

MINOTAUR CLASSICS

M&M MISCELLANEA

Options, Variants & Additions for Revised Mazes & Minotaurs



Originally published in the *Minotaur* webzine from 2008 to 2012; updated for the 2012 *Silver Jubilee* edition of the Revised *Mazes & Minotaurs* roleplaying game.

New Class: Sacred Healers

Feats of Strength Redux

New Class: Pankratiasts

Tricks & Stratagems

Unarmed Critical Hits

Optional Fate Points Rules

Feats of Marksmanship

New Options for Elementalists

Magicians in Battle

Alternate Advancement Rules

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SACRED HEALERS

A new optional priestly class for *Mazes & Minotaurs* by Christian Schwietzke



Sacred Healers are the priestly servants of Asclepius, the god of medicine (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 7). Much like regular priests, they receive sacred powers from their patron deity; unlike other priests, their duty lies not in tending temples and sacred places, but rather in tending their fellow mortals – as the resident healer in towns or villages, as a wandering healer in more remote or rural regions, or even as an adventurer.

Healing Prodigies

Magnitude 1: Divine Diagnosis

This power allows the Healer to ask Asclepius to reveal the nature of another mortal's physical condition. This can reveal, for example, not only that someone was poisoned, but also what creature poisoned that person, or what poison was used by another person. Similarly, the power can identify the perpetrator of a Petrification or Life Energy Drain, or of a physical injury. If the body is still in a sufficiently intact state, i.e. decomposition has not advanced too far, it can also determine the cause of death.

This power can also be used to determine the cause of plagues and other collective illnesses, including those of magical or divine origin. Asclepius will always truthfully reveal information to his devotee, as far as he knows it; only the intervention of another deity at least as powerful as him could conceal such information from him.

SACRED HEALER

Primary Attributes: Wits and Luck

Gender Restrictions: Healers can be male or female; unlike with regular priests, Asclepius place no gender restriction on his sacred servants.

Basic Hits: 8

Healing Prodigies: Sacred Healers are able to call on the divine powers of Asclepius; their repertoire of Prodigies, however, is more specialized than that of other Priests, with a narrower range of applications.

Curative Gift = Wits mod + Luck mod

Starting Power = (4 + Wits mod)

Power Recovery: Like Priests, Healers recover Power by praying their god, at the usual rate of (level) points per hour of prayer to Asclepius.

Level Benefits: Each level beyond the first gives a Healer +2 Hits, +4 Power points, +1 to Luck and +2 to Wits, Will or Grace.

Possessions: Staff, dagger, ceremonial robes and a starting wealth of $3d6 \times 10$ silver pieces.

Restrictions: Because of their sacred commitment, Healers cannot wear armor, use shields or carry weapons other than their staff or dagger. Much like Lyrists, their person is considered sacred by all those who worship the Olympians.

Patron Deity: Asclepius, the god of healing and medicine (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 7).

Background Talents: All Sacred Healers obviously have the Healer talent, plus a second talent chosen among the following: Beastmaster, Orator, Scholar, Woodsman or Wrestler.

Reputation Effect: Sacred Healers benefit from their reputation bonus when dealing with other healers and with priests and devotees of Apollo, Hermes, Athena and Hestia.

Advancement: Like all magicians, Sacred Healers advance by accumulating Wisdom points. They do not, however, gain any Wisdom for exploring the unknown but gain twice the usual amount for defeating any creature with Life Energy Drain, Petrification or Poison.



Behold the power of Divine Resurrection – but beware the wrath of Hades!

Magnitude 2: Divine Vitality

This power works exactly like the Divine Prodigy of the same name, with each use restoring a number of Hits equal to $1d6 + \text{the Healer's Curative Gift}$.

It should be noted, though, that each use of this power only costs 2 points of Power, whereas regular Divine Vitality is a Magnitude 3 power; thus, while his healing powers are not inherently more potent than those of a standard Priest, a Healer can use them more frequently – and thus more effectively – than a Priest of equivalent level and Power.

While we're on the subject, be sure to check the rules on poison detailed in *Minotaur n°3* (p 44).

Magnitude 3: Divine Protection

This power is a triple-dosed Divine Blessing (hence the higher Magnitude). It adds +2 to the recipient's Physical Vigor, Mystic Fortitude and Defense Class for a number of hours equal to the Healer's Curative Gift. Unlike those of a standard Divine Blessing, these bonuses can be combined with those of another deity's blessing, for an even greater effect.

Magnitude 4: Divine Immunity

This power operates like a Divine Gift but its effects last for a number of minutes (not rounds) equal to the Healer's Curative Gift.

The recipient (whom the Healer must touch with his staff or hands) becomes completely immune to Life Energy Drain, Petrification and Poison – as well as to a Helead's Fatal Kiss. This immunity also extends to all diseases, natural or otherwise – but only for the indicated period of time.

Magnitude 5: Divine Caduceus

This power allows the Healer to infuse his staff with the righteous anger of someone who serves life against those who take it.

The Healer can use the staff as a regular melee weapon, with a Melee bonus equal to his Curative Gift and standard damage (1d6). In addition, Monsters and Spirits with Life Energy Drain, Poison or Petrification will suffer extra damage equal to the Healer's Curative Gift (with no saving roll). These attacks can also affect Insubstantial beings, which will suffer full damage. Lastly, the Healer adds his Curative Gift to his EDC against all melee and missile attacks. All these effects last for a number of rounds equal to the Healer's Curative Gift.

This power cannot be used to harm Beasts or anyone who has never harmed another creature in anger or in cold blood.

Magnitude 6: Divine Resurrection

This power allows the Healer to bring the dead back to life. Unlike the Napaea's Kiss of Life, it does work on individuals who died from natural causes – but not anyone who has been dead for a number of rounds greater than the Healer's Curative Gift.

However, every time this power is used incurs a cumulative 1% chance (1% the first time, 2% the second time, etc) of arousing the anger of Hades for disrupting the flow of dead souls to his realm. The nature of this anger is left to the Maze Master to determine. Once triggered, the chance of arousing it again is reset to 1% for the next use of this power.

* Without this power, a staff can only be used according to the staff-fighting rules found in the *M&M Companion*.

PANKRATIasts & PUGILISM

A new optional character class, unarmed critical hits and a fistful of other things!

by **Colin Chapman**, with a few additional ideas by Olivier Legrand

PANKRATIAST

The Pankratiast is an athlete, the undisputed master of pugilism and wrestling. Punches, kicks, grapples, chokes and takedowns form his arsenal, one he requires no weapons to employ.

Primary Attributes: Might and Skill.

Gender: Male only.

Basic Hits = 12

Duck and Weave: Pankratiasts are skilled at making themselves difficult targets and add their Skill bonus to their melee EDC, unless they are surprised or wearing a breastplate.

Special Moves: Their training gives Pankratiasts access to various special unarmed combat moves. In game terms, this allows them to combine pugilism or wrestling with any of the following special tactics (which can normally only be used in armed melee): *Charge Into Battle, Subterfuge, Bashing, Double Attack and Disarming*. See the *Players Manual* (p 24) and *M&M Companion* (p 14) for more details.

Unarmed Master: Each Pankratiast must choose whether his greatest skill lies in pugilism (Master Pugilist) or in wrestling (Master Wrestler). This mastery gives him two extra combat benefits (one offensive and one defensive), as detailed below.

Weapon of Choice: Pugilism.

Level Benefits: Each level beyond the first gives a Pankratiast +4 Hits, +1 to Luck and +2 to Might, Will or Skill (player's choice).

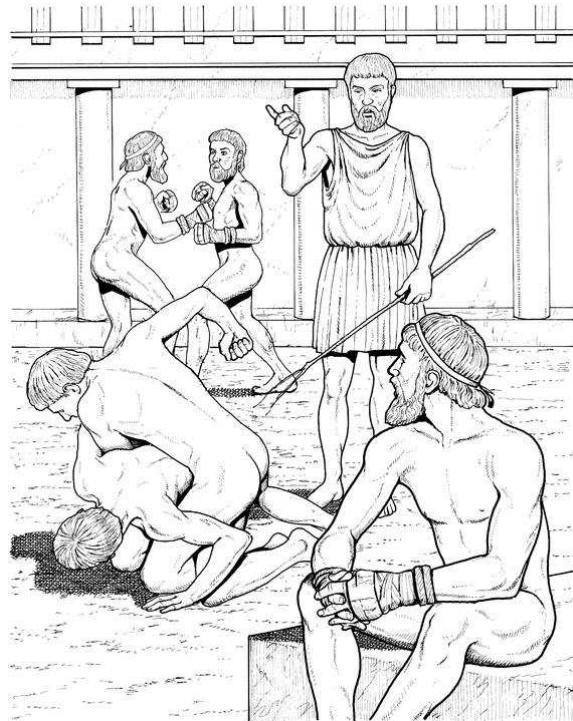
Possessions: Cesti (leather straps that wrap around and protect the fists). Their starting wealth is equal to 3D6 x 5 silver pieces.

Background Talents: Pankratiasts must take the Wrestler talent and another chosen from Acrobat, Healer or Orator. If you do not use talents but intend to use this class, Pankratiasts should still be given the benefits of the Wrestler talent.

Patron Deities: Most Pankratiasts follow Palaistra, the goddess of unarmed combat (see next page).

Advancement: As other warriors.

Reputation Effect: Athletic Fame. Pankratiasts benefit from the reputation effect when dealing with other athletes and sport enthusiasts.



Master Pugilist

Attack: The Pankratiast increases the damage of their blows from 1D3 + Might mod to 1D6 + Might for subdual damage, and may choose to inflict 1D3 + Might mod of real damage instead (pugilism is still ineffective against beasts and monsters, however).

Defense: The Pankratiast can block the attacks of other pugilists and melee weapons as per the *Weapon Parry* tactic. This cannot be used, however, against Large or Gigantic opponents or against the natural attacks of Beasts and other creatures.

Master Wrestler

Attack: The Pankratiast adds their Skill mod to their Might score when applying grappling holds, making it harder for opponents to break free. They also add their Skill mod to their damage when 'wrestling for blood' (see *Minotaur* no.5, pg. 56).

Defense: The Pankratiast adds their Might mod to all attempts to break free from a grapple, entangle, or hold whether delivered by a creature or wrestling opponent. It cannot be used, however, against Large or Gigantic opponents.

Palaistra



Palaistra is the goddess of wrestling, and daughter of Hermes. A boyish figure with very short hair, she cares nothing for femininity, but delights only in the arts of wrestling and pugilism, of pitting raw skill and power against an opponent for enjoyment or sport.

Symbol: An olive branch (olive oil is used by wrestlers, and victors wear an olive wreath).

Typical Worshippers: Pankratiasts, as well as some other athletes. Since she is, at best, a minor deity, she is not allowed to have proper Priests (let alone Divine Agents) or temples of her own – but every pankration schools has a shrine dedicated to her.

The Art of Pankration

New School vs. Old School

Over the last few years, a new style of unarmed combat combining the techniques of wrestling and pugilism with some never-seen-before moves has appeared in the Land of the Three Cities.

Scoffed and scorned by the traditional tenants of proper pugilism and wrestling, this new “martial art” (as it is sometimes termed), known as *Pankration*, has grown increasingly popular with young men who want to devote their life to mastering the science of unarmed combat – as Pankratiasts.

Since it is a novel (and not so well-accepted) art, *pankration* is only taught in three schools – one in each of the Three Cities. The first pankration school was that of Thena, with the royal blessing of King Theseos (himself a keen connoisseur of unarmed combat techniques); Heraklians quickly felt they couldn’t let the Thenans boast the exclusive mastery of some new fighting technique and the pankration school of Heraklia was created less than two years after its Thenan forerunner; not to be outdone, Argos quickly jumped on the bandwagon and pankration soon became something of a craze among the young men of Minea – many of them frequent the school of their city for occasional practice (or just to show off because, you know, *pankration is soooo cool*) but only a few of them have what it takes to become true Pankratiasts.

The Legacy of Bruxos

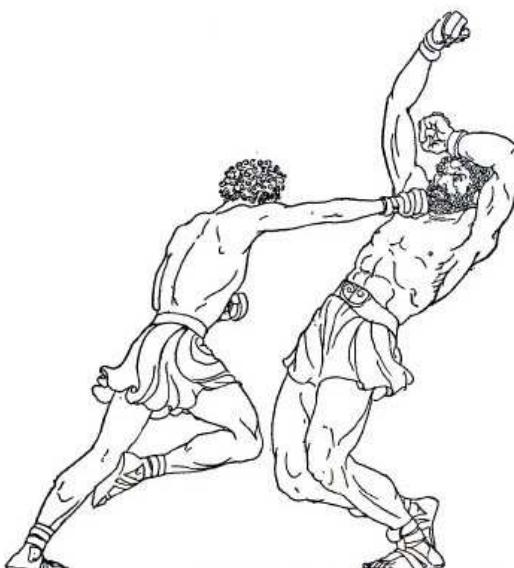
Pankration was invented some 20 years ago by the great Thenan philosopher **Bruxos**, who also was a peerless athlete (which does tend to be something of a rarity among philosophers) and had always been fascinated by the concept of unarmed combat as a true *art*. The three schools were created (and are still run) by his former disciples.

According to most reliable sources, Bruxos began to develop pankration after returning his travels to the far east, beyond the Land of the Sun, where he had learned many forgotten secrets of unarmed combat, but some of his disciples insist that their master was actually visited by the goddess Palaistra - who, it should be noted, was almost unheard of before the creation of pankration helped to popularize her name throughout the Land of the Three Cities.

A few years ago, Bruxos met a heroic and untimely death under the gaze of a Gorgon, who turned him to stone before he could use his art on her. The stone statue of Bruxos which can be seen in the pankration school of Thena is actually the petrified body of the great martial sage. The statue is always shown by the pankration masters to their pupils as a reminder of no matter how perfect your fighting skills are, you are never truly invincible.

Pugilism Critical Hits

Maze Masters who already use the Critical Hits tables from the *M&M Companion* and who wish to extend these rules to pugilism should use the table given next page when a critical hit is scored by a player-character or major NPC (whether or not he is a Pankratiast) fighting with his bare hands. Keep in mind, though, that pugilism cannot be used against animal or monstrous opponents. If this optional rule is used, pugilism should also entail the risk of a fumble, as per the usual rules.



- And that's a Pugilism Critical Hit, buddy!



Beware the right hook of the Boxotaur...

Pugilism Critical Hits

1-4 = Stunned!

Opponent takes normal unarmed damage and is -2 to attack and EDC next round.

5-8 = Dazed!

Opponent takes normal unarmed damage and is -4 to attack and EDC next round.

9-12 = Knocked Down!

Opponent takes normal damage and is knocked down and must spend a round getting back up. Prone characters suffer a -4 penalty to EDC.

13-15 = Disarmed!

Opponent takes damage as normal and his weapon is knocked from his hand — picking it up takes a full round, during which the opponent can perform no other action than defense (with a -4 penalty to his EDC). If the opponent has no handheld weapon, treat as Knocked Down.

16-17 = Crushing Blow!

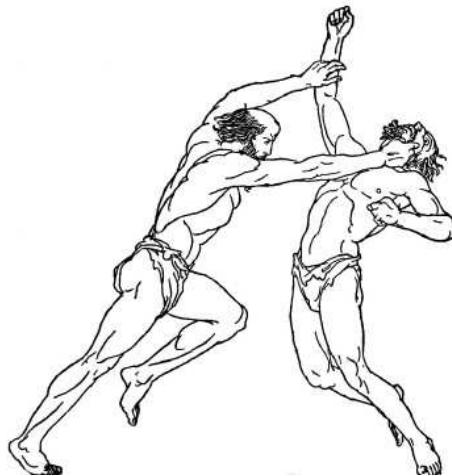
Opponent takes subdual damage as normal and suffers the same amount of real damage.

18-20 = Knock Out!

Opponent is instantly knocked out. His subdual damage total is immediately bumped to its maximum and will be decreased by 1D6 when he regains consciousness, as per the usual rules (see *Players Manual*, p 26).

2012 Bonus Content!

Wrestling Critical Rolls



- So, what do you think of this new optional rule?

This extra optional rule allows you to extend the concept of critical results to Wrestling.

If a wrestling attack results in a *critical success*, no extra roll on a special table is needed: the attacker has simply succeeded in locking his opponent in an inescapable hold; the grappled character or creature simply has NO chance of breaking free (no Melee roll against the wrestler's Might score), as long as the wrestler is maintaining his hold. Needless to say, such a result is especially welcome when trying to wrestle a Large creature!

If this option is used, wrestling should also entail the risk of a fumble, as per the usual rules. If such a result occurs, no extra roll on a Fumble table is needed; the attacker automatically suffers the effects of a *Trip / Fall* melee fumble: the character falls to the ground and must spend a round getting back up. Prone characters suffer a penalty of -4 to their EDC in melee.

Breaking Free

And since we are talking about wrestling, here is a little rule clarification that *should* have made it in the Silver Jubilee Edition of the *M&M Companion*.

Characters (or creatures) who try to break free from a wrestling, grappling or entangling attack can make their first roll against their attacker's Might right after the successful attack. If this first roll fails, they will have to wait the very end of each subsequent battle round to try again (i.e. subsequent 'break free' rolls are made at the end of the melee phase, once all attacks have been resolved).

MARKSMEN & MISSILES

New Missile Combat Options for Mazes & Minotaurs Sharpshooters



Playtesting the new Careful Aim option

Why should melee fighters get all the fun? They have access to a whole repertoire of special tactics and techniques, while all missile users have to do is to shoot their bow, throw their javelin or do whatever-it-is-thay-you-do-with-a-sling until they run out of projectiles. Here are four new options for those who want to give missile combat a bit more pizzazz and flexibility. As usual, the following rules are strictly optional and subject to the approval of your Maze Master.

Careful Aim

Only characters of above-average Skill (13+) may use this option. The shooter waits an entire battle round before firing his bow or throwing his missile; in other words, he spends one full round aiming and makes his attack during the missile phase of the following battle round.

This extra aiming time gives the character a bonus on his Missile attack roll equal to his Skill mod; this bonus will be lost if the character's concentration is broken (by an opponent's attack etc) while he takes his Careful Aim.

Unlike standard Missile attacks, a Careful Aim is totally incompatible with any form of movement.

Vital Spots

As its name implies, this special missile attack aims at a target's most vulnerable spots. It can only be used by characters of above-average Skill (13+) and is useless against Animates (who have no vital spots to speak of).

The character must take a Careful Aim (see above) but instead of adding his Skill bonus to his attack roll, he suffers a -4 penalty; if he does hit, however, his Skill bonus will be added to his damage roll. This bonus is cumulative with the damage bonus of Amazons and Hunters, making this option truly devastating in the hands of a true marksman (or markswoman, sorry girls).

Quick Shot

This maneuver allows a character to sacrifice accuracy for speed. It can only be used by a character of above-average Skill (13+), using his *weapon of choice*.

When making a quick shot, the character's Skill mod is added to his Initiative score but his attack only uses a single D20 instead of taking the best roll of two (i.e. the attack roll is resolved as if the character wasn't using his *weapon of choice*). Since the attack still occurs during the missile phase, this option is only really useful against other missile-users; it obviously cannot be combined with a Careful Aim.

Run & Throw

This option can only be used when throwing a javelin or spear and requires an above-average Might (13+). It can be seen as the Missile equivalent of a *Charge into Battle*. It allows the character to add his Might mod to his Missile attack roll, provided he waits for the *melee* phase of the current round to make his Missile attack roll *and has not been engaged in melee* by an opponent with a higher Initiative in the meantime.

The character also needs to run for at least 10' (during the movement phase) to gather the required momentum – but since he must stop this movement before throwing his missile, this maneuver does not qualify as a case of "firing while moving". If all these conditions are met, the attack will occur during the *melee* phase, at the attacker's usual Initiative.

This option cannot be combined with a Careful Aim, Quick Shot or any other Skill-based option.

Luke G. Reynard

GIVE MAGICIANS A FIGHTING CHANCE!



- Frankly, do you see ANY reason, I mean any REAL reason why I shouldn't be allowed to wear this, too?

In M&M, warriors are (logically enough) the kings of the battlefield – and magicians tend to be the most vulnerable characters, especially at low level. The following (purely optional) rule variants have been designed to make magicians slightly more “battle-ready” than they are under the official M&M rules.

Magicians & Armor

According to the various class descriptions in the *Players Manual*, wearing armor disrupts magical activities - but does this disruption really have to result in a *complete* impossibility to use magic? Some Maze Masters might prefer a more nuanced approach, with armor *hindering* the use of magical powers rather than prohibiting it completely.

The easiest way to handle this is to apply a penalty of -2 to the magician's Magical Talent for each piece of protective equipment (helmet, breastplate, shield). If the total penalty reduces the character's Magical Talent to 0 (or less), then he will be unable to use his powers with so much metal on himself.

Thus, a Sorcerer wearing a helmet and breastplate would suffer a -4 to his Psychic Gift – in other words, he would need a Psychic Gift of at least 5 to be able to use his powers with so much metal on himself and would always do so at a disadvantage.

At the discretion of the Maze Master, this penalty could be halved to -1 in the case of Priests wearing magical helmets, breastplates or shields directly associated with their patron deity – such as a Priest of Ares wearing a Breastplate of Ares or a Priestess of Athena wearing a Helmet of Athena.

This Magical Talent penalty should *not* affect the magician's Mystic Strength; in other words, wearing armor should make a magician's powers less efficient or powerful but not easier to resist.

Maintaining Concentration

Why should a powerful or strong-minded magician be unable to maintain his concentration *in spite of possible distractions*? Sure, in most such situations, a magician's concentration should be disrupted, but making this disruption *likely* rather than *automatic* could add an extra element of drama to the use of magic powers during fast-and-furious scenes.

The most obvious method to break a magician's concentration is direct physical injury: as the M&M rules currently stand, any successful attack against a magician occurring while he prepares his magic should be enough to break his concentration and abort the whole operation. Maze Masters who wish to make things less clear cut should allow magicians in this situation to test their Mystic Fortitude in order to maintain their concentration despite the injury; the target number of this saving roll should be equal to $15 + \text{the number of Hits of damage inflicted by the injury}$. Thus, a magician hit by an arrow for 4 Hits of damage while operating his powers would have to roll 19+ in order to maintain his concentration.

As the proverbial exception to the rule, successful *surprise* attacks *always* break the concentration of the target, regardless of how much damage they do, with no saving roll allowed.

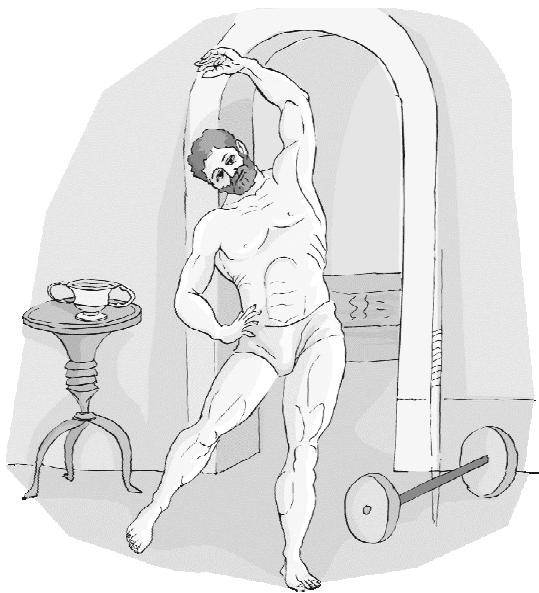
In the case of powers which require a magician to maintain his concentration over several rounds (such as the various *Songs* of Lyrists, who often have to play for a whole minute before their magic takes effect), possible interruptions may also include magical distractions - such as, say, the *Nature's Seduction* of a Nymph or the *Swirling Winds* of an Air Elementalist: in such cases, magicians who fail their saving roll against the distracting magical effect automatically lose their concentration, while those who successfully resist the attack remain focused if they made their saving roll by at least 5 points. If, for instance, a Sorceress wants to keep a victim under her Compelling despite being attacked by an enemy Sorcerer's Psychic Attack with a Mystic Strength of 17, she will have to roll a total of at least 22 on her Mystic Fortitude roll in order to resist the Psychic Attack AND maintain her Compelling; if she rolls anything from 17 to 21, she will resist the attack but her concentration will have been broken.

But what about non-violent, non-magical distractions (you know, things like trying to break the magician's concentration by making loud noises, silly gestures etc)? Well, frankly, such cheap tricks should simply *never* be allowed to work – so, yes, forget about interrupting a Lyrist's Song by shouting or singing “something else”), unless the Maze Master thinks the diversion would be enough to actually cause *surprise* in a combat situation.

Luke G. Reynard (updated in 2012)

NO MEAN FEAT!

Alternate, Expanded & Updated Rules for Feats of Strength, by Luke G. Reynard



- Ah, at last! A new system for Feats of Strength!

Editor's Note: This is a slightly revised version of an article originally published in Luke G. Reynard's *Minotaur* column, *A Twist in the Maze*. Some minor changes were made to make it fully compatible with the Silver Jubilee edition rules of M&M. While we were at it, we also seized this opportunity to remove some of Mr Reynard's more annoying and self-aggrandizing comments. (WOT?-Luke)

What's Wrong?

I've never liked the way Feats of Strength worked in *Mazes & Minotaurs* – for at least two excellent reasons. The first reason is a purely esthetic one: Feats of Strength use 1d10 and require you to "roll under", which seems to be an arbitrary, gratuitous and quite warty exception to the general M&M rules, in which almost all challenging actions are resolved with a d20 roll and, perhaps more importantly, according to the "higher is better" principle.

The second reason is more technical. Under the current rules, having a higher Might does not actually allow you to do better (ie lift heavier objects etc) but simply gives you a higher chance to succeed at the same generic Feat of Strength – whereas logic would seem to dictate that being Mightier should make you *stronger* in terms of capacity – as is the case with Encumbrance, which is another direct application of a character's Might.

Since it's never too late to correct a mistake and this issue has a strong athletic theme, I thought I could give it a shot and devise a more elaborate, alternate system for resolving Feats of Strength.

Basic System

Unlike the official rules, this new system allows the Maze Master to rate the actual difficulty of a given Feat of Strength, in terms of how much Might is actually required to perform the task.

Let's face it: not all actions which can be described as "Feats of Strength" have the same uniform level of difficulty and ripping iron manacles from a wall should logically require even more Might than, say, breaking down a heavy door.

When a Feat of Strength is called for, the Maze Master simply rates the difficulty of the Feat on the following scale, which is roughly similar (but not identical) to the usual d20 target numbers:

Challenging = 15

Spectacular = 20

Herculean = 25

Most Feats of Strength will be either Challenging (difficult) or Spectacular (bloody hard). Herculean feats are normally beyond the possibilities of player-characters – except those with truly phenomenal physical strength (Might 19+), who *may* have a chance of success (as detailed below) and, of course, characters who have been bestowed the Divine Gift of Strength (see *Players Manual*, p 31), who always succeed at such feats.

Breaking down a door, for instance, is usually a Challenging Feat of Strength, unless that door is especially heavy, in which case the difficulty could become Spectacular; breaking iron chains, on the other hand, qualifies as a truly Herculean Feat. Note that these examples clearly show the need for different levels of difficulty here.

Once the difficulty level has been defined, simply compare it to the character's Might score. If the character's Might is equal to or greater than the difficulty, then the Feat is automatically successful.

Thus, characters with a Might of 15 or more will always succeed at Challenging Feats of Strength (such as, say, breaking down most doors).

If, on the other hand, the character's Might is lower than the required threshold, he may still have a chance of accomplishing the Feat by *pushing the limits*, as described on next page.



- Does this qualify as a *Titanic* Feat?

Pushing the Limits

This requires a Physical Vigor saving roll against a difficulty level of 20. A successful roll does not mean the character succeeds at the Feat but allows him to boost his Might score by 1d6 for this particular Feat; if this is enough to bring the score to the required threshold, the Feat succeeds; otherwise (or if the saving roll failed), the character is simply unable to push his limits and may not attempt that same Feat again – at least not until he has increased his Might score or until he benefits from some strength-boosting item or magical effect (such as, say, a Divine Prodigy of Strength).

If the saving roll fails *and* its total roll is less than 10, the character has strained a muscle and suffers a temporary loss of 1d3 points of Might, which will return at the rate of 1 point per full hour of rest.

Let's now take a closer look at the inner workings of the system. Might remains the most important factor here – and even the only relevant factor, unless the character has to push the limits of his strength, in which case Might (sheer physical power), Will (ability to exert oneself) and Luck (overall divine favor) all come into play in the form of the Physical Vigor roll made to *push the limits*, making this variant more consistent with the game mechanics and overall philosophy of the Revised rules.

Working Together

But what, you ask, if two or even three characters try to pool their strength together? This might not always be possible (depending on the actual nature of the feat) but how do we solve this when the possibility does arise in play? Simple. Take the highest Might score as your basis and add the Might bonus(es) of the other character(s). Thus, if Pyros the 1st level Spearman (Might 13) gets the help of

Krondar the über-Barbarian (Might 20, for a Might mod of +4), his effective Might will be equal to 17. Since the system relies on Might bonuses, those with a lower Might won't be of any help here; if the characters need to push the limits, everybody makes a Physical Vigor roll and if at least one of them succeeds, then the collective Might score get the usual 1d6 boost (but no more – i.e. two successful rolls won't give you a 2d6 boost).

Monstrous Strength

Since creatures never need to make Physical Vigor saving rolls anyway, Maze Masters should simply use common sense and dramatic license here. As a rule of thumb, Large creatures should automatically succeed at Feats of Strength, regardless of the level of difficulty – and may even be able to perform even more impressive feats of strength, at the Maze Master's discretion. As for Gigantic creatures, well, we don't need a system for that, do we?

Herculean Exploits

Maze Master who wish to add an extra mythic touch to this already very nifty (*you know, Luke, humility and genius are NOT necessarily incompatible – Ed*) and suitably heroic system may reward warriors who succeed at a truly Herculean feat of strength *by their own means* (ie alone *and* without any form of magical assistance) with 20 Glory points, especially if the feat was performed in highly perilous or dramatic circumstances.

Example: the Strength of Krondar

Trapped in a terrible death trap with his adventuring buddies, Krondar the Barbarian decides to lift the heavy iron gates that prevent him and his friends from escaping certain death. The ruthless Maze Master rules that this will require a truly Herculean Feat of Strength – which would normally make it impossible but since Krondar has an awesome Might of 20, he does have a small chance of success if he manages to push his limits. This will require a successful Physical Vigor saving roll against a target number of 20 and then a roll of 5 or 6 on 1d6 (in order to bring his Might score to the required 25). Krondar has a Physical Vigor of +9, so he must roll 11 or more on 1D20: he makes it easily, but this only allows him to boost his effective strength by 1d6. Rolling 1d6, he gets a measly 2... which brings his Might to 22 – not enough to succeed at a Herculean feat!

Despite his extraordinary Might and his best efforts, Krondar fails to lift the iron gates. "Any clever idea?" he asks his friends. The Priest of Poseidon then remembers he does have access to the Divine Prodigy of Strength; he uses it on the party's Noble, who easily lifts the iron gates, allowing the party to escape (and leaving Krondar a bit upset).

TRICK... OR THREAT?

A Maze Master's Field Guide to Dirty Tricks and Clever Stratagems

by Olivier Legrand



Tricks & Stratagems

We all have in mind the way the famous Greek hero Odysseus managed to trick, lure or outwit his most dangerous foes (such as the Cyclops Polyphemus) or the clever stratagems used by so many fictional heroes to avoid direct confrontation with supposedly invincible monsters...

Yet, the M&M rules do not include anything about the use of tricks against creatures, beyond the rules on Subterfuge tactics, which can only be used in melee combat.

Sure, the *M&M Companion* does include rules about traps and deception but neither topic really covers the kind of tricks and stratagems we are discussing here: the traps described in the *M&M Companion* are physical traps and the type of deception covered in the Influence rules is purely verbal and cannot be used on Beasts or Monsters.

Unlike indoor or outdoor traps, tricks and stratagems do not require any material trigger and rely on purely psychological elements, such as distraction or disorientation. And unlike deception, they do not require any form of social interaction with their intended target – indeed, one of the chief purposes of such stratagems is to work against enemies that cannot be persuaded, seduced or intimidated, like wild animals, monstrous creatures or fanatical fighters... This article presents simple optional rules that allow Maze Masters to handle such stratagems in game terms without excessive complication, die rolling or number-crunching.

A Question of Wits

But before we proceed any further, we must tackle one of the Great Perennial Problems of roleplaying: player intelligence vs character intelligence...

A character's ability to devise tricks and stratagems should logically depend on his Wits score, since this attribute represents (among other things) cleverness and ingenuity. But let's be honest: giving a player a significant advantage simply because he made a Wits roll would not be a very exciting solution. Sure, some games do use « idea rolls » as an abstract way to reflect a character's intelligence (as opposed to the player's intelligence – or lack thereof)... but, sincerely, how « fun » is the following dialogue?

Player – We should try to trick this darn Minotaur out of its lair... Do I have a clever idea?

Maze Master – Roll your Wits.

Player – Made it! I do have a clever idea. What is it?

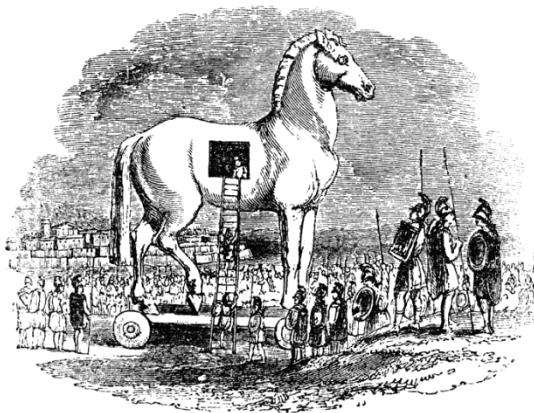
During a game session, tricks, stratagems and other brilliant ideas are much more enjoyable when they are the products of a player's own cleverness and imagination – rather than the products of an abstract game procedure (and a lucky die roll). On the other hand, one may rightfully object that if a character's Wits has nothing to do with his effective cleverness and ingenuity, then this attribute is pretty pointless.

So, ideally, devising tricks and stratagems in M&M should depend on player intelligence AND character intelligence. Combining these disparate elements doesn't have to be difficult. In fact, the easiest way to achieve such a compromise is to give each element (player intelligence / character intelligence) a different function in game terms.

Player intelligence should be the only source of clever ideas. In other words, there is NO way a Wits roll is going to GIVE you an idea you were not bright enough to have in the first place.

So where does my character's Wits score come into play, you ask?

The answer is simple: your character's Wits score is used to see whether or not he can put your clever idea in practice. Thus, astute players will be able to take full advantage of a character's high Wits score, while players with low-Wits characters will find it far harder to turn a clever idea into an effective result.



- Don't really expect this thing to work twice, do you?

In other words, the « cleverness » of a trick does NOT depend on the trick itself but on the Wits score of the trickster. That's right: if two characters with different Wits score have exactly the same idea for a stratagem, the idea of the character with the better Wits score will « work better » than the other.

This reasoning might seem a bit weird at first but remember that we are simulating myth and fiction here, not reality. In many mythic or fictional tales, the clever plans or subterfuges used by heroes are not THAT clever... but they almost always work – not because they were intrinsically clever but because they were thought up and carried out by a « clever hero ». The following rules are based on a similar reasoning (*Wow, Luke, you really deserve an award for Acrobatic Justification on this one - Editor*)

According to this reasoning (and to the rules given, below) characters with high Wits (such as Thieves or Hunters, who both have Wits as one of their primary attributes) are more likely to use tricks because *their* ideas will tend to work better.

My Cunning Ploy...

Because of their very nature, tricks and stratagems can only be adjudicated by the Maze Master on a case-by-case basis.

When a player comes up with one of these « clever ideas », the Maze Master must decide whether or not this idea can effectively be used to trick, lure or otherwise fool a creature.

Examples of appropriate ideas include using food to lure an animal out of its lair, attracting (or diverting) a monster's attention with loud noises or rubbing oneself with odoriferous herbs to fool a creature's sense of smell.

Examples of inept or stupid ideas include trying to make a flying creature crash into a tree, wall or mountain by distracting its attention, trying to make a Chimera sick with noxious fumes or attempting to scare a Minotaur with loud cries.

The Maze Master should take into account the idea itself as well as the current circumstances: time, space and equipment may be crucial factors here.

To see if a trick or stratagem actually works, Maze Masters should use the following procedure:

- a) Roll 1d6 for the trickster and add his Wits mod.
- b) Roll 1d6 for the intended victim and add its/his Cunning mod (eg 0 for Average Cunning, +1 for Alert, +2 for Clever and +3 for Crafty). Beings with Sixth Sense also get a +2 bonus here. If the victim is a major NPC, use his Wits mod in lieu of Cunning.
- c) Compare the two rolls. If the trickster's roll is higher, the trick or stratagem works. If the intended victim's roll is higher, the target sees through the trick and does not fall for it. If the two rolls are equal, the victim is uncertain and hesitates: repeat the procedures but this time, a tie will be enough to alert the intended victim.

Thus, characters with high Wits may be able to trick the most cunning beings, while characters with low Wits can only hope to lure the dumbest victims...

Speaking of dumbness, Mindless creatures should be made *completely* immune to trickery ; this may seem paradoxical, but when you come to think of it, you've got to have a mind in order to be stupid... Thus, tricks and stratagems will be totally useless against Animates and many Spirits.

Speaking of this, the intended victim's taxonomy should also be an important factor here: it is pretty obvious that some tricks that may work on Folks just won't work on Beasts and vice versa.

The Maze Master will also have to adjudicate the effects of a successful trick or stratagem – again, on a case-by-case basis. In most cases, this effect will be either surprise (as per the usual surprise rules) or distraction (the creature's attention is diverted from a specific spot for a variable number of battle rounds – if in doubt, simply roll 1d6). In all cases, a successful trick should result in a specific behavior, action or event rather than in a numerical bonus.

Elaborate Tricks

The d6-based procedure detailed above only covers the “intellectual” aspect of things. In many cases, the proper execution of a stratagem will be a more complex process, involving other crucial elements (which may require their own die rolls). Here are the most common examples of such extra complications and refinements:

Stealth / Concealment: If the trick requires that the trickster remains unnoticed by his intended victim, the required stealth / detection rolls should be resolved before the trick itself... and if the trickster is detected, then the stratagem simply won't work.

Influence / Manipulation: Some stratagems may also require the use of influence or deception (*M&M Companion*, p 31-32). In such cases, use the same method as for stealth above: the trick can only be attempted if the influence or deception succeeds).¹

Traps: If the trick is all about leading the target into a physical trap (falling into a pit etc), then the poor victim should be allowed the usual detection roll *after* failing for the stratagem.

Magic: Some stratagems may also involve magic, such as the Illusions created by a Sorcerer. In such cases, make the victim's Mystic Fortitude saving roll first and proceed with the trick itself if this roll fails.

Group Situations

You know the saying: strength is in numbers... but strength and intelligence are not the same thing. In other words, the number of victims you are trying to trick does not really have a significant impact on your chances of success. On the other hand, the presence of a single, brighter individual in a group of intended victims might change everything.

If the trick is aimed at a group of victims (such as, say, a band of Boarmen or a pair of guards), the system stays the same: the Maze Master should only make one roll for the whole group. If the targets do not have the same degree of Cunning, simply use the highest Cunning in the group; likewise, a single being with Sixth Sense will be enough to grant a +2 on such a collective roll.

On the other side of the trick, the Maze Master should always use the highest Wits modifier in the party, even if that character was not the one to come up with the clever idea in the first place: this does not mean that this character "steals" the idea, but that his superior ingenuity and cleverness will improve its chances of working as intended. The only exception to this rule is when the actual execution of a trick or stratagem (as opposed to its planning or installation) involves several characters: in such cases, the tricksters' roll should be modified by the *lowest* Wits mod in the group ("Damn it, that stupid fool Pyros has ruined everything!").

Final Considerations

Tricks and stratagems can add an extra "fun factor" to many adventure encounters... but don't let them rule the game. The Maze Master is the final judge on what may (or may not) qualify as a « clever idea » and should never hesitate to say NO.

If a player comes up with a ludicrous or inept idea, the Maze Master should inform him that this « trick » has no chance to work ; if the player insists on trying it anyway, the trick will automatically fail, preferably in a catastrophic or humiliating manner... don't overdo this, however, otherwise your scenario will soon transform into a sword-and-sandal version of some Roadrunner / Wile E. Coyote cartoon.



Big + Dumb + One-eyed = Obvious Trick Victim

If a player comes out with a really, really clever or devious idea, the Maze Master may give him a +1 bonus on his d6 roll.

Conversely, a very crude (but not completely inept) idea may give a +1 bonus to the creature's d6 roll (making the stratagem less likely to succeed).

Also keep in mind that even the stupidest victim won't fall for the same trick twice: tricks and stratagems should be about creativity, not repetition.

Lastly, sadistic Maze Masters may consider using tricks and stratagems *against* the unfortunate player characters. In this case, simply use the system the other way around, adding the highest Wits mod in the party to the d6 roll.

Of course, players who are bright enough to see through the Maze Master's cunning ploy do not need to make this saving roll ; sometimes, player intelligence DOES demonstrate its superiority over character intelligence...

Olivier Legrand (2008)

¹ Speaking of influence and deception, the simple d6-based system described in this article could also be used to resolve bluffing and other forms of verbal manipulation for those who dislike the optional Influence rules given in the "M&M Companion" or find them too complex for their own gaming tastes.

FAVORED BY FATE

An optional Fate points system for MAZES & MINOTAURS, by Igor A. Rivendell

Many recently-published RPGs feature the concept of Hero / Fate / Karma points – a pool of points which a player can spend to turn the odds in his character's favor, make him succeed at heroic tasks in desperate circumstances or even allow him to "cheat death" in the manner of so many fictional heroes. Such a system could add an extra touch of epic heroism to Mazes & Minotaurs, as noted by our Philosopher friend in a recent issue of the Griffin.

This article presents an attempt to bring such a system to the game without disrupting its venerable, time-tested mechanics. The rules detailed below are, of course, entirely optional and should only be used by those Maze Masters who really want to add a sense of destiny (or simply an extra touch of "pulpy" heroism) to their M&M campaigns.

Fate and Fortune

But before we see how our Fate points work in game terms, let's examine more closely how the concept of Fate relates to (and differs from) the concept of Fortune, as reflected in game terms by the all-pervasive, omnipresent attribute of Luck.

At first, having both Luck and Fate as separate game concepts may seem somewhat redundant, especially given the fact that a character's Luck already affects so many things in the game (no, don't worry, we won't go into the old "Luck-is-too-powerful" debate here).

Yet, on closer inspection, we find that Fate and Fortune actually represented very different things for the ancient Greeks – and could thus conceivably be reflected by different game concepts in M&M. Without going too heavy on metaphysics (we'll leave this to our Philosopher friend), we can define the difference between Fortune and Fate as follows: Fortune is essentially random and always retains an element of unpredictability, while Fate appears to be rooted in certainty and ineluctability.

The unpredictable and random aspect of Fortune is already quite well reflected by the effects of Luck in game terms: a character's Luck score affects all his attack and saving rolls (as well as basic Defense Class, Personal Charisma etc) but never really gives the absolute certainty of success or survival: even characters with extraordinary Luck scores can miss a foe or fail a saving roll.



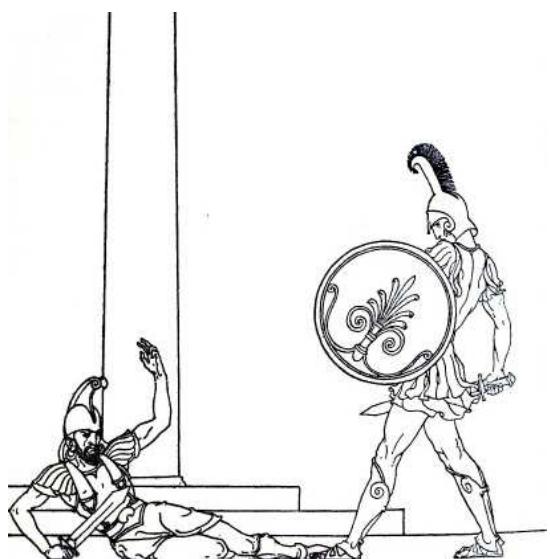
Behold the Power of Fate!

(Nice original illustration by Chuck Parish)

If we want to add an element of Fate in the game, we will have to make its impact on play significantly different from that of Luck – Luck and Fate should not only be different things, they should work differently in game terms.

Yet, for all their differences, Fate and Fortune also share some (very) common elements: both are supposed to be out of a character's control, both may help or hinder characters in critical situations, both are linked to the will and whim of the Gods and, last but not least, despite their apparent opposition, Fate and Fortune somehow seem to be inextricably tied to one another – much like the two plates of the same (cosmic?) balance.

But enough metaphysics! Keeping all the above in mind, let's now see how Fate points could work with the Revised Mazes & Minotaurs rules.



- Hold on! I've still got one Fate point to spend!

Fate & Level

All player-characters start their adventuring career with 1 Fate point at first level. Once spent, Fate points cannot be recovered: the only way to get a new Fate point is to reach a new level.

Each time a player-character reaches a new level, he gains a number of Fate points equal to this new level – but these points must be spent before the character reaches the next level.

Fate points which are not spent before a new level is reached are simply lost; they will not be added to the Fate points granted by the new level. Thus, a character who reaches level 5 will have 5 Fate points, regardless of how many Fate point he spent at level 4 (or at any other previous level).

This rule has two important consequences. First, it is impossible for characters to "hoard" or "save" Fate points from one level to another. Secondly, the higher a character's level, the more Fate points he gets to spend. Why? Because each new level represents an important step in the accomplishment or in the revelation of the character's destiny: thus, the higher the level, the more important a character becomes in the grand tapestry of things.

In other words, the number of Fate points available to a character can never be higher than his level. In reality, since spent Fate points are not recovered.

Calling on Fate

Whenever a player must make an attack roll or saving roll for his character, he may decide to spend 1 Fate point instead. In this case, the player does not need to roll the d20: everything is resolved as if he had rolled a result of 20, plus the appropriate saving roll or attack mod.

This rule applies to all attack and saving rolls – including the Physical Vigor roll that must be made when a wounded character falls to zero Hit. Thus, a character's life may be saved by the power of Destiny, in the form of a wisely-spent Fate point.

The way Fate points work illustrates the "certainty" concept mentioned above: while a character's Fortune (Luck) affects most of his die rolls (as well as attacks made against him, since a character's Luck affects his Defense Class), Fate "refuses" randomness and replaces it by a one-time certainty.

In combat, spending a Fate point instead of making an attack roll is usually a sure hit... but will also often result in an automatic critical hit, if the optional Homeric Combat tables from the *Mazes & Minotaurs Companion* are used.

Remember what we said earlier about the subtle connection between Fate and Fortune? Let's see how a character's Fate points interact with his Luck. At first, there does not seem to be any link between the two, since Luck does not affect Fate... but since Fate points are used to replace Luck-related die rolls, players of characters with high Luck scores are more likely to trust their character's good fortune and thus less likely to spend their precious Fate points except when their character's life is directly threatened. Thus, a character's Fortune does interact with his Fate (and vice versa) but in a suitably subtle and flexible manner.

The Limits of Fate

Fate points can only affect attack rolls and saving rolls (both of which are made on 1d20); they cannot be used to influence reaction rolls or other non-d20 rolls, such as damage rolls or feats of strength.

A character's Fate points can only affect his own deeds: they cannot be used to affect someone else's saving rolls, nor can they be used to make your opponents miss you – such things remain the sole province of Fortune, in the form of a character's Luck (which always modifies his Defense Class).



- Sisters, the guy has only 1 Fate point left!



Fate points are NOT for everyone!

The “automatic 20” granted by the expenditure of 1 Fate point should be more than enough to succeed in most circumstances, although some Invulnerable creatures with an extremely high EDC might still remain unhittable (if their EDC is greater than 20 + the character’s attack mod), in which case the Fate point has been (horror!) spent in vain.

This might seem a bit unfair but (a) should occur very rarely and (b) simply means that some very powerful beings are (at least partially) protected from (or by?) the powers of Fate... unless they meet the hero whose Fate was to defeat them (or, in game terms, a warrior with a high-enough attack mod and a few Fate points to spend).

A similar situation may also arise with Mystic Fortitude rolls made against a Mystic Strength so high that the target has absolutely no chance to resist, even with a roll of 20 or the intervention of Fate. There again, we find the idea that some very powerful beings (in this case, very powerful wielders of magic) can “overcome” the Fate of those who are not strong enough to oppose them.

Who's Got Fate?

Creatures should never be given Fate points, no matter how powerful they are. Major NPCs, on the other hand, can be given Fate points by the Maze Master, within the usual limitations.

A simple system to use is to take the character’s level and subtract 1d6: if the result is positive, this shows the number of Fate points available to the character; if the result is zero or negative, then the NPC has no Fate points left. Alternatively, you might also decide to make Fate points an exclusive prerogative of player-characters, who are, after all, the heroes of the story.

If you intend to graft this system to your ongoing M&M campaign, the easiest method is simply to give each player-character a number of Fate points equal to his current level and simply assume that no point were expended so far (and how could they have been expended, since they did not yet exist?). If you find this method too generous, assume that 1d3 Fate points have already been used.

Fate & the Gods

Despite what some of you might expect, the Gods **do not** grant extra Fate points to their champions and protégés. There are two reasons for this.

The first justification is that the Gods themselves acknowledge the power of Fate and prefer to abstain from meddling with them (at least in a too blatant or obtrusive way), since this could upset the Balance of Destiny (whatever that means).

The second, much more convincing reason is that, all things being equal, a Fate point remains less powerful than a Divine Call (a type of Divine Boon detailed in the optional rules on divine agents given in the *Mazes & Minotaurs Companion*)... as well as far less spectacular, and you know how much those deities like to show off.

In fact, when you come to think of it, a Divine Boon can be seen as a super-powerful version of a Fate point. It would therefore be quite fair to rule that Divine Agents can no longer earn Fate points, for they have placed their destiny into the hands of their divine patron. Thus, a character who becomes a Divine Agent at level 4 does not receive the 4 Fate points he should normally receive for reaching level 4, but will receive the usual 3 Divine Boons granted to new agents instead. Each time he reaches a new level, he will gain a new Divine Boon, as per the usual rules, but no Fate point.



Randomia, Goddess of Game Balance

This may seem harsh but keep in mind that Divine Agents are already extremely powerful and that Divine Boons ARE more powerful than Fate points. The “divine destiny” justification is also perfectly logical and consistent with mythical tales.

Lastly, this rule also has the advantage of presenting Fate as an alternative to divine affiliation, by giving a specific advantage to those characters who do NOT become Divine Agents, either because they don’t meet the requirements or simply because they don’t want to: the right to make (or at least to follow) their own Fate.

Fate & Doom

Words like “fatal” or “fatality” remind us that Fate also has a dark, tragic facet. In many mythic tales, heroes who have been protected by Fate are often punished by Fate as well, either for having called on the powers of Fate one time too many or for having thought themselves mightier than Fate itself in a classical crisis of hubris. In game terms, this dark, tragic dimension of Fate (which we shall call Doom) represents the necessity of counter-balancing the wonderful advantages granted by Fate points.

So how can we simulate all this in game terms?

Each player should keep a running total of all the Fate points spent on behalf of his character. This total, called the Destiny total, is a direct indication of how many times the character has called on Fate during his entire life. If a character’s Destiny total ever reaches his current Luck score, then he is on the verge of Doom. In other words, characters should never let their Destiny exceed their Luck, because this would mean Doom.

Each Fate point spent beyond a character’s Destiny limit will literally “force Fate”, qualifying as an act of *hubris*: the Fate point will have the usual effect but will also cause the permanent loss of 1 point of Luck. In other words, Fate will still give the character what he wants but will make him pay a heavy price for that, affecting his long-term Fortune.



- Why, WHY did I have to run out of Fate points?



- Excuse me, ladies, are you the Three Fates?

Depending on a character’s Luck score, the loss of a single point may or may not have a direct impact in game terms: falling from 16 to 15, for instance, will not reduce the character’s Luck mod, but falling from 15 to 14 would reduce it from +2 to +1. Luck losses that do not affect the Luck mod should be interpreted as warning signs of impending doom, while losses that do reduce the Luck mod are clear and manifest retributions on the character’s fortune.

Thus, characters who have reached their Destiny peak can still call on Fate... but at a potentially devastating price, since a reduction of Luck can sometimes create the difference between life and death. That’s what Doom is all about.

If a Doomed character manages to increase his Luck over his Destiny limit (usually by reaching a new level), then he is no longer Doomed – but will obviously have to tread a very fine line if he doesn’t want to be Doomed once again.

Also note that such a reversal of fortune is only possible for characters whose Destiny does not exceed their Luck by more than one point: those who are already way past the limit of their Destiny are simply beyond redemption. Since Luck represents divine favor, this possibility of offsetting Doom by increasing one’s Luck shows that even the Gods can sometimes be merciful too.

Lastly, since Divine Agents no longer earn Fate points, they are virtually immune to the effects of Doom – precisely because of their divine patron’s attention and protection.

Igor A. Rivendell

FUN WITH THE FOUR ELEMENTS

New Options for Classic Elementalists, by Igor A. Rivendell

Ever since they first appeared in the old *Myth & Magic* supplement, Elementalists and their flashy, spectacular powers have been a favorite class choice of many M&M players – but there is more to Elemental Magic than showy FXs and brute force. The purpose of this article is to examine a few nifty (and sometimes dirty) tricks to the Elementalist's repertoire - beyond the elementary (eh eh) uses of his powers. Of course, all the following stuff is strictly optional (for those among you who actually care about such things).

Air Tricks

Sky Diving

An Air Elementalist may use the **Swirling Winds** power to "feather fall" from any height, taking no damage whatsoever from the fall.

Since using magic takes a full battle round of intense concentration, this trick cannot be used as an emergency parachute to save yourself from the consequences of an unexpected fall – but it can save your skin if you are trapped on top of a mountain, tower or other great height with no apparent way of escape...

This effect can be used on a group, with all the usual restrictions (see *Players Manual*, p 32) – but only if the Elementalist himself is part of the falling group, since using this power in this unusual manner requires some very careful manipulation of the aerial currents.

Gone with the Wind

Since it applies to "every piece of equipment", the **Talons of the Wind** power is a great way to strip away an opponent's mythic items – especially amulets, garments and other accessories. An exception could probably be made for rings, though.

The concept of "equipment" also extends to the saddles of horses - in such cases the rider will have to make a Danger Evasion roll (target number 15) to avoid falling from horseback.



- Gee! How can I learn to do this, sir?

Anti-Aerial Defense

The **Gale Fury** power may be used with great efficiency to slow down winged pursuers, as long as they are within the required range; flying creatures who fail their saving roll have their Movement rate reduced by half for the duration of the effect.

Earth Tricks

We Shall Not Be Moved!

The **Hands of Stone** power is primarily used to immobilize enemies but can also be used in a more defensive manner against the *Gale Fury* power of Air Elementalists; by deliberately placing himself in the grip of the Hands, a character becomes immune to the effects of the Gale as long as he remains immobilized.

The Bronze Look

Since this power imbues its recipient with "the essence of bronze", it could probably also be used to disguise oneself as a very convincing bronze statue or even as a bronze Automaton.

Titan Booster

Since nothing in the description of the **Skin of Bronze** power prevents you from using it on Animates - YES, this means you can combine it with **Animate Statue** to imbue your animated Stone Titan with some extra power, raising its damage to 2d6+2 and its Defense Class to a titanic 25!

Fire Tricks

Creative Pyrotechnics

The **Dart of Fire** power is essentially an attack power but it can also be used to light a torch or set fire to a highly flammable object or material such as wood, cloth etc. The resulting fire, however, can be put out in a few seconds by a single person as long as this person reacts immediately (so no, you cannot use this power to set fire to someone's clothes and burn him alive instead of "just" doing him 1d6 damage).

At the Maze Master's discretion, this trick could also be used to ignite arrows. Lastly, a Dart of Fire is also a sure (if a bit showy) way to light a campfire.



- Help! We need a Water Elementalist here!

Portable Firelight

OK, a **Blazing Sphere** is a great way to char your enemies – but have you thought about their other uses? Since the Elementalist can control the movement of the Sphere as he wishes, it could make it hover over the party's head, providing a great source of illumination in a dark tunnel or cave, especially for those moments where holding a torch is either impossible or extremely risky.

It could also be used for reconnaissance, to probe a pitch-black tunnel or to check if anybody is waiting in ambush behind that corner...

Fire on the Water

Since it can "*ignite any flammable material it comes into contact with*", a **Blazing Sphere** can be used to set fire to a ship, with devastating effects: a burning ship must make a special saving roll against fire *each round* or lose 1 Structure point. This d20 roll has a target number of 15 but only uses the ship's Fortune modifier (which is equal to 0 in most cases).

Water Tricks

Anti-Flamoid Defense

A **Torrent of Water** or a **Swirling Flood** can be used to extinguish a fire or to inflict damage to Flamoids (see *Creature Compendium*, p 41) or any other Insubstantial beings made of living flame (1d6 damage if the creature fails the required saving roll, in addition to the other effects detailed in the rules).

Fresh Water Dispenser

Since nothing in the rules states that the water created by a Torrent of Water or a Swirling Flood is non-drinkable, having a Water Elementalist in the party can be *very* useful when adventuring in the desert or in other water-deprived environments, such as the Underworld – not to mention those long, uncertain sea voyages on uncharted oceans...

Arcane Firefighting

The two aforementioned powers can also be used to destroy a **Blazing Sphere** (Fire, Magnitude 2) if (and only if) their magically-produced water comes into contact with the burning globe; the Torrent of Water must be specifically aimed at the Sphere, while the Swirling Flood simply needs to come into contact with the fire.

In all cases, the Blazing Sphere is allowed a special saving roll, using the Fire Elementalist's Elemental Mastery as its modifier (doubled if the Elementalist has Fire as his primary element) and the Water Elementalist's Mystic Strength as its target number. If this saving roll is failed, the Sphere is destroyed; otherwise, it is unaffected.

ADVENTURES & ADVANCEMENT

A Radical & Freeform Character Development Variant by **Luke G. Reynard**

(or: doing away with the whole Glory / Wisdom / Experience thing)



The heroic Luke G. Reynard battling the Great Monster of Needless Complexity in the Labyrinth of Optional Variants

Even in a straightforward, heroic adventure RPG like M&M, there are many different gamemastering styles. When you come to think of it, there are probably as many Maze Mastering styles as there are Maze Masters... but once a session is over, Maze Masters really tend to fall into two broad categories: those who delight in counting each and every Glory or Wisdom point gained by the player-characters (not to mention Experience for those darn Thieves and Hunters) and those for whom this activity is a boring, pointless exercise in number-crunching and the worst part of what being a Maze Master is all about (to say nothing about the 'fun' of arbitrating players' arguments and complaints).

If you belong to the first category, then you might as well stop reading now ; if, on the other hand, you would gladly throw away the arbitrary, unwieldy and often ridiculously meticulous Glory / Wisdom / Experience system in favor of a much simpler method of character advancement, then rejoice, for this is precisely what this article is all about.

It's All About Adventures!

The basic idea behind this alternate approach is a very simple one: characters simply go up in level once they have completed a certain number of adventures, without having to keep an obsessive total of Glory, Wisdom or Experience points. The higher the level of the character, the more adventure he must complete in order to level up.

This number of required adventures is simply equal to the level the character is trying to reach.

Thus, it would take two adventures to go from level 1 to level 2, three more adventures to reach level 3, four more adventures to reach level 4 and so on. Thus, reaching the legendary 6th level would take a grand total of twenty adventures, which is a more spectacular achievement than it may seem at first.

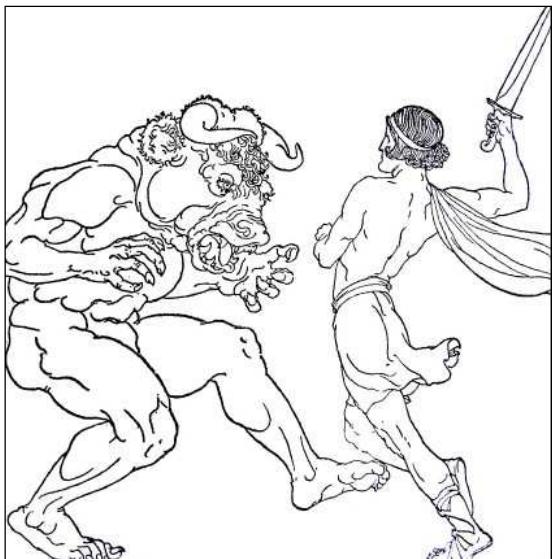
Let's get down to the specifics of the system. First, we need to define what « completing an adventure » actually means and what it does NOT mean.

Adventure is not always synonymous with *game session*: an adventure should be defined as a complete scenario, which may actually cover one or several sessions of play. Furthermore, *completing an adventure* does not just mean participation or mere survival but does include the idea of success. In other words, the Maze Master may simply decide that a given adventure does not count toward a character's advancement either because it was not challenging or perilous enough or because the character completely failed to accomplish the overall goals of the scenario.

Ultimately, it is the Maze Master's responsibility to present his players with adventures that are challenging and perilous enough for their characters but which have attainable objectives. So the term *adventure* in this context should really be taken as *suitably challenging adventure* - but every Maze Master worth his salt already knows this, right? I mean, nobody is going to pit a group of first-level neophytes against a Chimera or, at the other end of the spectrum, annoy sixth-level living legends with a handful of marauding Boarmen...

Regardless of which advancement system you are using, the challenges of an adventure should always fit the overall power level of the player-characters.

Maze Masters who find this approach interesting but a bit too schematic may make things more flexible by introducing two special types of adventure scenarios: mini-adventures and maxi-adventures.



Come on, Mino, let's do this on our own! There's no way I'm sharing my Glory points with anybody else!

Mini-Scenarios & Maxi-Epics

A mini-adventure is a short scenario which does challenge the characters' abilities but cannot really be compared to a full-blown adventure in terms of difficulty, length or danger; as far as character advancement is concerned, such mini-adventures simply count as half-adventures. In other words, a 1st level character could reach level 2 after two full adventures or four mini-adventures or one full adventure and two mini-adventures.

Maxi-adventures are scenarios which are especially challenging, difficult or dangerous and which usually take several game sessions to complete. A maxi-adventure counts as two full adventures for advancement purposes.

Thus, completing a single maxi-adventure may be enough to reach level 2. This idea could also be extended to include mega-adventures, with each mega-adventure worth two maxi-adventures (or four full adventures): *Tomb of the Bull King* is a perfect example of such a mega-adventure (or mini-campaign, depending on how you look at it).

We're In This Together

In addition of freeing the Maze Master from what can often become a dreary exercise in bookkeeping, this variant advancement system also has the big advantage of making the advancement of player-characters a group effort (since each adventure will have the same advancement worth for all those who were actively involved in it) rather than encouraging a sterile, pointless competition among characters (especially warriors, who are somewhat encouraged by the Glory distribution rules to adopt what many Maze Masters call the "Glory hound" behavior). This collective approach to character advancement is also a simple and effective way to promote the kind of team spirit or fellowship often found in fantasy novels and movies featuring groups of heroes.

As noted in the first lines of this article, this alternate approach will not appeal to every group's gaming sensibilities - some players actually enjoy the competitive aspects of character advancement and are very attached to the idea of rewarding each individual character according to his own merits, heroism, resourcefulness or number of 'kills'.

Such players may find this freeform system a bit too 'collectivist' for their tastes, since it apparently does not allow the Maze Master to give 'extra credit' to characters who have been especially brave, clever, resourceful, heroic or brilliant during play - but this is not really a problem when you start considering the player-characters' party as a group, rather than as an accidental or artificial gathering of individualists.

Remember what we said earlier about successfully completing adventures? Well, since heroism and resourcefulness are often the keys to success, each individual character can now actively contribute to the advancement of the group as a whole: the more heroic or resourceful you and your adventuring partners prove to be, the more likely you are to successfully complete an adventure and advance accordingly – so that when Pyros the invincible Spearman saves the day (and the lives of his fellow adventurers!) by single-handedly defeating that Manticore, everybody in the party will benefit from his heroic behavior...

Luke G. Reynard

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