

ADVENTURER

Light Weapons: An adventurer is able to use different light weapons, this skill increases with experience, but it will never reach the same level of a Warrior's or a Ranger's.

Diplomacy: one of the Adventurer's most important skills, allowing them to negotiate and achieve their ends without violence

Socialise: gives the character the ability to understand others (even strangers) and befriend them; it is an Adventurer's best skill.

Tracks: lets the Adventurer find signs of a creature's passage .
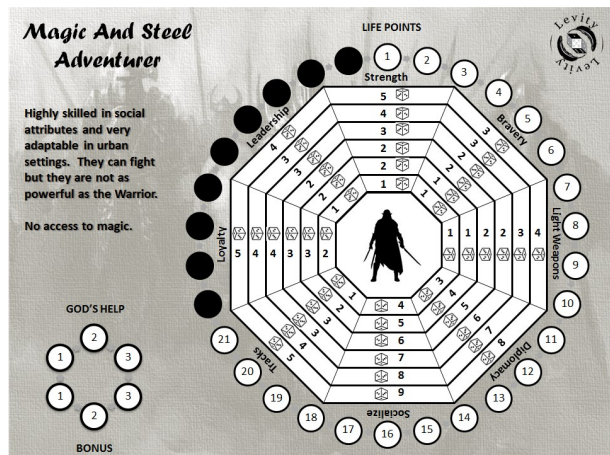
Cleric

Light Weapons: A cleric is able to use different light weapons, this skill increases with experience.

Magic Healing: allows the Cleric to heal physical and psychological wounds, **but can be used only on humans**

Magic Defense and Attack: skill allows the character to cast defensive and offensive spells **on humans**.

Perception of Evil:grants the ability to perceive the presence of nearby enemies or monsters .
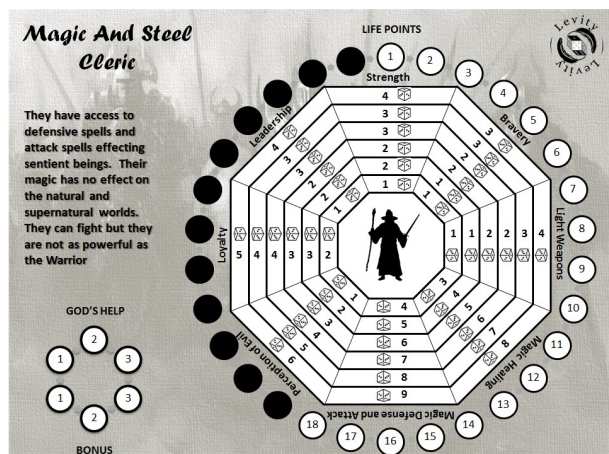
Arcanist

Light Weapons: An arcanist is able to use different light weapons, this skill increases with experience, but it will never reach the same level of a Warrior's or a Ranger's.

Empathy with Nature: Nature allows the character to commune with nature, "talking" with animals, trees, and rocks.

Magic Defense and Attack: gives the Arcanist the ability to cast defensive and offensive spells on **non-human living creatures** .

Perception of Evil:is the ability to perceive the presence of enemies or monsters .
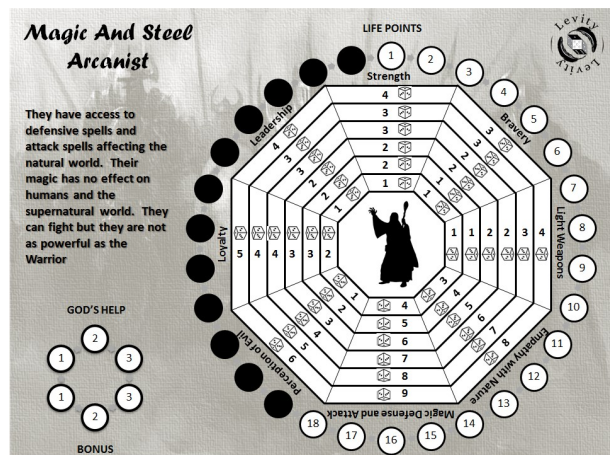
Wizard

Light Weapons: A Wizard is able to use different light weapons, this skill increases with experience, but it will never be the most important.

Arcane Knowledge: reflects the Wizard's unique ability to decipher, interpret, and understand magical secrets and artifacts.

Magic Defense and Attack: is one of the character's most powerful skills, **affecting mundane and supernatural creatures** .

Perception of Evil: It is the ability to perceive the presence of enemies or monsters in the vicinity of the character. It is one of Wizard's most powerful skills.
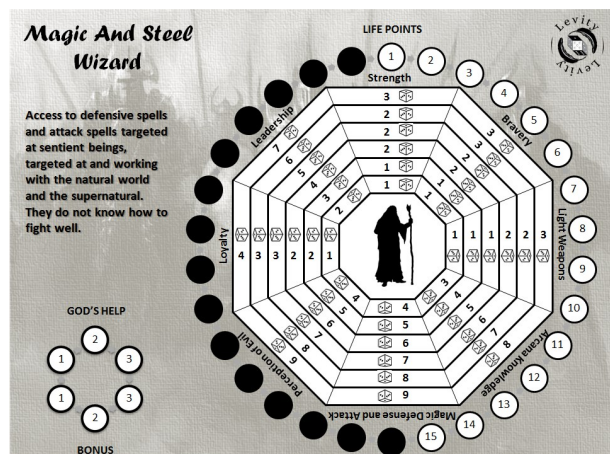
Bestiary

It is not my intention to create a long list of creatures. The objective of Magic and Steel is to bring a new perspective to old adventure modules, where you will find all of the monsters and enemies you need.

The Personalization chapter gives guidance in how to make new creatures and adapt them from other game systems. However, this manual includes sample monsters you can use in your own adventures.

In the following image, you can see a sample white sheet for an enemy. You should remember that the level and initial Health Points depend on the adventure's difficulty level, so they are variable as the combat damage scale (table in the lower part of the sheet).

Monster / Encounter	Level (L)	Initial Life Points	Current Life Points
	Can't be higher than adventure difficulty level	(Level) d6	
Level 1 to 3 1st Characteristic			M
Level 4 to 6 2nd Characteristic			M
Level 7 to 9 3rd Characteristic			M

You win and… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose and… Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)

Some of examples of level-dependent skills will help you create your own. You can modify these, or even create monsters of the same species with different skills. Magic abilities are indicated with an asterisk; remember that these can only be opposed by Magic Attack and

Defense skills. The Kingdom indicates if a creature is subject to Cleric's or Arcanist's spells.

These examples show the essential elements in the creation and use of monsters.

Name	Kingdom	Skills (Example)
Giant Spider	Animal	Surprise attack – Corrosive Web – Read minds(*)
Zombie	Human/ Supernatural	Stealth – Contagious bite – Group attack
Vampire	Human/ Supernatural	Attack from above – Weakening bite – Persuasion(*)
Ancient Dragon	Human/ Supernatural/ Animal	Improvvise flight – Stunning Scream(*).– Deathly flames
Goblin	Human/Animal	Bow attack – Hold your ground – Quick blade
Witches	Human/ Supernatural	Read minds(*) – Control Nature (*) – Mind Control (*)
Underground creature	Animal	Dark sight – Stealth attack – Mimetic
Golem	Supernatural/ Human/Mineral	Bind loyalty – Unstoppable attack – Resistance
Cultist	Human	Fanatic – Read minds (*) – Suicidal attack
Blob	Vegetable/ Mineral	Invisibility – Choke – Dissolve
Infernal Creature	Supernatural	Mind attack(*) – Eat memories (*) – Possess (*)
Sorcerer	Human/ Supernatural	Magic attack(*) – Levitate (*) – Mind Control (*)

Part V
Personalization
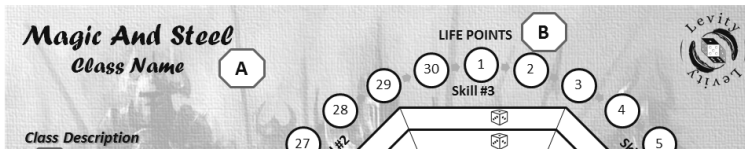
"*One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,*

One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them,

In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie."

– J.R.R. Tolkien, "The Lord of the Rings"

How to create new classes

If you need more than the six classes I presented, you are free to create ad-hoc classes for your adventure or for the setting you are writing. When you create a new class use the white sheet as follows:

A. **Name the new class**. You should remember that the default race is Human. If you are not playing human beings feel free to change the sheet's elements.

B. **Decide the number of Health Points**. A character has a maximum of 30 Health Points, and only the hardiest characters will reach this level.

C. **Describe the class**. It The description is very important in determining which actions are possible for the character.

D. **Define all eight skills**. I I recommend creating two social skills and two personal skills common to all classes and four skills specific to each class. Obviously, you can change these numbers if it suits your purposes.

E. **Define the dice progression for the character's advancement** . You You should choose at most two or three skills that can reach level nine (the highest rating possible), and two or three skills that can reach level four or five, with the remaining skills having lower maximum values.

F. **Choose an Image** representative of the class and put it in the center of the sheet

Your character is now ready.

Adapting Classes From Other Systems

"*Magic and Steel*" can be used to adapt characters from other systems. As an example, I will show how to create a character sheet for a new style of Cleric, based on the one found in Simon Washbourne's Tombs and Terrors. The class's name and description can be taken directly from the original game's rules

Cleric stats:
Prime attribute: Wisdom
Hit Die: D8
Starting money: 3D6x10gp
Armour: Any
Weapons: Club, mace, flail, quarterstaff, warhammer, sling
Abilities: Spell Casting, Undead Turning, Establish Temple.

Comparing the Cleric to other classes gives a rough idea of their potential Health Points. Looking at the hit die of each class, I see that d8 is an intermediate value. In Magic and Steel, the weakest class has 15 Health Points and the strongest has 30 Health Points, so I think 18 Health Points seems like a reasonable number for the new Cleric.

At this point the sheet should look like this

Now I have to assign eight skills. Starting with the party skills, I decide to use **Loyalty** and **Leadership**. For the personal skills I use **Charm** (absent in the original sheet) and **Wisdom** (present in the original sheet).

For class-specific skills, I go for two combat skills (**Heavy Weapons** and **Mind Control**) and two to reflect the Cleric's unique abilities (**Repel Undead** and **Magic Healing**). I decide that only the last one can reach the maximum value and then I fill the progression values of all the skills.

Finally, I add an image for the character.

Now the sheet should look like this:
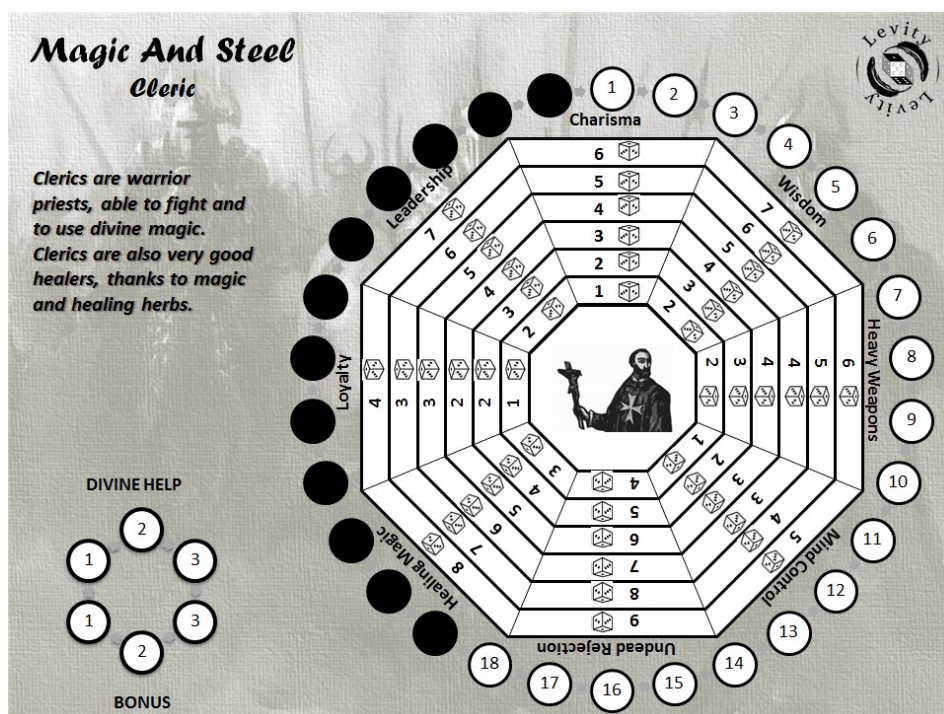
Remember that in "*Magic and Steel*" it isn't necessary to describe all of the skills in detail since a lot of actions can be solved without having any skill and for some of them you can still buy a Safe Roll

CREATING AND ADAPTING MONSTERS

Let's see how you can create a monster for your adventure. In the figure you can see all the steps needed to create an enemy.

A. **Choose a Name**

B. **Choose the level** of the monster (it can't be higher than the adventure's level).

C. **Determine initial Health Points** by rolling a number of six-sided dice equal to the monster's level and adding up the results.

Monster / Encounter	Level (L)	Initial Life Points	Current Life Points
A	Can't be higher than adventure difficulty level / B	(Level) d6 / C	
Level 1 to 3 / 1st Characteristic			M
Level 4 to 6 / 2nd Characteristic	D		M
Level 7 to 9 / 3rd Characteristic			M

You win and Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)	You win Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)	You win, but Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)	You win, but Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)	You lose Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)	You lose and... Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)
E					

D. **Choose the three specific skills for the monster** (one every three levels) and if those skills are magic or not.

E. **Determine the damage** for each possible Safe Roll and Unsafe Roll outcome

In the example you can see a giant spider created for an adventure with a difficulty level of 7. By using the bestiary and following the steps, I decide that the Read Minds skill should be magical (image on the left).

Monster / Encounter	Level (L)	Initial Life Points	Current Life Points
Giant Spider	Can't be higher than adventure difficulty level **7**	(Level) d6 **28**	
Level 1 to 3 / 1st Characteristic	Surprise Attack		M
Level 4 to 6 / 2nd Characteristic	Acid Canvas		M
Level 7 to 9 / 3rd Characteristic	Mind Reading		M

You win and Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)	You win Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)	You win, but Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)	You win, but Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)	You lose Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)	You lose and... Damage to player(s) Damage to monster(s)
E					

Remember, you don't need to worry about the monster's level, Health Points, and damage done for different rolls if you are playing a non-lethal game

When assigning damage values, I suggest starting with the extremes, in other words, the best

outcome for the party ("You win and . . . ") and for the best outcome for the monster ("You fail and . . ."). **When in doubt, use the monster's level as the damage for the worst outcome for the players.**

In the example, the character will lose at least 1 Health Point even in the best case, this could be a lethal encounter!

You win and... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose and... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)
-7 LP -1 LP					0 LP -7 LP

After choosing the extremes you can fill the rest of the table, distributing the values in a gradual way. Here is an example:

You win and... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose and... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)
-7 LP -1 LP	-5 LP -2 LP	-3 LP -3 LP	-1 LP -4 LP	0 LP -5 LP	0 LP -7 LP

And this is the complete sheet for the Giant Spider

Monster / Encounter	Level (L)	Initial Life Points	Current Life Points
Giant Spider	Can't be higher than adventure difficulty level 7	(Level) d6 28	
Level 1 to 3 1st Characteristic	Surprise Attack		M
Level 4 to 6 2nd Characteristic	Acid Canvas		M
Level 7 to 9 3rd Characteristic	Mind Reading		M

You win and... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You win, but... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)	You lose and... Damage to Monster(s) Damage to Player(s)
-7 LP -1 LP	-5 LP -2 LP	-3 LP -3 LP	-1 LP -4 LP	0 LP -5 LP	0 LP -7 LP

ADAPTING ADVENTURES

When you want to play but don't have an adventure ready for Magic and Steel (either one you've created on one published on the M&S website), you can simply use one of the many adventures made for other games. Once you've chosen one you must decide:

1. The adventure's difficulty level.

2. If the adventure is "lethal" or not.

3. If you want to use the standard classes or if you want to create new classes.

4. How to adapt monsters and NPCs (you can do it "on the fly" while playing, so you don't have to waste time for monsters you aren't going to face. Always keep a white sheet ready, though, since you never know when you could need a new enemy).

That's it. For anything else trust the system and practice with it. Then remember that it's the decisions made by players that make the adventure unforgettable and the numbers on a monster's sheet.

Obviously, since the characters can advance, you can play long campaigns with Magic and Steel. The system supports long-term play without any problem. In the unlucky case of a character's death you can create a new one. The new character will have the same skill values as the previous character. The players will only need to explain new figure's entrance into the story.

ADAPTING SETTINGS

The last step needed to reach the full potential of Magic and Steel consists in adapting an entire setting to the system. To do this, **remember that the system is calibrated to push a group of heroes through a series of dangerous adventures in which they will face a wide range of obstacles. Usually they will be able to do it, but sometimes they will need help from their gods.**

It could be easy to die, especially at higher levels. If the setting you want to use reflects this tone, then you will be able to adapt it very quickly. You need to identify the classes you want to use and adapt them as explained above, then do the same for non-player characters and creatures. At this point you only need to try some adventures to see if everything works.

I'm sure it does.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND CREDITS

"*I might find somewhere where I can finish my book.*

I have thought of a nice ending for it:

and he lived happily ever after to the end of his days."

– **J.R.R. Tolkien**, "The Lord Of The Rings"

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