

September
26th, 2016

Hireling's Handguide

Credits/Blurb

This is the first of two documents that are required to play the game. This one is all about the basic information that all Players would use during play, the second document has Dunarch (referee) specific rules and mechanics.

If you have any feedback that you would like me to look over, please send me an email (me@thomas-novosel.com). With the subject line "Hireling's Handguide: Feedback".

The text here was written by Thomas Novosel and is a playtest version of the final rules that will be put into the book.

ENJOY! And keep in mind that some stuff will probably change before the book is released.

Introductory Text

If you are going to be playing as one of the unfortunate hired hands who have to scurry out of this mess, grab this booklet.

Up ahead you will find the rules of the game that you need to know and reference while playing, the rules for creating your character and some ideas for expanding the game while you play.

"Here you are, your bosses are dead on the floor, blood pooling under their cloaks and mighty swords. A shattered wand is spread like used toothpicks all around the big bad guy. They led you in, they defeated great monsters and solved complex puzzles to reach this, the treasure room. **THE RUMORED FORTUNE!**

Gold, jewels and the most magnificent fabrics; and also gold. But, they could not have been prepared for what would wait here, protecting such delicious riches. They fought valiantly, you cowered behind a rock, they were hit with mighty fists, and you hid behind a rock, and they had to suffer the blasts of explosive magicks! And they died just as the boss monster did, but you survived, hidden behind a rock.

But what now? You have gold in your packs and have buried your heroes, tears have been shed (maybe), and now you must flee back from whence you came. You must run away as fast as you can back to the entrance.

Hopefully the path out is easier when you blindly flail your way forward!”

The Game

In this game you play as a hired hand with a specific and singular skill. Torch-bearers carry and light torches, trap-pokers stab at traps to spring them so that heroes are not wounded by the nefarious devices in the dungeon.

But your heroes are gone, and now you have all the loot. But to begin your life of luxury back at the dirt farms and grub villages, you first have to escape this dungeon.

A dungeon that you have been through before, but a dangerous dungeon nonetheless.

First up, take a gander at the Rules of Play and then move on to the Characters section to decide which moldy boots you will fill (if you have boots at all).

Rules of Play

The Dungeon Architect (abbreviated as Dunarch) will have some stuff to say before you begin play, listen along, nod your head, and when he asks a question blurt out compelling and odd answers. He'll know what to do with your confusing words. Also, keep in mind that if your answer is very stereotypical fantasy in tone, the Dunarch will give you a flail point, note down how many you acquire during this process (unless the Dunarch brought props, then clap for your Dunarch at his preparedness to play).

When you enter a room!

After doing everything you need to do in the current room to move ahead, someone should look for a way out. **When you find a “way out” or you enter the next room**, that player must choose:

- ...to name this room. If you need some ideas, take a look at the dungeon room names table at the back of this booklet.
- ...introduce a problem. This problem must be described as either a thing seen, something smelt, sound heard or even a taste.

If the Player chose to answer one, then the other remaining choice goes to whoever hasn't entered a room first yet (or who has been the first to enter a room the least). Either way, the questions should be answered in the same order as they are presented.

This is not as you remember it

When you are in a room, you may be presented with challenges or wild descriptions by the Dunarch (without him/her doing so after being prompted by the rules). If you think that what you are hearing

doesn't sound just as you remember it, give the Dunarch one flail point to be able to expand on what they said. Start with "yes, but...".

Players cannot do this to another player's description though.

You cannot give one flail point to "yes, but..." your way directly out of the dungeon. You also cannot give up a flail point to make a monster or hazard less dangerous, but you always can make it *more* dangerous.

Doing your thing (sometimes)

Sometimes you want to do something that you are kind of good at, some would say you specialise in that area of activities. **A Character doesn't have to roll a die to do something that is blatantly related to (or under) their specialty** (your specialty is determined by which character you are playing as). If it is the first time you are doing a specific action, tell everyone exactly why you think it is a good idea. The next time you do that same action, you don't have to tell them again, just describe how it looks to everyone at the table.

[[sidebar]] Example: ... [[sidebar]]

However, **if you are trying to apply your specialty to an unrelated action** (like a Trap-Poker pulling debris out of the way using a rope), the Dunarch will ask you a question:

- Tell us all about that one time you did this exact same thing, in a different place and how you did it perfectly.
- Tell a tale of someone who has done this before! It has to have a hero and an obstacle, make it quick!
- Describe your technique and who taught you how to do this. Was he/she a good teacher?
- Describe to everyone the worst case scenario, how you failing to do this end terribly for everyone around. Now tell us how you pull it off even with all this pressure?

When you answer the question asked, you do what you set out to do successfully.

If you opt to fail at a task that is within your specialty, choose a question and then answer it:

- How did this go bad really fast? It just escalated from "bad" to "OH MY! THE HEAVEN'S WHY DO THEY CURSE MY NAME?"
- At what point did time slow down and you stopped thinking that it would work?
- Has this failed before? And what made you think it would have worked this time? Before reality came crashing down to tell you "No".

When you answer the question and put yourself into immediate danger or the Dunarch does, grab a flail point.

If you don't answer a question when the rules say you have to, or refuse to answer any question the rules ask of you, then that character is immediately thrown into life threatening danger; the Dunarch will describe it and you will lose 1d6+2 gold.

From this danger you will need rescuing to be able to act again. Whoever saves that character can take up to 3 flail points (Player's choice) from the person they rescued. If no one saves you or even attempts to save you, roll a d6; on a 1-3 you lose another 1d6+2 gold, if you die you die. If you live after losing that gold, you crawl away from danger somehow. The Player will start with a sentence, then each other Player will add on to this sentence using "yes, and..." and finally the GM will conclude the harrowing escape with a "yes, but..." addition. On a 4 to 6, you are missing from the party, you are pulled into the darkness and are unsaveable. Make a new character.

Doing something that isn't your thing

You can always **try to do something that is within the ability of an ordinary adventurer, but is outside your specialty**. Just a roll a single six-sided die; on a 5 or 6 you do the best a hireling with a very specialized set of skills can do and succeed at the task, the Dunarch will tell you what this means. If you however, roll anything other than a 5-6, you have failed, stumbled, tripped, flubbed or just plain stunk at what you tried to do. Failing results in wild consequence, the Dunarch will ask everyone else around the table how this could go wrong and may pick from the suggestions, then elaborate and you will lose 2d6 gold.

When you are rolling as described directly above, check to see if you have an **Advantage or a Disadvantage** which applies (these are both found in your character's description). If this is a situation where you would have an advantage, roll two times and use the higher of the rolls. If you would naturally have a disadvantage in this situation, roll two times and use the lower of the rolls.

When **you go to do something that is definitely outside your specialty**, you can always spend 2 flail points to automatically succeed at the task. Describe to everyone how against all odds you blunder your way to victory!

Giving Aid

If you wish to aid someone in their task (which is outside their specialty), you must first describe to everyone around the table exactly how you are qualified to help? And how you are specifically assisting? Then, they can roll their dice and add a +1 to whichever die is used. If they fail however, you suffer the same consequences of failure as the person you are helping.

How Combat works

Healthy amounts of Gold

All Hirelings start with 20 gold, whenever you are attacked you lose a six sided die worth of gold (unless you are losing gold because of a rule previously described). When you run out of gold, you die and you have to choose (introduce) a new character. This new Character starts with half as much gold as your previous Character started with.

So if your first started with 20, your second will start with 10 and your third with 5. When someone loses a third character, the exit of the dungeon comes into sight. Your fourth character is the same as your first,

think of this as a shocking twist of events. *Tell everyone vaguely how you got from where you died/ disappeared to here?*

Dicing

When your Character dies due to the perils and dangers of “this place”, describe how your death benefits everyone else. How does your sacrifice help your friends? Did you distract the Grey trolls with your mangled corpse long enough so the rest of the party could escape this room? Does your terrible death help anyone out and into the next room by coincidence?

Or, you may opt to hinder your friends progress! If you decide to take someone down with you, spend 3 flail points and the hazards that have ensnared you with their nefarious clutches reach for your friend as well and the ally of your choice loses 1d6+2 gold. This is generally considered a dick move, but sometimes it makes sense.

Reviving

If your Character is dead, before you describe their death and if you are particularly attached, beg your buddies to give up a item. Another member of the party can destroy one of their items to allow their friend to have 8 gold to continue onward with. This item cannot be replaced and is lost forever! But, you survive, so that is cool too.

Introducing

When your Character dies, you get a new one. When the party enters a new room, introduce yourself and tell everyone why you were left behind on the way in or why you weren't with them in the treasure room (answer these questions instead of the standard Character build questions). Once you do this, you can play as normal.

Characters

Listed ahead and forward is each of the various Characters you may choose to play as.

[[I plan to add more, but these will do for now.]]

You may play as a...

- Trap-Poker; disarming traps is essentially all you do.
- Torchbearer; you are a master of lighting torches and holding them high to illuminate the room
- Peasant; you literally carry things in raggy bags (not too different from potato sacks)
- Chronicler; with a pen in one hand you have written all that you have seen thus far!
- Fool; amuse your friends! Make them less upset that a spear has skewered them!
- Itinerant Monk; a well traveled philosopher! What is, the itinerant monk?
- "Slop" Chef; the food you make is guaranteed to be at least edible!

If you are grabbing a second character because your last has perished, you can play the same type as someone who has already died or in your party at the moment.

Heck, it could be fun to play a group of torchbearers being led by a chef!

Circle one of your chosen character's build questions. If at any time you answer or reveal the great truth behind this build question. You gain 2 flail points as well as 4 gold. Try to make this an exciting or sappy emotional moment. Your friends may move along as if it's awkward as awkward can be, but that's okay. You said what you had to say and tried your best.

Trap-Poker

Equipment: *a long metal stick* and the Player's choice of either *a rope* or *a sprung bear trap* (but not both).

Specialty: using a long metal stick and/or a rope to find, disable, disarm and set off traps.

Advantage: using other tools to do Trap-Poker stuff that isn't your original long metal stick and rope. As well as using long stick like objects to get the attention of all creatures.

Disadvantage: running away from a monster or dangerous situation, you have the compulsion to poke the ground which slows you down to a snail's pace!

Build:

- Why aren't you an adventurer? What held you back or prevented you from being the "big guy"?
- Besides the promise of pay, why did you come here? What makes this fun? Explain.
- What makes you the best person to stab the ground for traps? Is it experience?

- Why did your “Hero” think a Trap-Poker was necessary on this delve? Did you come in handy at all on the way in?

Torchbearer

Equipment: a *bundle of torches* and either a *purse of matches* or a *lighter that is low on fuel* (but not both)

Specialty: using a bundle of torches to light the way and reveal what is hidden in the dark. Or to set flammable things on fire with matches or a lighter.

Advantage: pursuing other methods or engineering a way to bring light to the room around you.

Disadvantage: the unknown terrifies you just as the dark does, when attempting to discern the value or properties of a strange item or place, you may just set it on fire out of frustration.

Build:

- What prevented you from becoming an adventurer? Did you play with fire too much? Was it the whole “scared of darkness thing”? Explain.
- What life changing event, made you into a lover of light and flames?
- Why did your “Hero” think a Torchbearer was necessary on this delve? Did you come in handy at all on the way in?

Peasant

Equipment: a *sack full of rags and empty potato bags* and either a live *chicken* or an *ear horn* (but not both).

Specialty: concealing and carrying objects using your various bags as well as drawing the attention of a dangerous enemy/monster/thing with your loud and uneducated grunting.

Advantage: concealing objects as well as yourself behind various furniture and formations found in the room. And distracting enemies/monsters/things without putting yourself in harm's way.

Disadvantage: trying to sneak past anything with ears is hard to do. You breathe every so loudly when you are stressed. Hopefully no one hears!

Building:

- How did you get cheated out of your fortune so that you would have to live your life as a peasant folk?
- You have an odd obsession with a simple thing, something that would lure into danger just to obtain it (no matter how broken or useless it appeared) tell everyone what this object is. And show everyone why you value it later during play.

- Did your “Hero” *really* want you to come along? Did you beg for this assignment? For this ridiculous and very danger-deadly job? Tell everyone right now.

Chronicler

Equipment: *a number of scrolls* and *an expensive pen*, as well as *a moldy journal* containing the ramblings of Gortox the Destructor or Jillion the Magnificent (choose which legendary persons writings are in your journal).

Specialty: using the knowledge written within your scrolls to find the best way to appease a monster or uncover the truth within a confusing situation.

Advantage: If a disagreement or argument comes down to sheer knowledge of the unknown, dangers and places in the world, you are more capable than most.

Disadvantage: Having a inquisitive nature is not always great, it often means that you ask inappropriate questions at inappropriate times just so you can have more complete notes on your travels.

Building:

- What is the author of the journal like? How did they get their name and why do you have the journal?
- What is your favorite book of all time? What is its title and what is it about? Tell everyone and gush about the author for a second. (Make up a book that would be published in a fantasy setting such as this.)
- Did your “Hero” have a very good reason for bringing you along? How did they pitch this specific job? Tell everyone right now.

Fool

Equipment: a pouch of ridiculous and colorfully harmless props, choose 3: a *plushy purple axe*, a *liquid spraying flower* (without any liquid at the moment), a *animal mask* which is hard to look at, a *belt covered in small metal bells*, or a *color clashing patterned hat*.

Specialty: to amuse and distract people with harmless shenanigans, usually involving props from the prop pouch.

Advantage: Making people laugh is your talent. No matter how dark the day is, a joke is always brewing.

Disadvantage: There are times when jokes are just inappropriate. And you just don’t seem to know when that is.

Building:

- How do you feel about your lot in life? Was it hard for people to take you seriously? Show everyone later during play.
- Do you have a classic or show stopping act? Tell everyone right now. And maybe show them later.
- Why did your “Hero” think you’d be useful on this expedition? What joke amused your “Hero” so much they should bring you?

Itinerant Monk

Equipment: you have a pair of *silent slippers*, a *long flowing robe* four sizes too large and your choice of either: an ever eternal *slightly glad facial expression* or a full and *incomprehensible knowledge of the inner workings of the universe*.

Specialty: explaining the importance and full gravity of a situation. Being able to bore those who have no prior appreciation for finer philosophical conversation.

Advantage: being silent and cautious in how you disturb objects around you as you move. When you want to make no noise, you are good at holding your tongue.

Disadvantage: when you want to be loud. You are too soft in speech for most people to hear you, you must urge yourself in an impolite manner to have any hope of communicating with the deaf or friends who are fleeing.

Building:

- What thoughts are always in your head and what topics must you always insist on discussing?
- Where did you train and learn of such high knowledge? Where is this college/academy/dojo and what makes it hard for others to understand why people would go there?
- Why did your “Hero” think you’d be useful on this expedition? What troubled their soul which meant you had to be brought along? Tell everyone now.

“Slop” Chef

Equipment: you have a long *soup spoon*, a rusted *kettle with last night's leftovers* within and your choice of either a single *plump dead chicken* or an *apron* that says “Best at Cooking”.

Specialty: preparing food so that it does not harm any who consume it, you have just right pot to remove those ill effects and the knowhow to do so right.

Advantage: preparing food for monsters. To make them sleepy, content or enraged upon consumption.

Disadvantage: you are a little high and mighty with your craft and your big head gets in the way. You are never modest, and really should learn to give credit where credit is due. But, the only reason you’ve been successful thus far was because everyone was properly nourished...right? Right?

Building:

- What recipe have you been unable to learn or master or get “just right”? How does it haunt your cooking dreams?
- What popular magical chef do you take influence from? Make a person up and tell everyone their catch phrase.
- Why did your “Hero” think you’d be useful on this expedition? What was there favorite food that you took extra care in preparing?

The Dunarch's Manual

Credits/Blurb

This is the second of two unedited documents that are required to play the game. This one is all about the Dunarch's (referee) specific rules and mechanics.

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What is a Dunarch?

The word Dunarch is a mash together of the words Dungeon and Architect. The Dunarch's main role in this game is to remind and prompt Players to answer the necessary questions that must be answered according to the rules in the Hireling's Handguide section (which you should read before play). Your secondary job is to take whatever information is given by the Players to influence the construction of the dungeon as you play.

If someone talks about the history of slimey ghost monsters and everyone seems to latch onto the idea, bring them up at some point or reference them when explaining the look of a room.

What is this section of the rules?

If you are just being a Player, you don't need to read any further! But if you are going to be running the game as the Dunarch, read ahead!

The Dunarch's Manual contains all the specific rules and reactions to certain rules that you need to know to play, as well as details what prep should be done before playing this game and detailing a couple pre-made dungeon templates to use during play.

Preparations for Play

Before you can play this game, you (the Dunarch) must do the following:

- Read through the entirety of this game's text, make yourself familiar with its rules.
- Have a couple of six-sided dice ready, most of the time you will only need to roll one. But it is usually easier to have multiple at the table so that you don't have to pass them around when they are needed.
- Print Out the separate character sheets which detail each hireling types abilities. Also, print out multiple copies of the rules Cheater Sheet (one for each player, so that they may reference it during play).
- Come up with a list of room names (see Stocking the Dungeon, pg XX).
- Bring some scraps of paper and pencils for tracking flail points and gold.

If you are going to play at some point but are unsure of when or where or with who, then also keep these in mind when you throw this game into your backpack for impromptu sessions:

- In the back of this book there are a couple of premade dungeons with maps. Look over one to see how they work, then when you go to play you have some images bouncing through your head already to draw on.

If you want to impress your friends and even the most adventurous individuals, you could bring different colored glass stones to keep track of flail points, and use beans for keeping track of gold (you could also just paint some poker chips, but this is all just *luxurious* prop suggestions).

[[The Cheater Sheet and Character sheets have not been made as of yet.]]

Starting the Game

Every game session begins somewhere, in the case of this game every session begins the same. The hirelings are all together in the treasure room, the big boss monster is dead, the hireling's employers are dead and now the hirelings must flee with the riches they now have. This is described using the Premise text;

"Here you are, your bosses are dead on the floor, blood pooling under their cloaks and mighty swords. A shattered wand is spread like used toothpicks all around the big bad guy. They led you in, they defeated great monsters and solved complex puzzles to reach this, the treasure room. **THE RUMORED FORTUNE!**

Gold, jewels and the most magnificent fabrics. But, they could not have been prepared for what would wait here, protecting such delicious riches. They fought valiantly, you cowered behind a rock, they were hit with mighty fists, and you hid behind a rock, and they suffered the blasts of explosive magicks! And they died just as the boss monster did, but you survived, hidden behind a rock.

But what now? You have gold in your packs and have buried your heroes, tears have been shed (maybe), and now you must flee back from whence you came. You must run away as fast as you can back to the entrance.

Hopefully the path out is easier when you blindly flail your way forward!"

But, not every treasure room is the same, not every dungeon is guarded at the end with the same boss monster, and not every adventurer that has the coin to employ hirelings is the same.

Which is why, after someone reads the premise aloud, you have to ask for some information. Go around the table, ask questions and write the buzz words for each answer that is blurted out or agreed upon by everyone as being the "best" answer (best here is described as being the most unanimous or agreed to be the answer that the group will use). Below are some questions that you should ask:

- What does the inside of the treasure room look like?
- What type of monster killed your respective employers?
- What was this creature's role/purpose in the grand machinations that take place here?
- What did you see earlier but did not quite understand? Don't describe its function, only its appearance.

If you are using a Dungeon template, you should supplement the above questions with the few that are given by that specific template.

No matter which method, pay attention and be ready to use those answers to flavor the descriptions and monsters you will describe later. But, if after reintegrating something it gets overlooked or isn't getting as much attention, move on to whatever other theme/symbol/craziness is getting the most attention.

Introducing Characters

After you, the Dunarch, has gotten some answers the world has essentially been introduced, at this stage all the players should introduce their characters. They will probably describe themselves with fancy words, but remind them if they forget to tell everyone:

- Which Character type they are playing as
- What items they chose for their equipment
- Answer any building questions that say they should be talked about right now.

There are some questions which the players will be urged to show off during play, when someone does this give them a flail point or give them two if answering it puts them in immediate danger. Tell them about this arrangement right now.

Elaborations on the Basic Rules

In the Hireling's Handguide portion of the games rules there were parts that said "the Dunarch will tell you" or "the Dunarch will know what that means". Right here, right now is where you will find out what that means and how you should interact with the core rules.

When you enter a room!

After doing everything you need to do in the current room to move ahead, someone should look for a way out. **When you find a “way out” or you enter the next room**, that player must choose:

- ...to name this room. If you need some ideas, take a look at the dungeon room names table at the back of this booklet.
- ...introduce a problem. This problem must be described as either a thing seen, something smelt, sound heard or even a taste.

If the Player chose to answer one, then the other remaining choice goes to whoever hasn't entered a room first yet (or who has been the first to enter a room the least). Either way, the questions should be answered in the same order as they are presented.

The players always plant the seed for the rooms inside the dungeon by either giving the room a creative name or introducing a small issue that they can sense up ahead. The Dunarch will use this seed to come up with the details of the area, keeping in mind that there are many ways to “show not tell” what is going on.

If you want the players to smell decay, put the body in front of them and tell them about the worms around it and flies that buzz, they will infer there is a smell. If you want the players to see how grand the room is in size, tell them about the echo and how whispers are just as loud as if they were yelling. Mixing senses in descriptions to describe one thing but imply two.

But sometimes, it is just as good to be blunt and get down to the interesting details.

This is not as you remember it

When you are in a room, you may be presented with challenges or wild descriptions by the Dunarch (or by your fellow hirelings). If you think that what you are hearing doesn't sound just as you remember it, give the Dunarch one flail point to be able to expand on what they said. Start with “yes, but...”.

Players cannot do this to another player's description though.

You cannot give one flail point to “yes, but...” your way directly out of the dungeon. You also cannot give up a flail point to make a monster or hazard less dangerous, but you always can make it *more* dangerous.

This is where your skills at improv will be put to the test. The players will change what you say and you won't be able to negate those decisions, but you can run with them in any direction you want, as long as it does not invalidate their contribution.

Don't look at it as relinquishing control, look at it as if they are giving you suggestions for the tone and content of future rooms.

Any question asked by the rules shouldn't be invalidated, it may go further or be investigated more or expanded in a direction that could not be foreseen. But, if the rules say that it happens, a flail point is spent or they have to answer a question to do something, that contribution is their contribution.

If the player is being a little too crazy for you, or just tearing down the walls around them to make themselves gods present a danger which is not in their wheelhouse. These hirelings have very specialised sets of skills, it shouldn't be hard to present problems which will be more difficult to conquer.

Not answering questions

If you don't answer a question when the rules say you have to, or refuse to answer any question the rules ask of you, then that character is immediately thrown into life threatening danger; the Dunarch will describe it and you will lose 1d6+2 gold.

From this danger you will need rescuing to be able to act again. Whoever saves that character can take up to 3 flail points (Player's choice) from the person they rescued. If no one saves you or even attempts to save you, roll a d6; on a 1-3 you lose another 1d6+2 gold, if you die you die. If you live after losing that gold, you crawl away from danger somehow. The Player will start with a sentence, then each other Player will add on to this sentence using "yes, and..." and finally the GM will conclude the harrowing escape with a "yes, but..." addition. On a 4 to 6, you are missing from the party, you are pulled into the darkness and are unsaveable. Make a new character.

The core of this game is based around the responses that players give to act and progress as well as how they will choose to fail in order to gain the ability to guarantee success later on. As such, if a player is not answering a question and claiming the rewards as if they had, call them out on it after the fact. Doing this triggers this rule and gives you, the Dunarch, the ability to bring about immediate and inescapable danger that takes away some of their precious gold.

Also as a note, when it says the player will need rescuing to begin acting again, they need rescuing from another player's character.

As the Dunarch, you should keep your ears open and on the lookout for when this is triggered, because it — can create some fun and exciting moments as well as show how oblivious hirelings can be sometimes when they are in a hurry.

Doing something that isn't your thing

You can always **try to do something that is within the ability of an ordinary adventurer, but is outside your specialty**. Just a roll a single six-sided die; on a 5 or 6 you do the best a hireling with a very specialized set of skills can do and succeed at the task, the Dunarch will tell you what this means. If you however, roll anything other than a 5-6, you have failed, stumbled, tripped, flubbed or just plain stunk at what you tried to do. Failing results in wild consequence, the Dunarch will ask everyone else around the table how this could go wrong and may pick from the suggestions, then elaborate and you will lose 2d6 gold.

Hirelings have a very specific skill set, a torchbearer isn't incompetent you just don't have a very wide skillset, in short, a torchbearer is defined by his ability to light torches on fire to light the way. This rule allows the Dunarch to narrate with more control what happens when someone fails, they may choose to use the suggestions given by the players and elaborate or twist them, or not.

This type of power will probably be recognized by the players, in which case they will be opting to fail more often at their individual specialties. If they are not doing this, it is most likely because the rule is misunderstood, or the players have no reason to opt to fail, in which case, throw more situations that are outside their specialty at them to break up the pace.

A good way to come up with what situation would work, is to look at the characters that were not chosen and bring up something those missing hirelings would be perfect for. Or, put the players in a situation that would require them to use their disadvantage.

How Combat works

Combat in Runaway Hirelings is pretty easy, just follow these principles:

- Monsters don't roll dice, only Players do.
- Hirelings aren't highly trained killers, so monsters are more likely to flee than die. To kill a monster, the players have to put in the extra effort of chasing the monster further into the dungeon.
- Keep in mind that the dungeon has been gone through once before now, as such, the monsters are most likely survivors of conflicts with the hireling's employers (who perished at the boss battle).

Combat should never get down to a grind, it should be a time to make chaotic and creative use of the environment. No battle is just in a circle, people grab things and throw them, kick dirt and grab legs to throw people.

Monsters don't roll dice...

Players roll dice for their hirelings to act, just like any other time during the game, but monsters do not roll any dice ever. So what does a roll mean for the hirelings?

- A success results in the hirelings putting a mark on the monster, this is the equivalent of damage or discouragement to continue the fight. It doesn't have to be an attack, it could also be screaming crazy speech or waving fire to intimidate the monster. A monster's **resolve** is determined by how many marks it takes for them to flee or be subdued, if a monster takes 3 marks after they begin to flee the monster will perish at the hands of the hirelings.
- On a failure, the monster causes the hireling to lose $1d6 \pm X$ gold. Where X is the monster's **damage** number, this number rates the chances an adventurer has of surviving an encounter with said monster.

Making Monsters...

Making monsters on the run is pretty easy, you just need to think of two numbers, the creature's resolve and damage. If there are multiple of a smaller creature, count them as if they were a single creature and call it a horde.

Resolve for monsters ranges from 1 to 7, creatures with a resolve of 1 being easily overcome, intimidated or slain. And creatures with a resolve of 7 being the most difficult creatures to defeat. A monster's resolve is kept hidden from the players until the beast is slain or has fled beyond their reach.

Keep in mind that the players only succeed on rolls outside their specialty with a 5 or 6 on a six sided die when deciding on the resolve of a monster.

Damage for monsters ranges from -2 to +2, with the least capable and smaller creatures having a damage of $1d6-2$ (where the minimum damage dealt is 1) and the most dangerous when faced in combat having a damage of $1d6+2$. A monster's damage should be revealed to the players after they start attacking the monster.

Keep in mind that each player's first character starts the game with 20 gold and each subsequent character starts with half as much gold as the last character did. But this is essentially a backwards dungeon (when compared to most traditional fantasy roleplaying games, so the strongest monsters that would hurt the Player's characters the most will be located closer to the treasure room. You can think of it as while playing the game, the farther away from the treasure room or room in which play started, the weaker the monsters become.

This evens out because as characters die over the course of the game since they start with less and less gold with each subsequent character.

Some further notes on combat

- Hirelings can always flee from monsters, each character must make a die roll and use the rules under the doing something that isn't your thing section in the Hireling's Handguide chapter.

Dangerous Equipment

This section is unfinished, but you should be able to make due without examples of how to use each dangerous piece of equipment during play.

Each character type has a choice to make in their equipment section, some of those choices are purposefully there to prompt dangerous situations, or essentially stick a piece of dynamite in what is a quiet situation.

You, the Dunarch, should make use of these sparingly, otherwise it can seem a little too heavy handed to everyone involved. Below they are listed and to which character type they are a part of, after the list is a short example of how to make each dangerous (but always just make it up yourself if you have a better idea or the circumstances dictate it):

- Trap-Poker; sprung bear trap
- Torchbearer; lighter that is low on fuel
- Peasant; a live chicken
- Chronicler; the moldy journal of Gortox the Destructor or Jillion the Magnificent
- Fool; a plushy purple axe, a liquid spraying flower and an animal mask
- Itinerant Monk; a long flowing robe
- "Slop" Chef; a plump dead chicken

Trap-Poker

The sprung bear trap

Torchbearer

A lighter that is low on fuel

Peasant

A live chicken

Chronicler

The moldy journal

Fool

A plushy purple axe

A liquid spraying flower

A animal mask

Itinerant Monk

A long flowing robe

“Slop” Chef

A plump dead chicken

The Doorway Out

What triggers the end?

There are two ways that the exit of the dungeon can be found or appear. The first involves one of the Player's having lost three characters to the dungeon, at which point the next room entered will be the exit.

All Hirelings start with 20 gold, whenever you are attacked you lose a six sided die worth of gold (unless you are losing gold because of a rule previously described). When you run out of gold, you die and you have to choose (introduce) a new character. This new Character starts with half as much gold as your previous Character started with.

So if your first started with 20, your second will start with 10 and your third with 5. When someone loses a third character, the exit of the dungeon comes into sight. Your fourth character is the same as your first, think of this as a shocking twist of events. *Tell everyone vaguely how you got from where you died/ disappeared to here?*

The second is more subjective, it is based around the Dunarch being able to judge the interest levels of the Players during the game, if it seems that people are becoming less interested or the game session will have to end due to time constraints, then the Dunarch should have the dungeons exit appear as the next room entered.

How do you introduce the last room?

After the trigger for the last room has been met, the next doorway stepped through (that was not walked through previously) leads to the last room of the dungeon.

As the Dunarch you have the following things to keep in mind when introducing this room. First is to use what has occurred thus far during play to define the rooms characteristics and inhabitants. Second is to create an environment which would allow for the conclusion or resolution of an encounter (with a monster, device, character, curse etc.) which proved to be both troublesome for the Players as well as noteworthy (noteworthy meaning that it has popped up time and again during play in banter and conversation). This encounter could also be not hazardous but a point that divided the player's characters to a degree that would make them at odds with one another.

Generating the Final Room

If you are using a Dungeon Template provided with the rules for this game, then the form may be different than what is present here.

You will want to come up with the answers to the following questions and use them if it seems appropriate.

1. Which person met, monster avoided seemed to make the hireling's shake in their boots the most? Or was there someone that everyone helped at some point? One or two of them show up here, hurt, worried or in some sort of peril, this is when the hireling's can finish the job or say their grand farewells.
2. Where did everyone have the most fun and seem the most excited to be playing? What trait stood out the most in that room? This room is that rooms ugly cousin (the same trait exaggerated and foreboding, because there is a reason why no one really came here before your heroes).

Playing the final room

Use the rules. If you made it this far you have done a pretty good job. Trust yourself and trust that the players are here for the same reason you are, to get these guys out of here and have a good time doing it. **You got this.**

The Epilogue

Everyone has exited the dungeon, or at least those that are still alive have gone back to the unnamed village from which they came from. Everyone has riches to spend! Let's talk about it!

When the game is over and right before everyone leaves, go around the table and ask each player who had a character survive the dungeon the following questions.

- What will you be doing with the riches and hard earned knowledge?

- What will you be doing at this moment, 10 years from now?

For the players who had all of their characters die during the escape, have them describe what each of their character tombstones would read. Give everyone their moment to describe their answer, they earned it.

The Dungeon Template

[[this section still needs to be finished]]

A dungeon template is the basis of what could be called a module or prepared adventure to be played through. It contains a list of interesting and colorful room titles and a few very short lists describing the hazards present within, what type of imagery should inspire the session and a list of important creatures and monsters.

Stocking the Dungeon

If you are creating a dungeon template from scratch, take a look at one of the ones included in this book. Now, you have the general feel of how it is organized, but here is a good order to populate each list in:

1. Inspiration imagery; make three points with which 2 of the 3 will always be useful or related to a room title, hazard or individual off of your peoples and creatures list.
2. Hazards, traps and dangers;
3. Peoples and creatures;
4. Dungeon rooms list;

Leaving Blanks

You don't need a ton of information. Not all of the lists need twenty choices to choose from, the only list that should take up that much space is the list of room names, and even then, you really don't need twenty of them.

TORCHBEARER

Equipment:

a **bundle of torches** and either a **purse of matches** or a **lighter that is low on fuel** (but not both)

Specialty:

using a bundle of torches to light the way and reveal what is hidden in the dark. Or to set flammable things on fire with matches or a lighter.

Advantage:

pursuing other methods or engineering a way to bring light to the room around you.

Disadvantage:

the unknown terrifies you just as the dark does, when attempting to discern the value or properties of a strange item or place, you may just set it on fire out of frustration.

Build:

- What prevented you from becoming an adventurer? Did you play with fire too much? Was it the whole “scared of darkness thing”? Explain.
- What life changing event, made you into a lover of light and flames?
- Why did your “Hero” think a Torchbearer was necessary on this delve? Did you come in handy at all on the way in?

ITINERANT MONK

Equipment:

you have a pair of **silent slippers**, a **long flowing robe** four sizes too large and your choice of either: an ever eternal **slightly glad facial expression** or a full and incomprehensible **knowledge of the inner workings of the universe**.

Specialty:

explaining the importance and full gravity of a situation. Being able to bore those who have no prior appreciation for finer philosophical conversation.

Advantage:

being silent and cautious in how you disturb objects around you as you move. When you want to make no noise, you are good at holding your tongue.

Disadvantage:

when you want to be loud. You are too soft in speech for most people to hear you, you must urge yourself in an impolite manner to have any hope of communicating with the deaf or friends who are fleeing.

Building:

- What thoughts are always in your head and what topics must you always insist on discussing?
- Where did you train and learn of such high knowledge? Where is this college/academy/dojo and what makes it hard for others to understand why people would go there?
- Why did your “Hero” think you’d be useful on this expedition? What troubled their soul which meant you had to be brought along? Tell everyone now.

TRAP-POKER

Equipment:

a long metal stick and the Player's choice of either a rope or a sprung bear trap (but not both).

Specialty:

using a long metal stick and/or a rope to find, disable, disarm and set off traps.

Advantage:

using other tools to do Trap-Poker stuff that isn't your original long metal stick and rope. As well as using long stick like objects to get the attention of all creatures.

Disadvantage:

running away from a monster or dangerous situation, you have the compulsion to poke the ground which slows you down to a snail's pace!

Build:

- Why aren't you an adventurer? What held you back or prevented you from being the "big guy"?
- Besides the promise of pay, why did you come here? What makes this fun? Explain.
- What makes you the best person to stab the ground for traps? Is it experience?
- Why did your "Hero" think a Trap-Poker was necessary on this delve? Did you come in handy at all on the way in?

PEASANT

Equipment:

a sack full of rags and empty potato bags and either a live chicken or an ear horn (but not both).

Specialty:

concealing and carrying objects using your various bags as well as drawing the attention of a dangerous enemy/monster/thing with your loud and uneducated grunting.

Advantage:

concealing objects as well as yourself behind various furniture and formations found in the room. And distracting enemies/monsters/things without putting yourself in harm's way.

Disadvantage:

trying to sneak past anything with ears is hard to do. You breathe every so loudly when you are stressed. Hopefully no one hears!

Building:

- How did you get cheated out of your fortune so that you would have to live your life as a peasant folk?
- You have an odd obsession with a simple thing, something that would lure into danger just to obtain it (no matter how broken or useless it appeared) tell everyone what this object is. And show everyone why you value it later during play.
- Did your "Hero" really want you to come along? Did you beg for this assignment? For this ridiculous and very danger-deadly job? Tell everyone right now.

FOOL

Equipment:

a **pouch of ridiculous and colorfully harmless props**, choose 3: a **plushy purple axe**, a **liquid spraying flower** (without any liquid at the moment), a **animal mask** which is hard to look at, a **belt covered in small metal bells**, or a color clashing **patterned hat**.

Specialty:

to amuse and distract people with harmless shenanigans, usually involving props from the prop pouch.

Advantage:

Making people laugh is your talent. No matter how dark the day is, a joke is always brewing.

Disadvantage:

There are times when jokes are just inappropriate. And you just don't seem to know when that is.

Building:

- How do you feel about your lot in life? Was it hard for people to take you seriously? Show everyone later during play.
- Do you have a classic or show stopping act? Tell everyone right now. And maybe show them later.
- Why did your "Hero" think you'd be useful on this expedition? What joke amused your "Hero" so much they should bring you?

"SLOP" CHEF

Equipment:

you have a **long soup spoon**, a **rusted kettle** with last night's leftovers within and your choice of either a **single plump dead chicken** or an **apron** that says "Best at Cooking".

Specialty:

preparing food so that it does not harm any who consume it, you have just right pot to remove those ill effects and the knowhow to do so right.

Advantage:

preparing food for monsters. To make them sleepy, content or enraged upon consumption.

Disadvantage:

you are a little high and mighty with your craft and your big head gets in the way. You are never modest, and really should learn to give credit where credit is due. But, the only reason you've been successful thus far was because everyone was properly nourished...right? Right?

Building:

- What recipe have you been unable to learn or master or get "just right"? How does it haunt your cooking dreams?
- What popular magical chef do you take influence from? Make a person up and tell everyone their catch phrase.
- Why did your "Hero" think you'd be useful on this expedition? What was there favorite food that you took extra care in preparing?

rewrite, shorten, clarity

CHRONICLER

Equipment:

a number of scrolls and an expensive pen, as well as a moldy journal containing the ramblings of Gortox the Destructor or Jillion the Magnificent (choose which legendary persons writings are in your journal).

Specialty:

using the knowledge written within your scrolls to find the best way to appease a monster or uncover the truth within a confusing situation.

Advantage:

If a disagreement or argument comes down to sheer knowledge of the unknown, dangers and places in the world, you are more capable than most.

Disadvantage:

Having a inquisitive nature is not always great, it often means that you ask inappropriate questions at inappropriate times just so you can have more complete notes on your travels.

Building:

- What is the author of the journal like? How did they get their name and why do you have the journal?
- What is your favorite book of all time? What is its title and what is it about? Tell everyone and gush about the author for a second. (Make up a book that would be published in a fantasy setting such as this.)
- Did your "Hero" have a very good reason for bringing you along? How did they pitch this specific job? Tell everyone right now.