

DRAGON'S GRAVE



DRIVEN BY BIDS
A DICELESS RPG SYSTEM BY
MATTHEW BANNOCK

DRAGON'S GRAVE

DRIVEN BY BIDS

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**In the beginning, the dragons of heaven and
earth fought a great war.
In the end, they both died.**

**The words of their dying breaths became the
gods, and their scales became the folk of the
world.**

**The dragon of land's corpse became the world,
and its blood the oceans.**

**For centuries the folk and the gods lived in
relative peace.**

But the dungeons soon opened.

**These parasites are living, chambered beings
with raw magic focused into great pearls.**

**Adventurers are now tunneling into them,
disrupting monster breeding grounds, seeking
new sources of magic...**



INTRODUCTION

In this fantasy realm of living dungeons forged from the corpses of dragons, threats are in a constant state of flux. What adventurers have come to expect to be a troll may be very different from one dungeon to the next, as monsters tainted by the dragon's viscera mutate over time. Heroes are needed to fight these threats, and to find the pearls and use them to heal the world.

DRAGON'S GRAVE uses the BIDS tabletop roleplaying game system. It's an incredibly simple, highly narrative, diceless game system that gives players significant control over the story of their characters. These characters are often very powerful in their own right, wielding fabled relics, casting legendary spells, and capable of standing up to the minions of the gods, or even the gods themselves!

Game Moderators (GM) take on the role of building a scenario that includes the following:

- ❖ A living dungeon environment.
- ❖ A pearl of magnificent power found within.
- ❖ Monsters and villains, some connected to the dungeon, some seeking the pearl.
- ❖ Working with the players to name the allies, friends, and family of the characters, who have the potential to help the heroes...or who might be threatened by the dungeon and its vile inhabitants!

BIDS

A DICELESS SYSTEM FOR A GAME MODERATOR (GM) AND 1-4 OR MORE PLAYERS

Characters are a combination of two **tropes** and a **compulsion**. Tropes are short descriptions: Druidic Golemancer, Mad Scientist, Fire Mage, Alchemical Doctor, Elven Bard, Angelic Knight, Infernal Hexer, Centaur Lancer, are examples. A compulsion is a desire that may lead to trouble:

Characters are given two **skill points** that may be spent during a conflict to perform an action appropriate to one of their tropes. These refresh at the beginning of every scene. A character has two **luck points** that can be spent to succeed even in circumstances where none of a character's tropes really make sense. These don't refresh; they must be earned back.

When faced with a conflict or risky situation, a player may choose:

- ❖ **DRAMATIC SUCCESS:** Spend a skill point on an appropriate trope, or spend a luck point and narrate your success.
- ❖ **MARGINAL SUCCESS:** The player describes a narrow success, and the group (GM and players) suggest a consequence to be taken care of.
- ❖ **FAILURE:** The character fails at the task, or to defeat their opponent. They gain a luck point, and receive a consequence.

CONFLICT. Conflict is any situation that presents a number of risks to diminish the characters' skill and luck points. Generally, there should be enough layers of risk that characters will have to make choices between when to spend skill or luck points, and when to fail in order to regenerate their luck points. Generally, this means 3-5 risks per character.

In combat situations, a moderate challenge can translate to 3-5 enemies or challenges per character; a difficult encounter might be a boss monster requiring 4-6 challenges per character; and so on. Add 1-3 more layers per character to ensure some failures! Use the same idea for tense negotiations, or for surviving horrific environments in the living dungeons of DRAGON'S GRAVE.

CONSEQUENCES. Consequences tend to escalate the risk in a scene, either creating an additional problem or layer to a problem, inciting a character toward their compulsion, or threatening more (or new) characters or aspects of a setting. In this way, you don't always need to come up with specific challenges: let the players help come up with consequences!

One consequence can be removed at the end of a scene. If a player has a chance to rest (played out as a transition scene in which the characters eat, relax, discuss, research, etc.), they may remove all consequences.

ADVANCEMENT. Experience points are given out at the rate of 1 per scene, but this may be increased to 2 for a particularly eventful scene (a boss fight, a particularly dangerous scene in which there were many more threats than the party has skill

or luck points to deal with). It costs 3 XP per current number of tropes (2 for a starting character) to add a new trope. It costs 3XP per current skill points (2 for starting characters) to increase that pool. Characters cannot gain more luck points.

PLAYING DRAGON'S GRAVE

DRAGON'S GRAVE is intended to be very high-fantasy, with highly skilled characters bursting with power (magical and mundane), dungeons, monsters, and villains that threaten entire cities, and high stakes that often involve things the characters hold dear, such as loved ones, their fellow party members, and dozens (hundreds, even thousands) of innocents whose lives hang in the balance.

GOOD TROPES. Good tropes are evocative, allowing players to give input in the setting and reveal their characters' personality and powers. Think high fantasy: a Failed Alchemist is a lot more interesting than a Grumpy Doctor. A character's ancestry, occupation, background, magical specialties, and so on should all be readily apparent.

GOOD COMPULSIONS. Compulsions shouldn't drive a character's day to day actions, but instead should be the part of them that they strive to be better than, or the dark secret that will change how they are viewed. A Loner is boring, whereas Riddled with Dragon-Greed can tear a party apart. Examples: Gather money for family back home; Fame and fortune; Protect those who cannot save themselves; Wanderlust.

GOOD CONSEQUENCES. Consequences can be individual injuries and complications, but they can also be important

setbacks or sources of stress and threat. Broken Arm is fine; Lost Love or Protect the Civilians! are more interesting.

INSPIRATIONAL MATERIAL

The following pages provide several pieces of inspiration to get your game going quickly, including pregenerated characters, sample dungen environments, evocative monsters, and epic scenarios.

GLOOM MODE (OPTIONAL RULE)

All of this talk of epic problems and legendary powers a little too much for you? Go ahead and tone everything down to more typical adventure fantasy expectations.

- ❖ Tropes will include ancestry, background, role (warrior, mage, etc.) and specialties, but should be limited to a set of expected ancestries (human, elf, dwarf) and more typical combinations (wandering ranger, pious cleric of Light).
- ❖ Consequences should remain focused on the immediate injuries, conditions, status effects, and situation of an individual character: poisoned, injured, weary, entangled, confused, broken arm.

SAMPLE DUNGEON ENVIRONMENTS

BRAIN CHAMBER. These twisting halls are filled with pulsing organic material, piercing screams, and memory-bending hallucinations.

THE GUT. The earth dragon could digest anything, but it was surprisingly slow to do so. As such, entire kingdoms, swallowed whole, might be found among the bilious swamps of The Gut, with survivors eking out a terrifying existence harvesting strange fungus. Most of the folk are mutated

beyond recognition, having been here for generations, but not all of them are completely inhuman. Goblinoids of many varieties live here, alongside orc raiders. But there are many undead as well, as survivors turned to horrific magic to try to survive in this acidic wasteland.

THE MAW. Fangs as high as mountains. Molten lava the dragon of heaven once vomited forth. Motes of earthen scales and flesh from its enemy. The Maw is easily one of the most frightening dungeons in the world.





DESMERAND THE SWIFT

- ❖ Half-elven Beastmaster
- ❖ Former Assassin of the Crimson Cult

COMPULSION. Undermine the power of the City-States.



JEKERAN & SCRAPE

- ❖ Orc Frost-Hunter
- ❖ Savage Dwarf-Bear

COMPULSION. Those that stand too close seek to harm you!



GULTHAS

- ❖ Hill Giant Ranger
- ❖ Ley Line Geomancer

COMPULSION. Giants are the rightful rulers, not the smallfolk, and certainly not the children of the dragons, the gods.



NICODEMUS OF VALAR

- ❖ Dragonborn Warpriest
- ❖ Heaven Dragonknight

COMPULSION. Everyone responds most effectively to total dominance alone.



PRENSAR

- ❖ Ogre Vagabond
- ❖ Reluctant Wielder of the Dragonfang Blades

COMPULSION. The flesh of humans tastes the best...



SORSHANA ALEIRI

- ❖ Crystal Mage
- ❖ Last Scion of an Elven House

COMPULSION. Stockpile gems.



DRURGON SKULLHORN

- ❖ Minotaur Berserker
- ❖ Former Deathpriest of the Resurrectionists

COMPULSION. Corpses should never be buried, they should be displayed.



ESTRAMEERAZEN

- ❖ Zethari Dragoon
- ❖ Crystal Spear Samurai

COMPULSION. Trust no one.



“BURNT” MAGEERAN

- ❖ Infernal Firemage
- ❖ Bandit Lord of Velkora City

COMPULSION. You're a thief; you can't pass up a chance at a good score!

SCENARIO IDEAS

1. **THE GOBLINOID HORDE ATTACKS!** The mutating goblins amassed in The Gut have grown so numerous they now strike out into the surface world. They lead an army of acid trolls, horned wyverns, and riding worms toward Velkora City!

2. **DRINK DEEP THE POWER.** Serintan the Vile found the Wrinkled Pearl in the depths of the Brain Chamber, and can now control the minds of monsters...and those that give into their compulsions!

3. **THE RESURRECTIONISTS.** The Resurrectionist Cult has reanimated the skull of one of the dragons, but they can no longer control it!

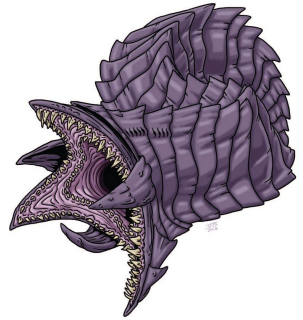
4. **CRASHED CITY.** Valis Taron sunk the flying city of Telamathas into The Maw! Can the survivors be saved before they burn alive?



THREATS

ROT WORMS

These yard long worms have lamprey like mouths and they feast on corpses. They tunnel through earth and loose stone, often surprising adventurers from the earthen ground or within dungeons. When they become adults they become blood moths.



BLOOD MOTHS

These flying beasts have mosquito like mouths and are the size of owls. While rarely deadly in a one on one encounter, they are often grouped for breeding and may also be near young rot worms. Their bites are often bacteria laden and spread blood infection or disease.



POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES.

Infected wound, blood loss, diseased

GOBLIN WIGHT



These creatures are neither goblin nor undead. They are fungal beasts born in the depths of the caves. They have a shape like a bloated goblin and sunken features like a corpse.

In combat they are faster than their shape would imply, and while they heal quickly, they are frail. In light of this, they prefer fighting from a distance, employing makeshift javelins and slings. Not terribly bright, they do use simple but effective tactics, however. They employ ambushes and clattering net

traps that hamper movement in their caves, and alert them to intruders. Up close they use hooked daggers and spit an irritant poison that creates itching blisters and difficulty breathing.

They steal the equipment of defeated opponents, so long living colonies may be better armed than their typical brethren. They also take slaves to mine the dragon bone and marrow found in the earth, using them as crafting material and food respectively.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES. Blisters, infected wounds, broken bones, captured, concussed, poisoned, nauseated

SERINTAN THE VILE

A powerful rock goblin sorcerer, Serintan the Vile discovered the Wrinkled Pearl in the depths of the Brain Chamber. Armed with this, he is able to dominate the minds of men and monsters alike with little chance of them resisting!



There are those that say the Heart Pearl at the Temple Fortress of Dracomire has the ability to steal the will of folk, allowing them to overcome the domination with a great effort. But even then, the inner darkness that afflicts all folk might rise up and consume them, giving Serintan a route to total domination!



POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES. Controlled, dominated, allies are enemies, charmed, psychically assaulted, uncontrolled urges, consumed by [Compulsion]

NIGHTMARE DRAGON

This breed of black dragons is greatly feared. Unlike other dragons that may have personalities that range from benevolence to ruthless, nightmare dragons thrive on subjugation and spreading terror. Some say that their powers of illusion and control are more potent when wielded against someone afraid. To this end they will often wipe out most folk of a village and leave a pile of bones in the center of town, leaving enough survivors to spread word.



Few descriptions of these creatures exist and those that do often contradict each other. It is widely believed to be moose sized dragon with a writhing mass of tendrils as a beard. A common tactic for this beast is to engulf a massive area with its breath weapon of oily black smoke.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES. Terrified, hallucinations, choking, gas, compulsions, phobias, bloodied, stunned, traumatized, lost limbs, poisoned

SECONDARY THREAT. The secondary threat is that nightmare dragons often scout an area with loyal cultists that poison, murder, and sow discord throughout communities. Often these loyal servants are taught shadow sorcery.

THE BONE TREE

Every fall, the mysterious bone tree bares a harvest of heart-like fruit. There will never be fewer than seven, and never more than thirteen such fruit. These fruit pulse while on the tree and for exactly thirteen days after harvest. In this state, they are a spell ingredient for a necromantic ritual to turn someone into a vampire. When allowed to rot, they are an ingredient for resurrection magic. Simply swallowing a seed whole will make someone shockingly hard to kill for a day.



Given these properties, they are often kept secret and jealously guarded by powerful alchemists and their constructs, or powerful necromancers, and undead. They need no sunlight and may grow anywhere, including the living dungeons. If discovered, the location can be sold for a small fortune, but doing so may prove deadly: killing someone to keep the secret is not unheard of.

This powerful creature animates when badly damaged, too. This makes them a unique threat, as they are immobile until angered, highly sought after but capable of protecting themselves from those that would pillage their powerful fruits.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES. Cursed, diseased. Those that rob fruit from a tree under a noble or monsters care would likely gain hunted. An animated bone tree might cause significant damage due to their size: injured, shattered, destroyed, collateral damage, razed walls.

VALIS TARON

The elven warlock known as Valis Taron was once a hero, the very one that discovered the Heart Pearl and brought it to the priests of the Temple Fortress at Dracomire. For centuries, her deeds were legendary, and she brought hope to all of the folk of the world.

When she laid her hands on the Miasmal Sword, however, her darkest urges were brought to the fore. She is now a conqueror and destroyer of the worst sort.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES. Poisonous aura, weakened, fast-acting poison, lost control, festering wound



KARTHUL THE TIMELESS

The mountain giant Karthul was a wizard king among other giants. He and his wives were said to be tough but fair in rulership of nearby human cities. A nearby empire declared war on his territory eager to "fell the beast to free enslaved humans." Nearby kingdoms were quick to side with the empire either believing the propaganda or swayed by the promise of taking the valuable rich farmland. His kingdom was steadfast in their support but was quickly overwhelmed by the superior numbers and armaments of the invading army. Karthul escaped but not before his three wives and seven children were killed. He vowed revenge on the lands of men studying time magic to undo what had been done.



To this end he removed an eye in ritual sacrifice and placed an enchanted pearl in the empty socket... little is known about what happened next, but now Karthul seems to teleport from area to area, alternating between rampaging and acting in a cold calculating manner, to sacrifice people and conduct rituals. He has been spotted in many areas at once, and at times aiding his own duplicates. Some say he is driven mad while others say his actions are part of a lengthy ritual focused on unweaving time.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES. Forced into sevice, crushed limb, cursed, withered, unstuck from time, insubstantial

DRAGON'S GRAVE



In a world ravaged by the fatal war between the dragons of heaven and earth, living dungeons have risen from the dragons' corpses to threaten all of civilization, and perhaps the universe beyond.

In this diceless tabletop roleplaying game driven by the BIDS system, players take on the role of truly legendary heroes, who seek the pearls of power that lay within the ever-shifting dungeons formed by each DRAGON'S GRAVE.