

# ELFS



**by Ron Edwards**

*Don't take my word for it ...*

**Basically, elves are scum. They are not ethereal and wise; they are dim-witted, opportunistic little bastards. Their demeanor is that of a 13-year old powergaming munchkin: Kill, loot, party. Repeat. When not in the throes of one of their mental handicaps, elves run across the world, hacking and slaying for fun and profit. You play one of these losers and try to get your grubby little hands on as much loot as elfinly possible, preferably while hosing your buddies.**

**Suffice to say that our elves made some extremely dubious moral choices, and came out smelling like roses. Afterwards, my players spent a while congratulating themselves on how smart they were, so I would also rate this part as a success.**

**— 'Powergamer,' RPG.net review**

*... take his instead!*

**ADEPT  
PRESS**

ISBN 0-9709176-4-3



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# ELFS

A spanky little role-playing game



AUTHOR  
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who is not sorry

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**Antti Karjalainen**  
who should probably know better

# ELFS

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## Stuff about Me

My Name: \_\_\_\_\_

My Player: \_\_\_\_\_

Spunk: \_\_\_\_\_

Low Cunning: \_\_\_\_\_

Dumb Luck: \_\_\_\_\_

## My Personality Stage

Oral ☐ Anal ☐ Genital ☐

My Genital ~~Stage~~ Denominator

## My Magical Items

I'm Lookin' Fer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Stuff I'm Carrying

I Already Gots: \_\_\_\_\_

## My Magical Spells

Coins I'm Carrying: \_\_\_\_\_

Coins I've Spent: \_\_\_\_\_

Things I've Killed\*: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Check on the back for the list, Spunky



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Visit the **Forge**, The Internet Home for Independent Role-Playing Games: <http://www.indie-rpgs.com>

**ISBN 0-9709176-4-3**

# CONTENTS

## Part One: Introduction

|  |   |
|--|---|
| A note on spelling and plurals . . . . . | 7 |
| What is this mess? . . . . .             | 7 |
| The whole point . . . . .                | 8 |

## Part Two: Characters

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Making a character . . . . .   | 11 |
| Elf personality . . . . .      | 12 |
| Outfitting . . . . .           | 14 |
| Sample characters . . . . .    | 15 |
| Some source material . . . . . | 17 |

## Part Three: The System

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Dice . . . . .                       | 19 |
| Combat: Procedure . . . . .          | 23 |
| Combat: Building opponents . . . . . | 29 |
| Treasure and loot . . . . .          | 31 |
| Reward System . . . . .              | 32 |
| Magic . . . . .                      | 32 |
| Magical Items . . . . .              | 39 |
| Turnin' on each other . . . . .      | 47 |

## Part Four: Setting and Sourcebook

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| The home-grown setting . . . . . | 51 |
| Monsters of Nurth . . . . .      | 54 |
| Other races . . . . .            | 56 |
| How to run Elfs . . . . .        | 58 |
| For first-time play . . . . .    | 61 |

## Part Five: Ice and Fire

|                           |    |
|---------------------------|----|
| Hooking them in . . . . . | 64 |
| The ice castle . . . . .  | 64 |
| Finishing up . . . . .    | 73 |

## Part Six: Going over the Edge

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Preparation . . . . . | 76 |
| How to play . . . . . | 77 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Appendix: Talkin' 'bout playin' Elfs . . . . . | 81 |
|--|----|



## PREFACE

Hi there! Brace yourself for naughty good fun. I should like to point out that playing Elfs has occasionally revealed surprising facets of the real people involved. During play, if someone in your group says something which shocks or offends you, remember that you are a human being too, and negotiate to suggest alternatives. Don't look for further sympathy from me. They're **your** friends.

Elfs was first published in 2000, as a PDF electronic file available for sale from my Adept Press website. This book includes most of that same text, with the following revisions and additions.

- Additional art and graphics by Antti Karjalainen, Ed Heil, and Ben Morgan.
- The basic resolution system has been changed, such that now a single success is sufficient to achieve most tasks. This change has the pleasant secondary effect of making the Dumb Luck rules easier to use and understand.
- Rules for character death have been added. How cheery!
- Various snide comments about pre-existing game systems have been deleted. Why? Because they were neither nice nor fun.
- The rules for the character Stages have been changed drastically. No longer must every roll be consulted for its relationship to Anal, Oral, or Genital Stage. Now, the only way that Stages affect play is through tattling.

# PART ONE INTRODUCTION



## A NOTE ON SPELLING AND PLURALS

The proper modern plural for an elf-type person is “elves.” You know this, and the dictionary knows this, and the game authors know this. However ... the characters in this role-playing game do not. They call themselves “elfs” and rudely insist that anything else is stupid; in fact, they also think that any one else is stupid. “Hey, stupid!” they call out when they see you or me in the streets.

There’s no arguing with them, so the game is called ELFS. What can you do?

## WHAT IS THIS MESS?

You are to play an elf in a generic fantasy-gaming type of world called Nurth. Alas, sometimes prejudices are true: these elfs are cranky, short, self-important, adolescent, cruel, incompetent, greedy, and sarcastic. They are not cute. They are not telepathic. Animals don’t like them. They are not wise. There is no elf homeland because no one else wants to acknowledge them. Long-lived and relatively infertile, they are scattered all over the landscape, remnants of a long-destroyed noble heritage and culture. They’ve degenerated a bit along the way, as demonstrated by their vocabulary – the people: “elf,” the language: “elf,” their ancestors: “old elfs.”

What does an elf look like? They are shorter than most humans, they have great big pointed ears and long, thick hair, and they have a limited range of childish facial expressions. There are no half-elfs (yeah, as **if** a human could be convinced to ...).

Your character is an adventurer because his or her priorities are to kill things and take their money away from them. Elf s would be great mercenaries, but they (a) try to cheat the garrison officers, (b) misunderstand contracts, (c) switch sides for better pay or because it’s Tuesday, and (d) squabble too much.

So adventuring, also known as thinly disguised theft and murder, is what they do.

## ELFS THE WHOLE POINT

Yes, this is a funny fantasy role-playing game. However, the real point of ELFS is an RPG-design experiment: to explore the discontinuity between player and character. Todd's a player, and his character is the attractively-named Troll's Fart. In most RPGs, Todd wants Troll's Fart to succeed in an action, say an attack, as much as Troll's Fart does (in his fictional way). However, in ELFS, things can be a little different. At times, Todd may be most successful even when Troll's Fart screws up or attempts something especially stupid.

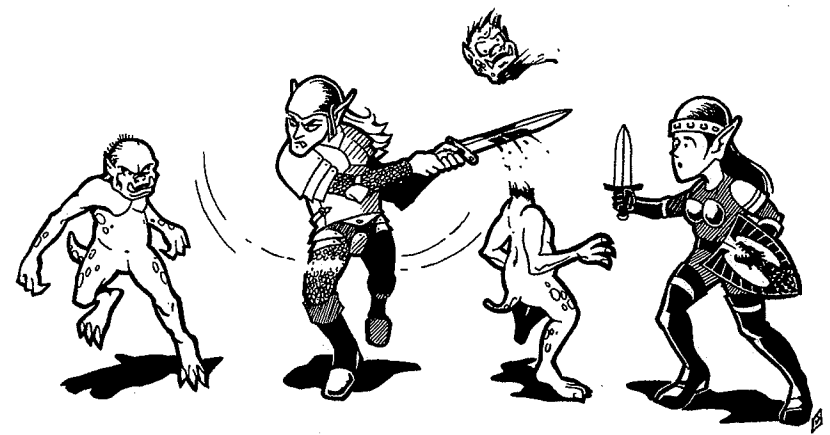
In ELFS, the player is not the character at all. The two may even have very different goals. Troll's Fart's goal comes out of very old-style gaming: Get more treasure than the other guy, bloat his ego, kill all sorts of things with minimal risk, etc. He and the other elf characters go after these things in the most oblivious, butt-scratching, selfish-little-twerp manner possible. However, Todd may sometimes desire something very different and in this game, he or she may announce actions that the character knows nothing about.

**For example, Troll's Fart the elf is fighting a four-armed rat thing in a torch-lit underground temple. Troll's Fart wants to swing his trusty axe at the thing's head, but Todd wants Troll's Fart to escape through the door along the wall. We'll deal with the actual game mechanics later, but for now, the possible outcomes are:**

- **Troll's Fart completely wipes out, accomplishing very little except perhaps to be rent and torn by the rat-thing.**

- **Troll's Fart's swing at the rat-thing is hopelessly unsuccessful, but glory be! He slams against the wall and, entirely by accident, opens and stumbles through the door.**
- **Troll's Fart not only slices the rat-thing with his trusty axe, but opens and stumbles through the door as above.**

It is also perfectly legal for Todd and Troll's Fart to announce the same thing ("I swing at him!"). To figure out how to do all this unusual role-playing, read on.



# PART TWO CHARACTERS



## MAKING A CHARACTER

Creating a character is really easy, if you follow these steps. All the terms presented in the following list are explained later in the chapter.

1. **Set the values of the three scores: Spunk, Low Cunning, and Dumb Luck.**
2. **Choose a Demeanor and a Personality Stage.**
3. **Decide whether the character is a magic-slingin' elf; if so, choose the spells he or she knows.**
4. **Determine the character's starting money and acquire his or her gear.**
5. **And just for fun, think a wee bit about the coolest magical item this elf could possibly have.**  
**You don't start play with it, but it might show up sooner than you think.**

Now it's time to explain all those steps in detail. You start by choosing values for the three scores.

- **Spunk:** How good the elf is at doing things. All traditional fantasy RPG "skills" and "attributes" are included in Spunk.
- **Dumb Luck:** Add this number to Spunk when the player announces his or her desired outcome, but the character is trying to do another thing entirely.
- **Low Cunning:** Add this number to Spunk when the elf uses a sneaky or especially juvenile way to carry out an action.

To set the scores, first, you start with Spunk 5 and Dumb Luck and Low Cunning each set at zero. Then, for each point

you deduct from Spunk (to a minimum of 1), you get TWO points to distribute among the other two scores as you see fit.

ELFS

**Example of characters' scores (more about these three later):**

- **Troll's Fart:** Spunk 3, Dumb Luck 1, Low Cunning 3
- **Spike:** Spunk 1, Dumb Luck 4, Low Cunning 4
- **Toe Cheese:** Spunk 2, Dumb Luck 2, Low Cunning 4

When building your elf, here's what to consider:

- If you want to have a lot of things happen that your character doesn't intend, then go with a high Dumb Luck. This way the events of the game go your way most of the time, based on Spunk + Dumb Luck, if not necessarily the character's way.
- If you prefer to play in such a way that the character wants what the player wants (as in most RPGs), then Low Cunning is your best bet. How these scores operate to produce these effects is explained in Part Three. You can go look at it and come back, if you want, or just keep reading until you get there.

## ELF PERSONALITY

Nothing could be simpler. An elf has all the qualities of a munchkin-player who whines and argues his or her way through a traditional fantasy role-playing game session. The elf (a) wants stuff to own and use, especially money; (b) wants just as much as the next guy gets, only more of it; and (c) regardless of gender, suffers badly from a case of short-man syndrome.

Do you yearn for deeper, more meaningful understanding of your character? Assign one of the following demeanors, or

make up one yourself, to round things out: cranky, vain, dazed, airheaded, wise-ass, perky, stoned, snobby, plain mean, or poser-cool. It's also perfectly all right to play a session and then see what adjective suits your character best.

Yet more sophisticated characterization is accomplished by assigning one of the following handy categories to your character. Note that in each case, the topic implied by the category's title is the character's primary source for conversation, insults, metaphors, analogies, similes, body language, and general day-dreaming.

**Oral stage.** The character has just got to be sucking on or mouthing something. Typical quotes might include:

1. "Prepare to die, foul wizard! Oooh, look, cookies."
2. "Muffa wumpf wuffa!" (contents of mouth are impairing speech)
3. "This potion looks yummy."

**Anal stage.** The nether end of the character's digestive tract is loudly expressive. Typical quotes might include:

1. "You are one ugly troll! Did your mom shave your butt and make you walk backwards?"
2. "I only have one thing to say about that." (Pooooot.)
3. "Hey, who let one?" (followed by hysterical giggles)

**Genital stage.** The character is quite concerned with the activity, or lack thereof, of his or her or anyone else's private parts. Typical quotes might include:

1. "That's a mean-looking dragon. Wanna make it?"
2. "Whew! I can't believe we lived through that explosion! Wanna get naked?"
3. "Hey, look, there's a secret door over here. Wanna ..." (etc)

ELFS



How are stages used during play? The first rule is that no one absolutely has to play his or her character according to the stage. Elfs' actions are whatever the player says, regardless of the character's stage.

The second rule is that everyone is encouraged to provide details based on the character's stage, especially when role-playing the results of 0-success and 3-success rolls.

The third rule is that a player may tattle to the GM that another player's character has not role-played his or her stage in a given scene. The tattling has to be done right when the scene is over, not before or after. If the GM agrees with the tattling player, that player receives a +1 bonus to his or her next roll's target number.

The fourth rule pertains to character death and you can check it out later in the rules.

As you can see, role-playing an elf is a matter of deep and careful character-portrayal, with long-term spiritual goals and ... and, if you can't tell that I'm kidding, maybe you should start over at page 4.

Seriously, then, you role-play an elf by having the little stinker do whatever he or she wants in the shallowest manner possible. The elf is the worst gamer-munchkin character ever. Then enjoy yourself and play more "effectively" by having other things happen along the way.

## OUTFITTING

Ah, rolling your money and buying your stuff! Roll 4d10, total them up, and add Spunk; the total is how many coins you've got. Buy your stuff with these coins.

How about the prices of things, in those one-of-everything stores that seem to be in any town or city, where prices are startlingly uniform from one to the other? How silly. Here's what they cost in ELFS, wherever you go in Nurth:

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Basic, sensible sword (or axe or similar) .....         | 8 coins     |
| Over-sized, cartoony hand-held weapon .....             | 13 coins    |
| Longbow .....   | 32 coins    |
| Light crossbow .....                                    | 6 coins     |
| Arrows .....  | 1 coin      |
| Dagger .....  | 1 coin      |
| Light and cool-looking armor (studded leather) .....    | 8 coins     |
| Head-to-toe, clanking, waddling armor (plate) ..        | 213 coins   |
| Riding horse .....                                      | 13 coins    |
| Cloak, boots, other practical clothes .....             | 1 coin each |
| Backpack .....  | 1 coin      |
| Food, water, rations (ick), and that sort of thing .... | 3 coins     |
| Rope, spikes, climbing stuff, and so on .....           | 1 coin each |
| Hooded lantern .....                                    | 4 coins     |

## SAMPLE CHARACTERS

### Toe Cheese

Spunk 2

Dumb Luck 2

Low Cunning 4

Oral stage, with a stoned demeanor

**A tubby guy with a bush of blond hair, wearing a wizard's robe that's a size too long for him, festooned with stars, moons, and clovers. He has 19 coins to start, and buys a light crossbow with some arrows, food (for sure!), and a dagger, leaving him with 9 coins.**

### Troll's Fart

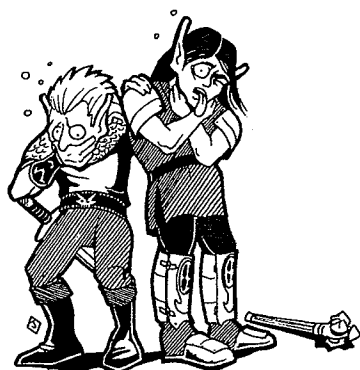
Spunk 3

Dumb Luck 1

Low Cunning 3

Anal stage, with a grumpy demeanor

**A burly guy, with shoulder-length bushy brown hair tied in a top-knot, wearing a fur vest and bell-bottoms. He has 25 coins to start, and buys an axe, light armor, rope & spikes, a bunch of torches, and a pack, and has 4 coins left over.**



### Spike

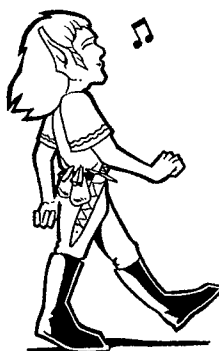
Spunk 1

Dumb Luck 4

Low Cunning 4

Genital stage, with a wise-ass demeanor

**A buxom babe, with streaked-blond hair in a braid or tied in a scarf, wearing a low-cut blouse and hot pants. She has 21 coins to start, and buys an oversized sword, a pack, some outdoor clothes, a dagger, and some food, leaving her with 2 coins.**



### SOME SOURCE MATERIAL

Among the many representations of elves in fantasy fiction, movies, and comics, this Elfs one hasn't really seen much air-time in role-playing games. If it's unfamiliar to you, some of the sources you might find useful include:

1. The movie WIZARDS, specifically the character Weehawk
2. The comic ELFQUEST, at least the scenes where the character Cutter is in a really bad mood
3. The novels by Michael de Larrabeti – THE BORRIBLES, THE BORRIBLES GO FOR BROKE, and ACROSS THE DARK METROPOLIS
4. The comic POISON ELVES
5. The card game MUNCHKIN
6. The role-playing game Hackmaster

In these references, the elf characters are rambunctious, violent, and full of piss and vinegar. That is exactly what this game is too, but taking it even further, and giving traditional FRPG elves a nice finger-poke in the eye to boot.

# PART THREE THE SYSTEM



## DICE

All resolution in ELFS is really easy. If the GM and player agree that the task at hand is at least possible for the character, roll 3d10. Count the number of dice that come up at or below your target value, and that's the number of successes (0, 1, 2, or 3). If you get at least one success, you succeeded in the task.

It doesn't matter which of the three dice that are rolled come up with what values. All that matters is whether one is equal to or less than the target number. This target number is the character's Spunk, and it might be increased either by Low Cunning or Dumb Luck (see below).

The number of successes affects how the GM or player decides to describe the outcome.

**Example: Spike attempts to climb up a castle wall, as the people inside have rudely swung their drawbridge shut. The GM and player are fine with this, and Spike's Spunk is a tiny little 1. If the player rolls:**

- three 1's, then Spike scurries up the wall as easily as Jackie Chan.
- two 1's, Spike at least makes it up there like a pretty cool fantasy hero ought to.
- one 1, Spike puffs and heaves and barely gets up there.
- No 1's, Spike just doesn't make it, for whatever reason seems to make most sense at the moment.

Since Spike's Spunk is a mere 1, she has a really lousy chance of success. She's much better off using Low Cunning or Dumb Luck to boost her target number (see below).

Obviously, you can go ahead and use plain old Spunk all you

want, which amounts to playing the character as in most role-playing games. But boosting that value with Low Cunning or Dumb Luck is hands-down better.

Low Cunning is quite straightforward: if the character's action is, in the GM's judgment, notably childish, rude, and/or sneaky, then the target number is raised from mere Spunk to Spunk + Low Cunning.

**Example: Spike is still climbing that castle wall. It so happens she is being pursued by an enemy goblin dude, who's climbing up right beneath her, gnashing his unbrushed teeth. She waits a second, then steps on his head, using it as a launching platform to jump up and grab the edge of the wall's top. Now her target number is 5 (Spunk 1 + Low Cunning 4 = 5); the 3d10 yield 1, 5, and 9 - two successes! She easily gains the wall and the goblin is discommoded and vexed.**

**Example: Spike is accosted by a hungry znort (see this creature's description later in the rules). Thinking quickly, she elbows her friend Troll's Fart in the belly, resulting in a sudden, loud confirmation of his name. The znort will focus its attention solely on him, so she gets to add her Low Cunning to her Spunk when she attacks it (1 + 4 = 5).**

The GM is perfectly justified in ignoring the Low Cunning addition to the target number in two circumstances: (1) if the tactic is a repeat, especially during the same session; and (2) if the announced tactic is clearly not funny to anyone else in the group.

Dumb Luck is just a bit more complex: The player must announce two actions, not just one. One of these actions is designated the thing that the character is trying to do, and the

other is the thing that the player desires to happen.

**Example: Toe Cheese is confronted by a seductive snake-woman who lures him into her cottage with chewy-centered candies. The GM states that Toe Cheese must make a roll to resist this trap.**

Jason, the player, decides to use Dumb Luck. Thus he states "resists temptation" as his, Jason's, stated action for Toe Cheese, and "tries to vault the picket fence gate jauntily" as the action that Toe Cheese intends.

In other words, in Toe Cheese's little pea-brain, he fully intends to go and get those candies. But Jason, well aware that the GM has simply presented him with a clear and present danger, is attempting to weasel the character out of the situation. This is a perfectly good and respectable tactic for playing ELFS.

GMs should be careful! The two announced actions must accord with the following:

- Both of the actions ordinarily require a roll.
- Both are physically possible for the character at that moment.
- They cannot be contradictory (e.g. "shoot my arrow at him" and "run away madly"; or "mount my horse" and "fall off my horse").
- They are that character's actions, no one else's.
- Not legitimate: "Troll's Fart will swing at the rat-thing, but I want the ratthing to slip on a banana peel." Nor, "Spike will vault over the treasure chest and the NPC fairy will pick the lock."
- Legitimate: "Troll's Fart will swing at the rat-thing, but I want him to stumble through the door." "Spike will vault over the treasure chest and her weight will spring the lock." If any of the dice are equal to

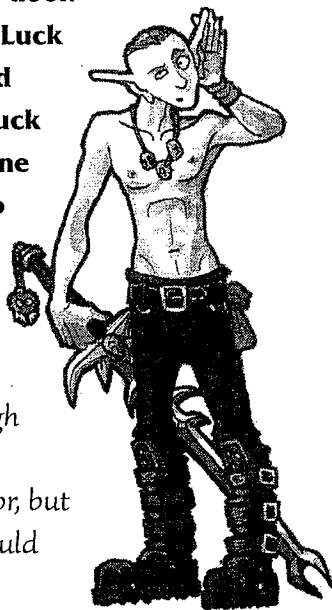
or below Spunk + Dumb Luck, the player's action is successful. The character's action only succeeds (in addition) if the roll is a Total Success (all three dice).

**Example: Toe Cheese is vaulting over a fence (and in game terms, also attempting to resist temptation of the snake woman, although he doesn't know it, fictionally speaking). His Spunk is 2 and his Dumb Luck is 2, so his target value is  $2 + 2 = 4$ .**

Here's the roll: 2, 3, and 3. Given a target value of 4, that's three successes. What happens? Well, Toe Cheese does indeed vault the fence gracefully. But he also resists the temptation! Jason suggests that Toe Cheese suddenly remembers that the last time he ate chewy-centered candies, he kept getting coconut (yuck!), so he is not especially tempted after all.

**Example: We last saw Troll's Fart fighting a four-armed rat-thing and/or stumbling through a door. Well, Troll's Fart has Spunk 3, Dumb Luck 1, and Low Cunning 3; and the stated situation is clearly a case of Dumb Luck in operation (see above; Todd says one thing, Troll's Fart intends another). So his score is now  $3 + 1 = 4$ .**

Todd rolls 3d10 and gets 4, 7, and 9; he counts the dice that are equal to or lower than 4: one of them, just enough to achieve the player's action alone. So Troll's Fart does make it through the door, but his sword-swing misses clean. It only would



have connected if all three dice had come up 4 or lower.

Which action is which is totally up to the player, prior to the roll. The Dumb Luck announcement could just as well have been exactly reversed, so that Troll's Fart is trying to escape, but Todd announces that in flailing about to do so, Troll's Fart strikes the four-armed rat-thing. In that case, the roll described in the example would result in the elf failing to escape but successfully hitting his foe.

**Example: Spike is in a whole new situation; she's been dragged by grunting, bad-smelling goblins before the throne of Balzac, the black-clad, balding, brooding wizard who rules them. Time for some Dumb Luck. Spike's stated action is to scare the wits out of the wizard with her threat that the prince of Schmar will come with his soldiers to save her, but Julie's stated action is for Spike to inadvertently seduce the wizard. Her total value is  $(1 + 4) = 5$ ; the 3d10 roll comes up 2, 2, 9. Therefore she is not as scary as she thinks she is, but Balzac is smitten by her evident charms (perhaps when she drew in a deep breath to start her monologue?).**

### SOME FINAL POINTS:

- Low Cunning and Dumb Luck may not be used simultaneously.
- You may use a score even if it is at zero for one reason or another; it simply fails to add anything to whatever other score you are combining it with.
- All this number-allocating only lasts for one action.

### COMBAT: PROCEDURE

All right, the first thing to understand is that the NPC foes

never roll any dice. All combat is handled by rolls made by the players. An opponent is built (among other things) of the number of successes the player must roll to defeat it. Failures may result in the player taking damage instead.

## SEQUENCE:

1. All players announce their various actions in any order.
2. All players roll 3d10 each; outcomes occur in the order of highest to lowest single die value. Don't touch these dice, but let'em lie.
3. Using the very same dice, as they currently read, resolve all outcomes in that order.
4. No other rolls are made; success or failure is now determined from the very same rolls.

**Example 1 of combat order:** Troll's Fart, Spike, and Toe Cheese are all mixed up in a bar fight with Serpent Cultists. To make things simple, each character is using Low Cunning for his or her action during this round (let's say each one is fighting a cultist). So Toe Cheese's target number is 6, Troll's Fart's is 6 as well, and Spike's is 5.

The GM calls for rolls, and they are:

Toe Cheese gets 4, 8, 8.

Troll's Fart gets 2, 10, 10.

Spike gets 3, 4, 9.

The events of the round occur in this order: Troll's Fart with 1 success, Spike with 2 successes, and Toe Cheese with 1 success.

**Example 2 of combat order:** same situation, same characters, same tactics, but with different rolls

Toe Cheese gets 1, 4, 4.

Troll's Fart gets 7, 8, 10.

Spike gets 3, 4, 9.

This time, the order is: Troll's Fart with 0 successes, Spike with 2 successes, and Toe Cheese with 3 successes. This example shows that the order of actions and the success of the actions have very little to do with one another.

**Example 3 of combat order:** same, same, same, with different rolls.

Toe Cheese gets 4, 7, 8.

Troll's Fart gets 1, 4, 8.

Spike gets 1, 3, 8.

Look at all the ties. Determine order just as usual by ignoring any ties. So after the 8's are ignored, Toe Cheese's action is first with a high 7 (the roll gets him 1 success, by the way), and Troll's Fart goes next because his 4 is higher than Spike's 3. (Troll's Fart and Spike both happen to have made 2 successes this round.)

In melee (close) combat, a GM's character has no problem striking at any and all the player-characters in combat with it; this means that if you roll against someone or something, you're automatically able to take damage from it. However, Low Cunning goes a long way to even the odds, including ganging up, surprise, and trickery of all kinds.

**Example: If we check out Example 2 above, Toe Cheese and Spike both did damage to their respective foes.**

**Let's say a Serpent Cultist is kind of fragile and is defeated upon taking 3 successes of damage; that would mean that Toe Cheese's foe is out for the count and Spike's foe is not.**

So how does the character get hurt? If you roll absolutely no successes, drop one point from Spunk. Note that if the foe requires 2 or more successes to be hurt at all, and you roll just one, you do no damage to it but at least you kept from getting hurt.

**Example: During that same Example 2, Troll's Fart rolled NO dice of value 6 or less, so Troll's Fart suffers damage and drops from Spunk 3 to Spunk 2.**

If Troll's Fart were so lucky as to have rolled all three dice at 6 or below, he would have done 3 damage - until we remember he's using a big cartoony axe, so he would do 4 instead! (See the discussion of big cartoony weapons.)

What happens then? If you total up enough successes for a given foe, it falls over dead or defeated, as decided by the GM based on your tactics.

But if the opponent hits you, that deducts 1 or more Spunk from a player-character. If your Spunk goes to 0, you can keep fighting, using Low Cunning or Dumb Luck to have any target values at all, but any subsequent hits will bring you down, collapsing in defeat. Also, if at any time, if you use either of the secondary scores at 0, while Spunk is 0, you collapse.

However, damage in ELFS is pretty minor as long as you're not actively fighting or engaging in other dice-related activities. A

character with Spunk at 0 is perfectly fine and capable of walking around and doing things, as long as he or she hasn't collapsed.

It's up to the GM just what "collapse" means, although GMs are urged to imprison, strip, humiliate, or otherwise treat the character such that the player might prefer the character had died. The character gets 1 Spunk back upon waking up (which is determined by the GM) and subsequently gets 1 Spunk back per scene of continuing play, where a scene is defined as any kind of interaction with any other character. Also, a GM can always bump a character up 1 Spunk out of pure niceness.

**Example: Spike has rolled miserably during an altercation with a big mean troll, taking 2 damage, reducing her poor little Spunk of 1 to 0 (you never go under 0 Spunk). However, she is still able to fight and do things, as long as she uses Dumb Luck or Low Cunning. At the moment, she's right in front of the troll as he raises his elf-tenderizing mallet for another blow. Ha! A perfect opportunity to tie his sandal straps together, which means her roll will use Low Cunning + Spunk (which right now for her means  $4 + 0 = 4$ ). And even better, Low Cunning gets double value against trolls (see their description later), so her target value is an amazing 8!**

Later, after the fight, Spike is still stuck at 0 Spunk, and needs to avoid situations that will get her more damaged, or bring either Low Cunning or Dumb Luck to 0, because she'll keel right over. But if a scene goes by without any mishaps, she'll get 1 Spunk back automatically and be all better.

## GEAR IN COMBAT

How about armor?

ELFS

Light armor confers 1 free Spunk that a foe can knock off with no harm to the armor-wearing character. Great stuff. Heavy armor confers 3 such Spunk, which sounds great except that it is ugly and loud. The GM may, at any time, decree any of the following for a character wearing it:

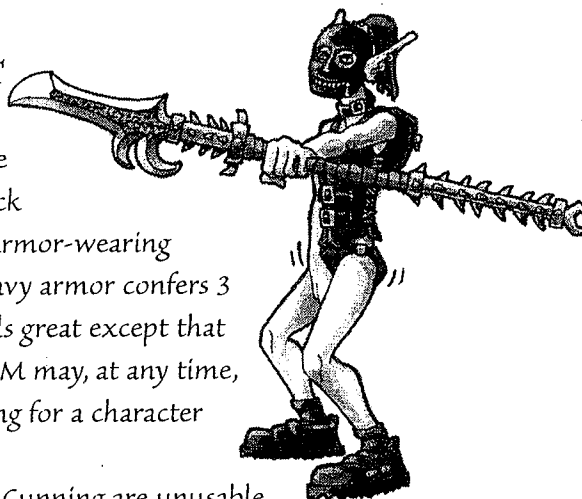
- Dumb Luck or Low Cunning are unusable.
- The armor simply stops working.

When it comes to weapons, elves are devoted Freudians: bigger is better. An outsized weapon does an extra success on a 3-success roll – that is, they do 4 successes instead of 3. Cool, huh?

## ONE DEAD ELF

Certain opponents are designated Lethal (see the next section). If your Elf collapses due to injuries sustained from a Lethal opponent, he or she might die! The way this is handled is a bit unusual, though. When the terrible moment comes, the player has to think about it: do you or don't you want this little stinker to keep on living? If not, then the character dies and you get to take a break from play or make up a new character for later. The new character may or may not get all the old character's stuff, at the player's option.

But if you want your character to live, that's another matter entirely. Stage suddenly becomes relevant again: the other players now have the option to tattle on you based on the character's actions during the current session (past sessions don't count). Remember, tattling means that another player identifies your character as having ignored his or her stage (Anal,



Oral, Genital) during play. If someone does this, and if the GM agrees, the GM is now forced to pronounce your character dead, and you can then proceed as described above.

If no one tattles, or if the GM decides that none of the tattling is substantiated, then the character lives. Please note that tattling is a choice on the other players' part; if your character acted inconsistently with his or her stage, they are not required to tattle about it.

## COMBAT: BUILDING OPPONENTS

Enemies are built by assigning values to the following categories.

### Required:

1. Size: the total successes it takes to kill or otherwise defeat this thing.
2. Weaponry: how much Spunk it removes from you on a successful hit.

### Optional Advantages:

1. Armor: a single success has no effect on the creature; for really awful-tough armor, only three successes will do.
2. Reflexes (subject to #1 above): if more than one success is needed to hurt it, the character gets hurt if he or she scores less-than-sufficient successes (this is really nasty).
3. Vitality: the last few successes have to be in a row (if this option is used, the GM sets how many successes must be in a row).
4. Competence: using either Dumb Luck or Low Cunning is absolutely required to hurt it at all.
5. The foe is designated Lethal; collapsing due to injuries sustained by it can kill the character.





#### Optional Weaknesses:

1. Weakness: its total successes-to-kill are decreased under a stated circumstances, e.g. being hit using a given score.
2. Vulnerable spot: several successes at once or in a row bring it down, no matter how many it has left (if this option is used, the GM sets how many successes will do the job).

The most basic foe, then, is really easy to construct: e.g., "six successes to kill, does 1 Spunk damage." A more complicated foe might be hard to hurt, or it might require a lucky run of successes in order to be taken down for good.

**Example: the four-armed rat-thing that Troll's Fart was fighting requires seven successes to take down, but it has a vulnerable spot: four successes in a row will do**

it too. So if Troll's Fart rolls, say, one success, then on the next roll, three successes, it will be defeated. If he keeps getting only one success at a time, he'll need to do that four times in a row; if he misses a lot, he'll have to work his way through all seven successes if he doesn't get defeated himself.

Just about any sort of creature, with all sorts of armor or invulnerabilities or special attacks, can be summarized in this way. Creatures from Nurth are summarized later in the rules.

#### TREASURE AND LOOT

An opponent happens to carry around funds that approximately match his, her, or its fighting competence. Use the following rubric:

- The foe has coins equal to 1d10 per success needed to kill it.
- Add 1d10 for each add-on option that makes it harder to defeat.
- To add some variety, the GM may convert any 100 coins of value to a gem (all gems are worth 100 coins).

**Example: that four-armed rat-thing, which took 7 successes to bring down, is a guardian of a shrine. Its one detail makes it easier to kill, not harder, so that doesn't add (or affect in any way) the number of coins rolled. The GM rolls 42 on 7d10, so if Troll's Fart manages to defeat it and scrounges among all the odds and ends and four-armed rat-thing turds, he'll find a cache of 42 coins.**

It might so happen that a character wants to convert coins to gems (e.g. for easy travel), or vice versa (to spend them). He or

she will need a fat, smiling moneylender-type human NPC to do this, and the total amount returned will lose 10% value.

## ELFS

### REWARD SYSTEM

Here is the wholly original ELFS experience system:

- For every 100 coins spent (not just acquired), the character may improve Dumb Luck or Low Cunning by 1.
- For every 10 foes killed (by the character personally), the character may improve Dumb Luck or Low Cunning by 1.

Once any improvements have been made, the player is free to boost Spunk by 1 by losing 2 points from Dumb Luck and Low Cunning (either 2 from one of them, or 1 from both).

### MAGIC

Elfs are really good at magic. Just ask them.

Any player may decide to have his or her character be a magic-slingin' elf. If not, then not, but if so, the character gains the following qualities:

- He or she can cast spells (duh!). See below for how to do this.
- He or she is now very valuable to non-sentient or semi-sentient monsters because magic elfs taste good.
- Also, his or her blood and bones are useful ingredients to NPC wizards for their disgusting potions.

Second, the magic-slingin' elf's player gets to choose which spells the elf knows from the following list, to a total number equaling the elf's Spunk. Spell casting is limited according to one of the following options (GM's choice; he or she should pick one, and only one, and stick with it forever):

- Each spell known may be cast once a day.
- The character may cast a given spell more than once

a day, but the target number is reduced by 1 cumulatively for each re-casting.

- Spells may be cast as desired, but each casting costs the elf 1 Spunk.

### The big spell list goes like this:

**Kzap.** An arc of bright energy zips from the elf's finger to the target, doing 1-3 successes worth of damage (according to the spell-casting roll). The charge remains in the target's body, such that anything he or she touches next will also take a success worth of damage. After that, the charge is dissipated. This spell only affects living targets. Duration: instant. Range: eyesight.

**Snorr.** The target creature instantly falls into a deep sleep. He or she will awaken instantly upon being touched in any way, with bad hair and in an incredibly foul mood. This spell only affects living targets. Duration: one scene. Range: eyesight.

**Bwap.** A magic, rectangular paddle appears in the spell-caster's hand; it has several round holes cut into it. He or she may instantly use it to bop a target, for 1-3 successes (according to the spell-casting roll). Duration: instant. Range: touch.

**Goop.** A nasty, icky, sticky substance appears in the designated area, connecting any solid objects therein. Non-player characters, objects, and opponents are stuck together without hope of escape during the spell's effect. Moving in it or freeing oneself requires at least two successes, and even then the stuff annoyingly keeps showing up in nooks and crannies (such as arrow-quivers). Duration: one scene. Range: eyesight.

**Waft.** The target of the spell, which may not weigh more

## ELFS

than the caster, becomes just a little lighter than air and bobs upward, if not tethered. Neither target nor caster has any control over the movement of the target. Duration: one scene. Range: touch.

**Addle.** The target gets very confused and may walk in the wrong direction, misread texts, mistake one person for another, and so on. He, she, or it cannot get confused about who might be attacking, however. This spell only affects living targets. Duration: one day or (if a player-character) until the target gets a 3-success roll when trying something, whichever comes first. Range: eyesight.

**Bick.** The caster's finger lights up with fire and may be used to ignite flammable things. After a moment, though, it hurts and the caster can't help but shake his or her hand to extinguish it. Duration: instant. Range: touch.

**Yap.** The target of the spell can briefly speak to animals, trees, or any other living things. Such creatures consider elves to be rather low on the Scala Naturae and are prone to derisive comments. This spell only affects living targets. Duration: one scene. Range: touch.

**Noodge.** The caster may telekinetically shove a target, with exactly the same muscle strength he or she possesses. With some extra casting time, the caster may even poke or prod a target with finer control (e.g. turning a key in a lock). The caster must carry out exactly the appropriate hand movements as the action implies. Duration: instant. Range: eyesight.

**Pally.** The target of the spell thinks the caster is just the coolest, most admirable person imaginable and will act in the caster's favor if very specifically instructed. He or she will also follow the caster around and extol the caster's virtues to all and sundry, especially anyone

or anything mean or ferocious. ("Oh yeah? My friend here can kick yer ass!"). Furthermore, the target will be jealous of and hostile to the caster's previous acquaintances or companions. If the caster doesn't agree, or live up to the claims, or tries to make the new pal go away, the target will feel betrayed and may well become belligerent. This spell only affects living, sentient targets.

Duration: one hour. Range: eyesight.

**Ooooh.** This spell produces pretty, pretty lights. Everyone in the area will admire them, and their actions during the scene will only succeed if they get 3 successes on a roll (for NPCs, if their character targets get 0 successes).

Duration: one scene. Range: eyesight.

**Aaaah.** The target of the spell recovers any and all damage, such that Spunk is restored to its starting value. The side effect is an immense sense of wellbeing and satisfaction, rendering both the caster and target incapable of any other action for about a minute. This spell only affects living targets. Duration: permanent (the healing, that is). Range: touch.

**Mmmm.** A substance affected by this spell becomes edible or potable. Its texture becomes cheesy and chewy; its appearance, odor, and taste are utterly unaffected. This spell only affects about a pound of non-living substances. Duration: permanent. Range: touch.

Now how about how to use magic? Magic must be employed using Dumb Luck. Otherwise it won't work. However, the rules for Dumb Luck are a bit more formal for magic than for mundane actions. The spell's un-intended effect must be chosen by the player from the Wonky Effects List. The character does have to roll, and the results are as follows:

- No successes means that the magic backfires; use the handy chart given a bit later.
- 1-2 successes means the named Wonky Effect occurs.
- 3 successes means both the player's action and the character's action (i.e. the spell's listed effects) occur.

When casting a spell, the character's stated action is always determined by the exact spell description given above. This also means that casting a spell requires a certain amount of gesturing, hollering, and otherwise creating a perceptible fuss.

**Example: Julie decides that Spike is to be a magic-slingin' elf. That wasn't hard, was it? In play, Spike and her pals get confronted by a grinning, unshaven, menacing bunch of bandits. Julie might announce, "Spike is casting Kzap!"**

The character may customize the spell being cast. Each spell has a listed duration and range, but these may be adjusted left or right on the following lists. To do so, the elf must take a -1 penalty to the target number for each step.

- Duration: instant – one scene – one day – permanent.
- Range: touch – immediate area – eyesight – as stated.

#### Examples:

- Filling a room with Oooh for a full day. Bump duration up one step; cast at -1.
- Casting Bick for an ally in another part of the castle. Bump range three steps from touch to "as stated," for a total penalty of -3.
- Casting Aaaah across the room on a companion you're annoyed at: bump range one step up from touch to immediate area, bump duration down two steps from permanent to one scene. Total = -3.

- Or, as in the case of Spike casting Kzap, the spell's stated description is exactly what she wants, so no customizing is done and the target number is not modified.

So much for Spike's stated action. Magic must be cast using Dumb Luck, so that means that Julie has to state an action for her intent, as the player, as well.

For magic, the player's stated action (as opposed to the character's) must be one of the following. Any time Spike casts any spell, Julie may choose freely from this list for her action:

#### Wonky Effects List

**Spurt:** the next two spells cast by anyone in the story do exactly twice the stated spell results, in every particular.

**Fizzle:** this spell and the next spell cast by anyone in the story result in an explosion right next to the caster, doing 1-3 Spunk damage (or successes damage, to NPCs) as determined by the spell-casting roll.

**Haywire:** roll 1d10 and count to that number along the spells in the list, starting from the intended spell. If you come to the end, wrap around to the beginning of the list and keep counting. Whatever spell you end at, that's the spell that takes effect. (If three successes are rolled, this second spell occurs in addition to the announced spell.)

**Slurp:** a random character in the vicinity of the spell's target gets 1 Spunk increase, lasting for the next minute of game-time. This heals Spunk damage or acts as a bonus if the character wasn't wounded.

**Stop:** all magic in the story is cancelled for the next minute of game time. This means all spells cast by anyone, as well as from items, centuries-old enchantments and so on. At the end of the minute, any ongoing spells that were stopped may or may not be restored, at the GM's discretion.

Where the above instructions say "in the story," that means anyone and everyone who's carrying out an action that's relevant to the characters and their current predicament. "Next" means exactly what it says, irrespective of time lag. The spell cancellations or boostings or whatever can be effective across continents or even dimensions.

The GM should definitely be ready to think on his or her feet to explain the various wonky effects of magic in the most entertaining way possible.

**Example: Spike knows the Kzap spell. She tosses it at a bothersome bandit, and Julie states Haywire as her, the player's, stated action. Dumb Luck for Spike is  $(1 + 4) = 5$ , so she rolls 3 dice and gets 5, 4, and 4! 3 successes! So the Haywire goes off (only one success was needed for that), and Kzap does too. The effect of the Kzap is that the bandit takes 3 successes of damage. However, what does the Haywire do? Julie rolls d10, getting a 9. The GM counts nine spells along the spell list from Kzap, and ends up at Pally – so the bandit suddenly finds himself loyal to and admiring of Spike. The GM decides this bandit must be a masochist; he will follow Spike around and beg her to Kzap him again or hurt him in any way, even offering suggestions. If she declines (for instance, being occupied with the other attacking bandits), he will become really upset.**

Way up above, the text mentioned something about backfiring. This happens when a magic-slingin' elf gets no successes at all at a spell-casting roll. The GM may happily roll 1d10 and consult the following list to see what happens to the inept caster:

- 1-2: nose turns blue for the next hour.
- 3-4: develops one hell of a rash, which takes a day to fade.
- 5-6: becomes addled, as per the spell, for one scene.
- 7-8: cannot speak clearly but quacks just like a duck if he or she tries, for one scene.
- 9-10: turns things yellow by touching them; the effect lasts for one hour

"For one scene" means the very next time, not necessarily immediately, that the affected character wants to take that sort of action. In other words, if 7 or 8 is rolled, the character must quack instead of speak for one scene whenever he or she next tries to speak, whether that's one second or a day or ten years from the moment of backfiring the spell.

A final, important note: absolutely none of the above rules apply to NPCs casting magic; that works according to the GM's wishes in any and all cases.

## MAGICAL ITEMS

Oh boy, what a great deal: objects which guarantee winning! Totally unfair kill-fest ordnance! Line me up, says the typical elf. I want me a Plus-Lots Monster-dicer. After all, they're just scattered all over the place, right? And the stupid opponents never use them effectively against us, so if I just keep looking, I'll get one. The only problem is if my trusty companion gloms onto it first. . . .

Magic items are a big part of playing ELFS. However, they are not placed into adventure scenarios by the GM like opponents and geography, but rather are "brought into the game" when the players make certain rolls.

Specifically, if a player wants his or her character to find a magic item in a particular scene, he or she must describe the item using the terms below, then roll 3d10 against the elf's

Spunk in the usual way. Dumb Luck or Low Cunning may be employed with suitable role-playing. This roll may be made no more often than once per hour of real-time game play. (And no, you can't roll the instant you start and then again an hour later; the first such roll requires an hour of play to have gone by. Nice try.)

## DEFINING ITEMS

In order to roll for a magic item, the player must first describe it in the following terms. The more complex or powerful an item, the more the target number of the roll is penalized.

1. What is it? That is, what sort of object? A weapon, a piece of jewelry, an item of clothing, a piece of cookware, or what?
2. Which of the following magic effects does it produce:
  - movement (teleporting, flying, running on non-solid surfaces, silent movement).
  - active fighting (e.g. extra damage, independent movement).
  - defense (armor, invisibility, mental shields, etc).
  - other (well, anything else).
3. Does it improve a target number, or the number of successes on a roll? If so, how much?
4. What are the range and duration for each effect?

The GM may decree, completely arbitrarily, that a given item's powers are used up or otherwise limited. This is most helpful when players invent effects that are way, way too useful. The GM may also assign a further Target Number reduction for item abilities that do not fit into the above parameters, such as "raise the dead," "summon a demon," or "make a wish." These sorts of

abilities may be limited to single-use and furthermore receive anywhere from a -1 to -5 to the target number.

The answers to these questions affect the target number of the player's roll. For each of the following, reduce the target number by 1:

- Any specific ability.
- Any +1 improvement of target numbers.
- Any extension of range past line-of-sight



**Examples:**

- A gem which aids in spell-casting, such that customizing a spell is easier, canceling out up to 4 penalties. Thus it is functionally a +4 target number modifier, for a penalty of -4.
- Your basic magic sword that glows and increases one's attacking target number by 1. This is an ability (glowing) plus an obvious +1 to a target number, for a target number modifier of -2.
- A cloak that gives the wearer +2 target number to any Low Cunning roll involving hiding and sneaking. That's a +2, for a target number modifier of -2.
- Boots that permit the wearer to run to run up and down walls and across ceilings, and to jump twice as high as normal. This is two abilities for a target number modifier of -2.
- This wand buzzes whenever an enemy is present with intent to harm its owner. This is a single ability, so that's a target number modifier of -1. Since the player has unwisely left the actual buzz noise unspecified, the GM decides it acts much like a joy-buzzer or an especially feisty vibrating pager, and that it's quite loud.
- A pretty necklace whose wearer may ignore all effects of heat and flame and also get a +2 when fighting dragons or similar fiery creatures. This is a novel ability, plus the fighting effect category with a +2 bonus, for a total target number modifier of -3.
- A ring of Zap-O-Rama, permitting its wearer to smack someone with a lightning bolt at will with a +3 bonus. That's an ability (ranged attack) and a +3 bonus, for a target number modifier of -4.

- A vase that reverses evil enchantments, most notably the effects of hosers (see below). This is a single ability with a target number modifier of -1. The GM also decides to have its powers get used up after a bit (too damn useful).
- A gem that heals damage! (way cool) Since damage is only expressed in terms of Spunk penalties, this confers a bonus up to (say) +3 for purposes of canceling wounds. So that's a +3 bonus, for a target number modifier of -3.
- A real magic sword, dammit, which grants +2 fighting bonus, cancels spells cast at its user, and cuts right through stone and metal. Ha! Well, that's (uh) two novel powers and the bonus, for a total target number modifier of -4.
- A powder which, sprinkled on someone, permits them to walk through walls. That's an ability, which would be a -1 total to the target number, until the GM realizes it's also a defensive device and justifiably adds another ability, for a total modifier of -2.

The target number is further reduced by 1 for every magical item that the character already has. If the target number is 0 or less, then the item, sadly, is beyond the hopes of the character at this time.

Now that the target number has been determined, the player rolls 3d10 as described above, using Low Cunning or Dumb Luck if possible. This is the only closed roll in ELFS, that is, in which the GM may see the results but the player may not. The GM consults the following table:

| Number of Successes | Rolled Result             |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 2-3                 | got it!                   |
| 1                   | non-magical version       |
| 0                   | hoser version (see below) |

**Example of finding a magic item: Jason plays the elf Toe Cheese, and after an hour of play decides to roll for a magic item. He decides upon a pair of brass knuckles that gives him +1 damage and raises his target number to hit with them by 1. That's a total target number modifier of -2.**

During play, Toe Cheese has just managed to wander into the lair of a horrid female troll and unfortunately consumed a bowl of her stew. The GM points out that there are various remains at the bottom of the bowl (e.g. teeth). Jason suggests to the GM that the remains include what appear to be a set of brass knuckles and declares a Treasure roll based on Dumb Luck. "What's the character trying to do?" asks the GM, and Jason replies, "He's trying not to puke all over the place."

Toe Cheese has Spunk 2 and Dumb Luck 2, for a total of 4. He has no magic items at this time, so his target number is  $4 - 2 = 2$ . No matter what, Toe Cheese is going to find some kind of brass knuckles in his stew bowl. The question is whether they're magic and whether they're any good.

If the roll yields two or three successes, then Toe Cheese does find the desired magical brass knuckles. In either case, Toe Cheese does find the desired brass knuckles. With three successes, he also manages to keep his lunch down, but with two successes, he doesn't.

If the roll yields one success, Toe Cheese discovers a perfectly ordinary pair of brass knuckles.

If the roll turned up a complete failure, then the brass knuckles are a hoser item; see the next section to discover what they're (not) good for.

The last two outcomes (zero or one success) also entail Toe Cheese horking up the stew as well.

## HOSERS

A hoser version of a magical item looks, smells, feels, and otherwise appears just as the player described it, up to and including passing all "tests" the character may devise. However, it is really a dirty, rotten, stinking cheat of a magical item and, when first used in earnest, will display its actual hoser qualities. For one thing, it has none of the abilities originally announced by the player. For another, one of the following effects occurs:

1. All the character's other possessions rot apart in just a few days.
2. The character grows a tail over the next week.
3. The character subtly exudes an orange slime that gets on everything
4. The item turns all cheesy and crumbles apart in 24 hours.
5. The character receives a -1 penalty to all target numbers.
6. The character shrinks a foot in height.
7. The character is charged with static electricity and frequently receives a mild electric shock when touching furry or metal things.
8. The clothes worn by the character and anyone nearby commence shrinking inexorably.
9. The character becomes immensely sexually attractive to horses.
10. Roll twice more (and yes, if you roll another 10, keep going).



Hoser effects will persist for at least a day, and if necessary they will resume during that time as well. For example, if 8 is rolled, and the characters run off and get new clothes, those will shrink as well. If the character casts the item away, that's fine, it's gone; the effects will not resume. However, any effects it has caused remain for a day or more.

The last and most fun thing about hosers is that they do count against the character's target number regarding how many magic doodads he or she has already.

### STEALING ITEMS

One may also acquire a magical item in a much easier fashion, by taking those already in play from characters who own them. Low Cunning is required for such a dastardly act. The roll works just as described above in terms of modifiers, but any degree of success will succeed and 0 successes has no negative result.

**Example of stealing a magic item: Jason correctly realizes that it's far safer to swipe someone else's good stuff rather than risk getting a hoser. Toe Cheese has noted that Spike has been making use of a fine magic item for a while; in fact, it's the pretty fire-resistance necklace from the above list of items (target number modifier of -3). At the beginning of a play session, Jason moves into action.**

**Toe Cheese has Spunk 2 and Low Cunning 4, so when he suggests to Spike, a genitalstage elf, that there's a remarkably handsome naked guy bathing in the local hot spring, he gets  $2 + 4 - 3 = 3$  for his target number to swipe the necklace from the pile of clothes she leaves behind on her way to verify his claim.**

**Say Toe Cheese rolls 3, 9, 10 - a poor roll, with only 1 success, but it's plenty to get that necklace into his possession.**

### TURNIN' ON EACH OTHER

Just possibly, an elf or two in the same game will seek to do harm to one another. The GM and players will swiftly realize that, by the rules, it is not immediately clear how this might be done. So—in light of the possible, sad circumstances—here's how to go about it.

1. Actual open combat among player-characters is handled through normal rolls ... except that the successes generated through the rolls are essentially meaningless. The only way an elf takes damage in these circumstances is when the character's player rolls no successes at all, in which case the character loses one Spunk. Two elves fighting will make a lot of noise and potentially chew up a lot of scenery, but actual harm to the characters is rare. It's barely possible that one elf might reduce another to collapse in this way, but only barely.

Magic among elves is also handled normally, with the proviso that damage-causing spells like Kzap are limited in exactly the same way as weapon-damage described above. Which is to say, they don't do anything.

2. Much more dangerous (or effective, depending on how you look at it), is for one elf to capitalize upon another elf's collapse. If one player really wants to kill another player's character, this is the way to do it. A collapsed elf is quite vulnerable. The dastardly murdering elf must succeed in a roll to do the deed, and unfortunately, there's no particular reason to

make this roll difficult.

Now, here's the tricky part: recall that the GM has a certain amount of power over when and where a collapsed elf recovers his or her wits. That also means that the GM may set a variety of barriers between the collapsed elf and his or her would-be murderer, depending on the situation. For instance, if Spike collapsed in the course of adventures in the goblins' castle, the GM might well plan to have her wake up hanging in chains in the nasty filthy torture chamber. That means that an elf who wants to kill her must contend with the goblins and architecture of the castle in order to do so. What I'm really saying, you see, is that immediately killing Spike, upon the moment of collapse, is not an option unless the GM for some reason permits it explicitly.

3. Finally, and this is really the main way that player-characters do awful things to one another, elves can quite simply utilize Dumb Luck or Low Cunning to put one another into harm's way. Against monsters or whatever, this isn't hard—ducking behind a comrade and giving him or her a push, for instance, means that the monster-critter attacks the comrade and not the treacherous elf (if the roll is successful). The game system will handle that easily, and what happens is that the targeted character is brought to, or nearer to, collapse.

Certain sources of harm, however, need some attention: high cliffs, very deep pits, boiling mud or lava, and that sort of thing. What happens to an elf who is nudged, drop-kicked, or convinced to walk into or over one of these? Option A is for the

GM to treat the physical situation very much like a monster and take it from there—the elf can't "kill" the opponent, but may stay alive long enough to escape it by generating enough successes. Option B is for the GM to designate such features of the environment as Really and Actually Lethal. When the GM says such a thing, it's fair warning to the players that if their characters touch (go into, submerge in, etc) that feature, the characters die. In some situations, that means all the elves clasp hands like little second-graders and walk very carefully. In others, it means they eye one another and start sidling around most innocently to positions of advantageous nudging.

# PART FOUR SETTING & SOURCEBOOK



## THE HOME-GROWN SETTING

Time for the elaborate, detailed, made-up fantasy world of Nurth. Of course, it is carefully constructed to accord with the usual fantasy-gaming setting: richly detailed, anthropologically consistent, politically correct, backed up with complete history and list of important historical figures, and populated by thoroughly-quantified NPCs. And all the bridges are for sale, in fact, are on sale, for you.

## THE MAP

So here's what you need to know about the map. It's really cold to north and south, the oceans are wet and salty, all rivers flow downhill toward the oceans, the mountains are higher than valleys, the flat areas may have farms on them, cities are found at trade junctures, and all fauna and flora live where they ought to be, although you can put magic versions of any of the above wherever you want.

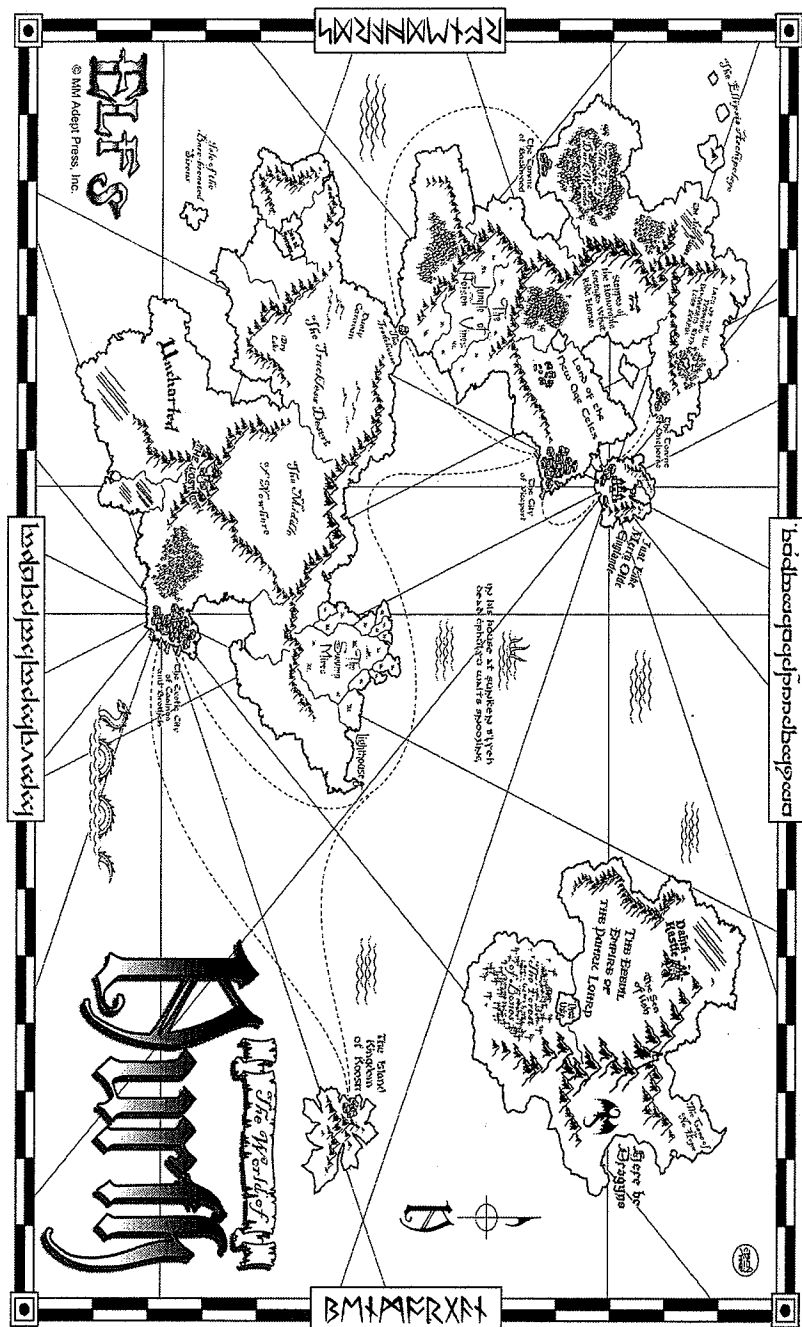
Now it's time for the GM to be creative and really bring this fantasy world to rich and stirring life! Assign the following terms to the map.

### The Realms:

- Very Bad Empire
- Much Like Olde Englande
- Land of New Age Celts
- Ancient Wise Elvenkind Place (alas, thoroughly abandoned and in disrepair)

### The Lands and Cities:

- Hick Town (multiple)
- Wicked Fun City
- Big Ol' Port



## The Outlands:

### The Wildernesses:

# THE TWO-MINUTE HISTORY OF THE WORLD

- **Dawn of time.** What more do you want to know?
- **The age of elvenkind.** Elves were tall, wise, cultured, and lived in harmony with all aspects of the environment, and they spelled their plural differently.
- **The rise of the dark evil races,** possibly because living in the state described above requires exploiting others to provide the necessary services.
- **War, brutal, merciless, and bloody.** Which is why the elder races are so rare.
- **About 1000 years ago,** everyone stops, exhausted, and humans come and buy up all the real estate. They also figure out how to do magic without breaking the windows, scaring the cat, and raising demons.
- **Age of humans.** Business prospers, wars are infrequent, cultures flourish. All is well, for humans.
- **And now,** the Dahrk Lohrd awakens, and seeks to rise once more ... Oh wait, forget it, no he doesn't. Some human paid for him to hang out on an island.

When setting up a human community for play, the GM rolls d10 twice to arrive at the distinct and impressive culture arrived at by the locals:

1. They wear funny hats.
2. They wear tight, complicated clothes.
3. They employ dumb greetings of some kind.
4. They're too stuck up.
5. They're too friendly.
6. They're too prudish.
7. They carry out abominable secret rituals in the dead of night, especially on strangers.
8. They spent a lot of time in incomprehensible religious practices.
9. Their laws are really picky and arbitrary.
10. Their cooking is terrible.

## MONSTERS OF NURTH

Oh boy! Fun critters who can bother, fight, kill, and eat the characters include the following.

**Aviel** — A beautiful, winged, sexy humanoid who always seems to focus on characters in the genital stage. They are, ah, willing to engage in erotic activities with such elves, and when they do so, the elf's Spunk is increased by 1. This only happens once, but as long as the elf and aviel, ah, continue at least daily, then it remains. Sound good? Too bad, because each encounter with an aviel drops Low Cunning and Dumb Luck by 1. When they both hit 0, then Spunk starts to disappear too. Finally, all the character will have left is the +1 bonus, at which time the aviel leaves forever – and the bonus vanishes too.

- number of successes to defeat = 10.
- abilities: none, besides those stated above.

**Reaper** — These horrible beings, which resemble skull-faced spectres clad in rags, are fortunately only encountered singly. They like killing, and will follow a given character about,

visible only to him or her, urging him or her to fight and kill as often as possible. If the character wants a break, the reaper gets impatient and attacks.

- number of successes to defeat = 6 + the foes killed by the elf in the reaper's presence.
- abilities: does 2 Spunk damage on an attack.
- The reaper is a Lethal opponent.

**Scumbat** — These nasty things travel in flocks; they are basically bats who ooze lots of mucus. They ordinarily feed on garbage, but will eagerly attack wounded elves as well. In general, they will concentrate their attack on the smelliest, dirtiest member of a group.

- number of successes to defeat = the number of scumbats in the flock.
- abilities: vulnerable, attacks using fire will reduce their number of successes to defeat by half; killing scumbats at close range means being covered in sticky goo that dries into very strong glue in a few minutes.

**Shrift** — These short, cranky, spindly-legged humanoids skulk about and love to steal things. Their first theft of a character's possession is inevitable unless the character rolls 3 successes vs. Spunk. They have to be seen, found, or discovered only through using Dumb Luck or Low Cunning, never just Spunk alone.

- number of successes to defeat = 3.
- abilities: very tough and elusive, requiring 3 whole successes to hit at all; they bite, such that failure to hit them results in 1 Spunk damage.

**Znort** — The znort is a fairly intelligent, four-legged creature that most resembles a burly panther with a semi-human

face. It has an especially large and wet black nose. Znorts love farts: they track them, praise them (with very specific connoisseur's vocabulary, in French accents, ah, le fragrance!), and if an anal-stage character is near a znort, then the creature gains one success-point bonus or damage-healing.

- number of successes to defeat = 7.
- abilities: armor, 2 successes are needed to hurt it; reflexes, failure to hurt it results in 1 Spunk damage to the character.

## OTHER RACES

Putting up with non-elfs is one of the true curses of elfy life. Here are some of the more aggravating members of the universe for them.

**Humans** — These bastards are everywhere and run everything. Every human has total immunity either to Low Cunning or to Dumb Luck, and there's only one way to find out which.

- Most humans require 3 successes to defeat, but exceptional individuals require as many as 6. Some have armor (requiring 2 successes to hurt) and some have reflexes (doing damage on both 0 and 1 success).
- Some humans use magic. Such usage is wholly determined and controlled by the GM.

**Little Fairies** — Cute, friendly, mischievous, endearing li'l guys! They sure like to help out elfs or anyone else on any kind of quest or endeavor, offering advice, spells, and much more without being asked.

- They only require 1 success to defeat, but they are immune to all attacks except 3-success ones. Since this means any successful hit on a fairy is overkill,

such a hit will splat the fairy most thoroughly.

- Spunk is effectively 0 against them; only Low Cunning and Dumb Luck count.
- Little fairies are very magical and easily befuddle, charm, or otherwise disorient opponents; in game terms, any missed roll against fairies results in the character blundering off in a wrong direction, or doing any other totally confused sort of action.
- Magic doesn't work at all against them; casting a spell at a little fairy will result only in a Haywire effect against the caster.

**Goblins** — Imagine a hairless, lumpy, puke-colored, snaggle-toothed elf, and you've got a goblin. They run in packs and ambush anyone venturing into anywhere not controlled by humans. The only good thing about them is that they carry or have twice as much treasure than predicted by the rules above.

- Goblins require 4 successes to defeat, and they have no special armor or abilities.
- Except at night or underground, in which case Low Cunning is useless against them and all the successes to defeat them must occur at once or in a row.

**Trolls** — Large, hairy, horned, unsociable creatures. They will harass and eat anyone, but will happily cooperate with someone who offers them a chance at their favorite food: elfs.

- Trolls require 8-10 successes to defeat. They do at least 2 Spunk damage on a successful hit and can only be defeated with 2 successes at once or in a row.
- The good news is that they're stupid and Low Cunning has twice its usual value against them.
- A troll is a Lethal opponent.

## NPC-ELFS

ELFS These characters are played as humans, except that elves are notably incompetent, credulous, or annoying. They do not share the human immunity to Low Cunning or Dumb Luck, and they do not live with humans, but instead are found in little towns or tribes.

## HOW TO RUN ELFS

By now you should have figured out the point. A couple of ELFS sessions are a good exercise not only for fun and rambunctiousness and keeping digestion regular, but also for some satire of the traditional RPG paradigm, and even, maybe, a bit of thought about just what is a player and what is a character.

Let's leave all that for the philosophers, though. The immediate success of ELFS ultimately rests on the scenario being actually interesting. The GM has two very separate tasks at hand: (1) to provide a setting that the elves want to rampage around in, and (2) to give the players lots of laughs.

The basic needs of an ELFS scenario are not very different from that of many other RPGs. They include a setting for exploration and confrontations, a list of individuals to encounter and perhaps fight, a bunch of goodies of some kind, and various situational hazards.

Basically, the characters venture into an isolated area, or deep underground complex, belonging to other people, with sketchy and cryptic instructions regarding traps and dangers. They meet a lot of adversaries and have the opportunity to gain some profits or treasures. They are often caught in the cross-fire between at least two warring groups, none of whom will believe they're not spies for the enemy side. So far, that's familiar territory for RPG veterans.

However, the GM must also have given some thought to the



personalities and relationships of the people and monstrosities inhabiting this setting and set them up specifically for ELFS. You see, the elf characters are not wandering into an arena for physical and magical contests, so much as stumbling into a powder-keg of very funny interactions.

First of all, figure out how any of the groups and individuals are situated in a balance of power. Tribes of giants, mercenary hirelings, nearby semi-intelligent monsters, settlements of any kind, outlaw bands ... how do they get along? Which are on the brink of conflict? About what?

Second, list all the NPCs that could conceivably articulate their situation in life. Give each one a motive, ambition, or an immediate problem. This handy list is a good start:

- hemorrhoids
- parent-child dispute
- impotence
- negotiating labor dispute
- recreational drug habit
- sibling rivalry
- low self-esteem
- aspiring artistic vision
- delusions of grandeur
- delusions of competence
- weird hobby
- marital dispute

Permutations of the items on this list go on forever. Assign such things freely: jealousy of one's second-in-command, a secret crush on a leader of the rival group, low self-esteem that could easily be vulnerable to flattery, impatience with the fundamentalist ravings of the leader, a fetish for short people, a political ideal ("Down with the high priests! No more gnoll abuse!"), and so on.

During play, the key is to inform the players of all the above details as soon as possible with each encounter. These are not secrets but rather right in the characters' faces. Play all the NPCs and foes terribly, terribly seriously, as if they took themselves and their treasure and all the circumstances to be Epic Drama. Give them lots of speeches about themselves and their plans.

How to get the elf characters involved in all this mess in the first place? Feel free to satirize the tropes of fantasy role-playing.

- A potential employer evaluates the characters by having his thugs insult or attack them.
- A sinister dude hires the characters to fetch or kill something, but he's planning a double-cross.
- For extra special depth and complexity, combine the above two options.

During play, the principal task for the ELFS GM is not to stall out. He or she must stay sensitive to what the players find funny and work any encounter into a direction that satisfies that need. If a planned confrontation seems to be turning into an impromptu alliance, or vice versa, the GM should abandon

the original plan and run with whatever seems to be working out. If a throwaway NPC turns out to interest the players, the GM should instantly assign them usable scores and personality traits; conversely, if the GM's beloved NPC turns out to bore the players silly, play should move away from that NPC and on to better things right away.

Think about funny improvisational skits - what makes them funny? It is always the actors' ability to abandon something that isn't working for the immediate audience, and to pick up on something that does work and develop it with very little preparation. That's the job of the ELFS GM. Unfunny skits are horrible, so don't subject your players to their role-playing equivalent.

## FOR FIRST-TIME PLAY

For the first time playing ELFS, the GM should hook the characters into a situation using very brutal, arbitrary methods. Simply begin the story with them in trouble: marooned on a drifting ship, penned up in a larder, on a mission under duress, lost in a sewer, and so on. Such tactics won't be necessary for later adventures, but the first session has the most effect on players when they are plunged into it and must take action immediately.

ELFS looks simple and maybe a bit silly, but in practice it is a real stretch for people who are used to role-playing only from "inside the skin" of their characters. Many players won't really grasp the mechanics, especially for Dumb Luck, until they have seen them in action a couple of times. I highly recommend giving them a lot of advice or explicit options during the first session, such as:

- "Why not try Dumb Luck to climb over that rubble? Your character's intent might be to use the top as a vantage point, but your goal might be to get across

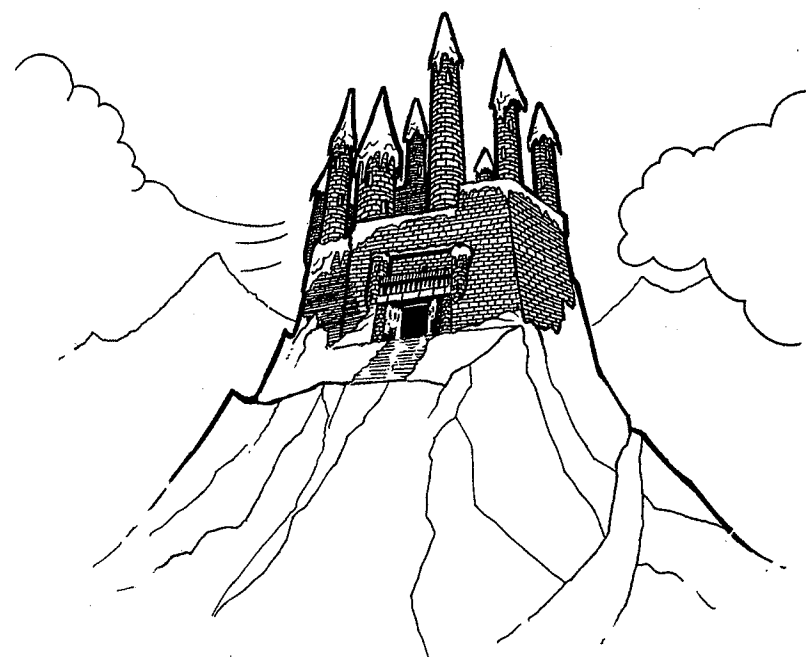


the whole thing. Or the other way around.”

- “This is a good chance for Low Cunning. Your pal is sprawled across the top of the rubble where he fell down. Why not just walk across him? If you do that, you can add Low Cunning to your Spunk.”
- “You’re fighting this giant frog-guy, right? All you have to do is roll 3d10, as usual. OK! Only one success, which means he’s not hurt ‘cause he’s so rubbery. But you’re not hurt either. Can you think of a way to add Low Cunning or Dumb Luck for the next roll?”

Phrase such suggestions to give the player options and to ask for their participation, rather than dictating what they should do. After a little while, in my experience, they catch on, and then the GM must run to keep up with their devious little imaginations in any conflict.

# PART FIVE ICE & FIRE



Here is a bona fide, official, educational scenario for playing ELFS.

## ELFS HOOKING THEM IN

Since this is intended to be a start-up, simply decree that the characters are already in the middle of some caper. Briefly, they have somehow irritated a very powerful wizard named Gryph, who has retaliated by sending them on a mission for him. Breeze through this quickly: "You were caught rifling his scullery, thinking it was his treasure trove. He caught you and made cutting comments regarding how you smell of onions. None of your abilities or actions meant jack. Now you're magically impelled on a mission to the top of the world." Or something like that, to your taste.

Gryph sends the characters to retrieve his hash pipe, which happens to be at his old castle at the very top of the world. He does not specify why or how it happens to be there, although he lets on that he just had it a few days ago.

He has magicked the characters to the eyeballs such that if they try to escape the castle or fail to hunt for the pipe for any period, their guts start to dissolve. This is not measured in damage; they can feel it begin to happen, and if they ignore the warning, they die. Tell the players so. (You may also tell them that such draconian GM tactics are only for the first story and will not be repeated in later adventures.)

## THE ICE CASTLE

The characters appear at the front gates of the castle. This impressive spired edifice sits at the top of a terribly dangerous craggy mountain, accessible only a couple of months out of the year (and this isn't then). Gryph spent his summers here when he was working on his advanced wizard's degree, consulting with the Cosmic Fire Lizards in the top chamber, but hasn't been back

for over a century. He would probably be surprised to find a tribe of native peoples living on his doorstep and in his front hall, as well as the general state of disrepair that has ensued.

It is immediately evident that travel down the mountain-side is impossible; the way is frozen over and blocked. The castle begins with broad steps leading up to impressive double doors, which are ajar and in fact frozen open. These lead through the high walls into a courtyard; in there are some outbuildings along the inner walls and the mansion with its great hall on the first floor.

Looking around will show that the whole castle is in a serious state of communion with the elements; one whole side, wall and all, is encased in ice, and snow blows steadily into the windows of one side of the upper stories and out the other. Big sheets and slopes of ice and snowdrifts make it impossible to walk all around the mansion and the grounds. The characters can't tell this right away, but the upper floors of the mansion are not even accessible at this time.

## WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

A tribe of snow-barbarian elves has moved in for a while, planning to stay here until the season changes and the road down the mountain is open again. They laid in a lot of dried meat and other food and are comfortably enjoying the winter, using the courtyard, some of the outbuildings, and Gryph's front hall.

Gryph's apprentice, Tobias, stole the pipe and sneaked up to this castle, planning to consult with the Cosmic Fire Lizards as Gryph did. Tobias has joined the tribe, somewhat to their surprise, and secretly goes upstairs to talk with the Cosmic Lizards every so often. To maintain influence over the chief, he procures saltpeter from the lizards and slips it into the chief's food. After



a week or two of this, of course, the chief, whose name is Manly Mighty-Spear, came to see him about a very confidential problem, and Tobias promised to help, thus cementing his cushy position in the tribe.

Tobias' studies with the Lizards are paying off, but for his next advancement in knowledge, he needs to sacrifice someone or something to them. He's now trying to convince the chief to give him his daughter, Lusciossa, although he pretends he's smitten with her and wants to marry her. She, of course, cannot stand him.

## THE COURTYARD AND LOBBY

The snow-barbarian elfs do not run at the players, screaming with rage to kill them. In fact, they'll even offer hot soup. They are very resistant to cold and dress lightly, more appropriate to a tropical setting.

This part of the scenario is basically a social situation, and there is plenty of opportunity to mingle - meaning, of course, to commit faux pas, establish allies and enemies, figure out some of the dynamics of the group, and look for the pipe.

Word gets around fast in a small community, and although no one would really come out and say anything about Manly Mighty-Spear's little problem, they aren't giving him a whole lot of respect about now either. Nor are they especially sympathetic toward the idea of the foreign wizard marrying their princess, as they are irked at his patronizing ways toward their indigenous-people customs. Therefore outsiders might be able to work out a few opportunities to get crucial information.

Eventually, the characters should peg Tobias as the only likely suspect. Depending on what the players decide to do, they might be wholly allied with the tribe (or any special interest thereof), wholly despised by them, or anything in between.

## NUMBERS

Should it come to combat or other conflicts, here are the necessities:

- The basic tribes-person has 3 successes to his or her name and does 2 successes damage.
- Manly Mighty-Spear: the chief is much tougher, requiring 6 successes to defeat, with the last 3 being in a row.
- Lusciossa: like a tribes-person, but also, roll Spunk for every time a character has a conversation with her; when you hit 5 successes she makes an indecent proposition. (The game author acknowledges that this character is offensive and disrespectful in the extreme and looks suitably ashamed of himself. Briefly.)
- Tobias presents an interesting combat situation: 3

successes at once or in a row discommodates him such that he cries, whimpers, and gives up. However, he's very hard to hold onto, as being near him will rapidly get the characters high, and he'll easily escape unless at least two of them make a 3-success roll.

Tobias may be thought of as the nut to crack at this point. This guy is a wizard's apprentice who just decided to go for the big guns by himself. Recognizing him, though, might take a scene or two. He really likes being the "tribal shaman" and wears all the possible regalia and gewgaws he can. It might be hard to recognize him as a foreigner under all the dead creatures and carved fetishes and so on, at least at first. The hash pipe is in fact visible, hanging from his little vest, if one looks for it. He is often absent, especially when he's most wanted.

Tobias has achieved some degree of proficiency with the hash pipe and wields some effective spells, which are left to the GM's wicked imagination. (Kids, do not try this at home.)

Upon meeting the tribe, the characters should find themselves embroiled in all sorts of social conflicts. Once things look a bit dicey for Tobias, that is, as soon as he figures out that the elves are looking for the hash pipe, he will flee upstairs, wafting upwards in a haze of scented vapor. (The central stairway from the great hall is completely icelocked.) A good roll can track him there; the tribesmen won't follow immediately.

## THE UPPER FLOORS AND ROOMS

There are two more floors above, as well as a high tower with topmost chamber. These areas, not counting the tower, comprise seven or eight rooms with various corridors and doors connecting them. The stairs from below spiral up through the middle of the building; they stop at the third floor

and the stairs up into the tower are in a corner (these are thoroughly, thoroughly blocked with ice).

These areas are open to the elements via the windows and frost covers everything. Much of the floors are covered with ice and snowdrifts have formed around most of the corners.

- Icy floors require a roll to negotiate; failure results in banging one's head painfully for 1 damage that quickly wears off.
- The snowdrifts also require a roll; failure results in getting stuck and all but 3 successes result in snow down one's underwear.

Even worse, all sorts of creatures are roaming these areas:

- Moaning ghosts roam the halls; Gryph left these hanging around from studying (graduate students never clean up), and they will pester the characters, crying out in scary voices for their blood. It takes 4 successes to defeat one, but all four must be in a row. They may also be dissuaded from attacking by giving them some blood to drink. This option does no damage to the character who donates the blood, which makes the ghosts drunk.
- White winged reptiles fly in and out of the windows, lashing at the characters with their edged tails. These critters require 3 successes to hit at all, and it takes 5 successes to kill them. The characters may avoid them entirely simply by stooping down and avoiding ever being in front of a window.
- A two-headed polar bear has snuggled up inside a snowdrift for the winter and is not pleased at being kicked by some stupid, clumsy, inconsiderate elf. This monster is quite dangerous at 1 point of armor,

8 successes to kill, and doing 2 Spunk damage, but fortunately it thinks elves taste nasty and, upon biting one, will go "Huck-ptooey" and abandon the fight. Only very stupid characters will press to attack, and only then will it go into all-out combat mode.

- The worst are the ice weasels lurking in the nooks and crannies. They only attack if someone has taken damage. There will be 1-10 of them, with their number indicating how many successes it takes to defeat them. As a group, they do only 1 Spunk damage. The trouble is that once a character does take damage from them, he or she will continue to lose 1 Spunk per round, as they glom on and won't let go. It takes 3 successes to rid oneself of a bunch of glommed-on ice weasels.



There is no sign of Tobias up here and it should become clear that it's basically a blasted chilly waste of a good castle, with no way up into the tower. However, one thing stands out: the unbreakable mirrors in every room. These mirrors are really mystic portals into the top chamber. When a character looks into one, he or she will immediately feel its magic working to suck the character into it. Ask whether the character is resisting or cooperating, and ask for a roll. If resisting, the character needs three successes to keep from being sucked in; if cooperating, he or she needs any degree of success in order to get sucked in. Regardless of the result, from that point on, any of the characters entering a room with a mirror (all of them) will have to make a similar roll.

### THE COSMIC FIRE LIZARDS' CHAMBER

Transported through the mirrors to the top chambers of the castle, the characters encounter a very different environment: hot, sulphurous, and bubbly. The floor is a pool of really hot liquid mud, with a couple of ridges and protrusions of packed mud sticking up, plus a ledge on one side. Steam fills the air. It's so hot that the GM should just drop characters 1 Spunk as he or she sees fit, the first time they perform any kind of exertion. The walls (which do not correspond to the size or shape of the top of the tower as seen from outside) are solid brick. Weird mystic Portals hang in the air, corresponding to the mirrors; however from this side, they are not mirrors at all, and one can see through them into the lower chambers and even grab and pull individuals through. However, escaping through them will be difficult and require 3 successes to avoid being grabbed by one of the Lizards.

The two creatures there are large reptilian humanoids with devilish features; they are snakes from the waist down. They

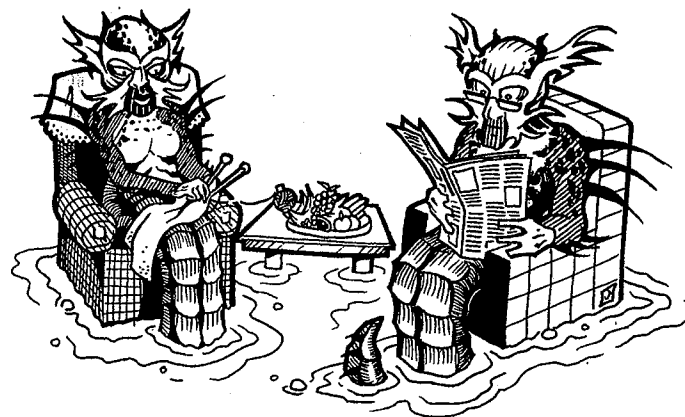
are husband and wife, and they interact with one another much in the feverish, overly-solicitous, hubby-hubby manner found in early television sitcoms. They are reasonably friendly and the following information is readily available:

- Gryph set up this little pocket dimension for them to stay in; in fact, they would like to know how his final exams went (this would be about 75 years ago).
- They supply Tobias with saltpeter in exchange for magical trinkets; they have no idea what for.
- Tobias just came by and gave the pipe to them; he received a powerful spell to Cloud Men's Minds in return.
- They are happy to exchange the pipe for a tasty elf to eat for lunch.

Further bargains are welcome; they will happily take a non-hoser magic item in exchange for granting a neat magic power of the player's description (such a power will have no effect if used on them). They will only exchange the hash pipe for lunch, as described above. Fighting them is not especially recommended. They will require 10 successes each, and 2 successes to hurt; rolling 0 means you're coiled up in their tail and need 3 successes to get out.

There are two ways to get out of the situation without sacrificing a companion to them (although if that's the solution, why not?):

1. They think elves are cute. If one has captured an elf, he or she can't possibly eat the character "while it's looking at me like that." Under these circumstances, a very cute action will, with any degree of success, dispose the Lizards favorably toward the characters.
2. They think Tobias is pretty much a goofball and will



be happy to eat him instead as payment for the pipe; however, this option must be suggested by a character for them to see it, and they will require Tobias to be delivered to them before turning over the pipe.

## FINISHING UP

The characters will return to Gryph as soon as one of them in fact takes a draw on the pipe. The Cosmic Fire Lizards will not permit this act in their chamber; second-hand smoke is very bad for you and it's just rude, you know. Also, the pipe is magically inactive in their presence.

Presuming that the characters managed to acquire the pipe in one way or another, they now must get out of the castle. It is suggested that the GM embroil them immediately in the middle of the tribe's problems, as Tobias has returned to the lower floor and tried to rally the chief and tribe against the elves. How likely this is, and what ensues, depends entirely on how the elves have interacted with the tribe thus far, so it is left to individual instances to work out. The idea is not to give the characters a chance to toke on the pipe until they at least deal with some of the problems.

Tobias has of course returned downstairs and is Clouding the Men's Minds to convince them to kill the elves. What the characters can do about this is up to them (do note the actual name of the spell, regarding whose minds are cloudable).

There are plenty of options, with any of the NPCs as potential allies, but thus guaranteeing one or another of them as foes. By the way, breaching the lizards' topmost chamber from the underside is an interesting option, as it will melt most of the ice around and probably damage the castle considerably.

Once the characters manage to toke up, they'll reappear in Gryph's mansion, and the pipe will be nowhere to be found (he's magicked it to his secret stash place). "All right, you little monkeys," he'll say. "Get out of my sight, and if I ever see you again, I'll skin you and use the skin for a washable bum-wipe. Good-bye." The scenario is ended.

## PART SIX GOING OVER THE EDGE



And “over the edge” means exactly what? Well, in the role-playing game by that name, written by the excellent Jonathan Tweet and including essay material by Robin Laws, “over the edge” means stretching the limits of the traditional role-playing experience. It means considering the activity to be a legitimate art form and doing something with it that hasn’t been tried before. And, lucky you, ELFS offers a tailormade opportunity.

“Hear that, Troll’s Fart? This guy says we’re Fine Art!”

“Yeah? I only have one thing to say about that.” (prolonged fart)

In this version, ELFS is not played as a stand-alone game. You must choose any roleplaying game which might be described as a “traditional fantasy role-playing game” (henceforward, the FRPG) published before 1987. You’ll use it as kind of a foundation or backdrop for playing ELFS. Character creation and the resolution system are used just as normal, with some attention given to the following issues.

## PREPARATION

### The Setting

Ignore the setting given in these rules and consider the setting of the FRPG. Don’t use it absolutely as given, but rather a cartoony version of it.

### Outfitting

Ignore the price list given in the ELFS rules. Instead, take that FRPG and set the price of the most practical, functional one-handed sword at eight coins. Then scale the prices of everything else to that, based on their lists. Anything that costs less than a coin, just round up to one.

## Magic

All the magic rules are followed as usual, but the spell list is ignored. Instead, the GM takes the beginning (e.g. first-level) spell list from the FRPG he or she is using. Only “real magic-user” type spells are allowed, such as illusionist and M-U spells from AD&D, or equivalents from ROLEMASTER or DRAGONQUEST or WARHAMMER or whatever.

All the logistic constraints of the FRPG’s magic do apply exactly as described in the relevant rulebook: spell components, duration and range, energy drain, castings per day, forgetting the spell, and so on. If “level” is a concern, use the elf’s Spunk. Any mechanics that need to be converted to ELFS mechanics (e.g. endurance drain) are adjudicated by the GM. These constraints entirely replace the options given in the ELFS rules.

Magic items present a lot of fun in this option, as the sort of rulebooks we’re talking about inevitably list pages and pages of nifty objects. Players announcing their intent to find one must select from those listed in the book. Also, during play, any use of Dumb Luck with a magic item must take Haywire (see the magic rules above) as the player’s intent; the GM uses the big item list from the book as the source for the Haywire.

## HOW TO PLAY

An old-style module pack for a real typical dungeon-crawl works wonderfully, but it will require just a bit of tweaking. First of all, strip it down, as many of them are overloaded with opponents and combat set-pieces. Developing one or two of the more interesting situations should be enough, so just ignore most of the other details.

Second, just list all of the NPCs. In the older adventure modules, these characters are totally faceless: “Three troll guards are dicing in the alcove,” or “The tribe includes a shaman with



a wand of something-or-other." The key is to come up with something these NPCs will do or want with the characters besides just fighting them. Then apply all of the guidelines given in the rules above about creating scenarios, and you and the players will have a lot more to do with these NPCs than merely setting up fights. Take those three guards: is one of them trying to get the others to praise the poem he just wrote? The characters' opinion will be just what he needs to convince his pals that "harm to thee" and "balmier" do in fact rhyme.

Oh yes! Nearly all of these modules include a "savior NPC," whose job is to save the player-characters' bacon if necessary, and/or provide some key item or knowledge they need. In ELFS, such characters should be played as obnoxiously and RPGstereotypically as possible: the pious priest who constantly guilt-trips them, the New-Age wizard who mumbles, the staunch and robust man-at-arms who demands constant praise, and so on.

Third, lighten up the deadliness. Find all the traps and figure out a way for their effects to be humiliating rather than lethal. The guidelines above ensure that many NPCs will be interested in interacting with the characters rather than merely attacking them, but also come up with something for hostile NPCs to do with defeated characters: stuffing them in the cupboard for later, tying them up to use in a mystic ritual tomorrow night, insisting on a political debate in hopes of gaining a convert,



insisting on being worshipped for a while, and so on. If you do retain some foes that simply want to kill intruders, then make sure the confrontation includes a way for characters to escape (possibly unintentionally).

## GETTING ESPECIALLY SELF-REFERENTIAL

It might so happen, some time as the elf characters roam about having misadventures, that they run into the following characters or very similar ones:

- **Arianet-Alynn Goldfallow.** This is the New Age hero-woman, 110 pounds of self-actualized, aerobicized goodness. She wears fashionable garments and armor that somehow show a lot of leg. Her hair is to die for.
- **Gelrick.** This guy is a grunting dolt encased in metal, except for places where we can see his rippling muscles. The other characters send him at opponents first; he seems to like it.
- **Jebediah Darklocke.** A brooding goth of a wizard-fighter-assassin, wearing black. He's a loner, a contemplator, the last scion of a dying civilization, cursed by the gods, doomed forever by his love, the pain in his eyes never quite hidden, thinly overlaid by an air of cynicism; someone shut me up, please.
- **Those two other guys.** One is an agile, slinky sort wearing leather and looking furtive; the other wears some kind of theological vestments over his robe and has a very blank face. Neither speaks or performs any action except when the others tell him to. When they are present, the group can go through any door and recover from any injuries.

These characters are nothing less than alarming. Each requires 12 successes to take down, and the last 4 must be in a row. Two successes are required to hurt them at all, and each has 4 points of armor. They do 3 spunk damage.

They spout off a lot about all sorts of noble sentiments: finding their long-lost family member, avenging the honor of their clan, saving the world from the plans of some Dahrk Lohrd. However, all they really do is unreasonably hack and kill and slaughter, cutting a swath of destruction and theft across the whole landscape. Their dialogue is tremendously self-referential, with lots of rules arguments and jargon from traditional fantasy role-playing.

What to do with this bunch is left up to the GM, although I would not mind if they were brought to miserable grief. Repeatedly.

## WELL, THAT OUGHT TO DO IT!

What are you waiting for? That's ELFS. Go play.

# APPENDIX: TALKIN' 'BOUT PLAYING ELFS!

This stuff comes from discussions at the Forge ([www.indierpgs.com](http://www.indierpgs.com)). Many thanks to all!

## ELFS AND CONVENTION PLAY

### Anybody got any advice on running ELFS at a convention?

If you love to see your NPCs' neurotic little hangups revealed, you're golden. One time, I was laughing so hard at the thought of my inhibited Dawrk Eevil Cleric lady getting her leg humped by an elf that I had to stop the action.

The practical side of this is that you're never at a loss. Once the players get the idea that they can go places and do things, and that this new place will be funny too, it takes off.

Also, for some reason, railroading takes on a complicit quality in ELFS. When the wizard with two-inch-long eyebrows steps out of the shadows to help out (and tell them exactly where to go and what to do), it's like the players are in on the joke and don't mind at all.

## IT'S NOT FLUBBING IF IT'S FUN

I finally got a group to play ELFS!! Woo hoo!! Even better, they really enjoyed it! I took them through the Ice and Fire module.

Well, as usual, flubbed up the module. They decided to try sneaking past the barbarians, and rolled 3 successes to do so, and decided to head directly up to the third floor. The second room they entered, they figured out the

mirrors, and went to the tower-top. Not smart on my part, but I skipped ahead to where the Fire Lizards already had the hash pipe. One of the characters was unconscious, and so the other characters all decided to give him for lunch in exchange for the hash pipe. One of the characters, a "stoner" immediately decided to light up. They zipped through it in just over an hour's time.

I think the most humorous point was when they wanted to go through the ice leading to the tower, so an anal stage character got set to fart for all he was worth with the magic slingin' elf (the stoner) getting set to light his fart, and melt the ice. Well, he decided to have Haywire as the result, and only scored two successes. It resulted in "Mmmm," so the fart turned solid, and into an edible mass. The stoner got upset and kicked it down the stairs, ... so I had one of the snow-barbarian elves call up, "Hey! This stuff tastes like shit!"

Flubbed up the module? How? It sounds to me like you had a really good time ... no one ever said an ELFS session had to be such-and-such a length.

If you are really looking forward to a certain set of encounters, though, and it looks as though the players are going to bypass it, I suggest using the carrot. That is to say, offer something reeeeeeal nifty and obvious to entice them into the situation of interest. Food, magic items they're looking for, Lusciosa. ...

**"I skipped ahead to where the Fire Lizards already had the hash pipe."**

There we go. That's where our heroes had the opportunity to go deal with the snow-barbarians, right? It's kind of puzzling why you skipped right there ... I mean, that would indicate that the short running time was your doing, not the players' ... But

my main point is that if it was fun just to schlep past that set of characters, then it's no big deal. No flubbing.

I hasten to say, with some dignity, that I have never GM'd a scene involving an edible fart.

## PREP IS IMPORTANT

Just had me my first session of ELFS tonight. It went swimmingly. I had four players, none of whom had read the rules before. The session lasted about two hours.

Player #1 (hasn't played any RPG in nearly ten years, wants to get back into gaming): is playing an oral stage with a high Dumb Luck. Player #2 (my brother, who has lots of gaming experience but all traditional dungeon-crawling): also playing an oral stage, but with scads of Low Cunning. Player #3 (longtime fantasy-role-playing guy): playing an anal stage with an even split of Dumb Luck and Low Cunning. Player #4 (longtime fantasy-role-playing guy): playing a genital stage with an even split of DL and LC. He was also the only one that volunteered to be a magic-user.

I started them off in the sewers of Freehold, my token Big Port City. They were each running from separate groups of angry people, treated as one giant angry mob, intent on either running them out of the city or impaling them on big sticks (I hadn't really given much thought to which one).

"Why are we running?" they asked. I grinned. "You tell me. You're the ones they're chasing."

It took them a second to realize that I was (gasp!) giving them power. Then they each proceeded to come up with an absolutely hilarious reason why they were being chased out of town. Most of them involved sex in some

fashion (which is odd, considering only one of them is genital stage). What followed was the most unbelievably obscene combat sequence I've ever seen.

I laid out combat for them as follows:

1. You each tell me what your character wants to do for this round.
2. I ask if you want to use Low Cunning or Dumb Luck (reminding them that while, yes, you can simply use Spunk, you get a bonus for using one of the other two).
3. If you want to use Low Cunning, I ask who are you screwing over and how.
4. If you want to use Dumb Luck, I ask so what is happening in reality, as opposed to what is happening in the character's depraved little mind.
5. If you want to use just Spunk, roll 'em and pray.
6. Everyone roll. Determine initiative as detailed in the rules.
7. I resolve the basics of everyone's actions in the order dictated by the initiative.
8. Once the result of everyone's action has been determined, I narrate the actual events of the whole combat round, often to resounding hysterics.
9. Rinse. Repeat as necessary.

Once their opponents had been dispatched, I let them loot the bodies for coins, and they escaped out onto the docks and onto a departing ship, bound for destinations as yet unknown.

**Rules Assessment:** This is a nice neat set of rules. Once the guys caught on to the ways that they could use Dumb Luck to influence game elements outside of their own characters, or even bring new game elements into existence, they ran with it in a big way. The experience

system gave them a good laugh. A fun time was had by all, and we're going to do it again as soon as possible.

**The Bottom Line: Two Thumbs Up.**

For your later sessions, I do suggest you do some preparation. This time, yes, they were having fun with the player-power material, but it will get stale very fast unless you have some NPCs who are (a) up to something understandable and (b) terribly parodied from traditional fantasy stereotypes.

The players will need adversity, and that adversity needs to have faces, names, and screamingly funny dialogue. When that happens, then ELFS is satirical, not silly.

Many new players shy away from being "magic elfs," mainly because they have been brainwashed that "knowing magic makes you weaker in other areas." Have your players figured out that a magic-slingin' elf doesn't have to trade off any effectiveness of any kind? Once they do, you might give the players the option to have their characters be magical after all.

## DUMB LUCK

The players had a tough time grokking the Dumb Luck system. They always wanted to do too much or too little with it – either trying to grab too much authorial control or too little. The best use of Dumb Luck was where Otter found a magic item by slipping on ice and bumping his head against a secret chamber (that's what the player wanted), while the character was attempting to look cool on the ice (which, since he only got two successes, he failed to do).

Commentary was varied. Despite one of the best moments in the game coming from him, one player didn't like the fact that he didn't seem to be successful as often

as he'd like, especially once he lost Spunk in combat. Another complained it required too much creativity in combat, when she's better elsewhere. Both thought they lost Spunk too quickly. (I also think these players were less hip to the Toon-style "failure is funny too" idea that ELFS seems to engender.) One liked it because he got to do the sort of things he'd never do in other games – he grabbed the pipe while invisible (the magic item he found was a Ring of Invisibility), and left the party holding the bag with an angry mob of barbarians until he thought to take the pipe. The last one seemed to enjoy it, though he had the toughest time coming up with ideas.

I think some of the problems had less to do with the system and more to do with how I ran it -- it was perhaps more combat-heavy than it should have been. However, I think that the Dumb Luck system, which is the coolest part of the game, could use more 'splain-ing, and/or some expansion - the players wanted more authorial control. Also, I tried to make the failures funny, but the players didn't get into the spirit there very much, and that's something to watch out for.

The Dumb Luck mechanic is indeed the key, and most of your statements about (a) what players didn't find fun and (b) didn't understand seem integrated to me. In other words, if they don't grasp the "what the player wants" from that mechanic, then "what the player wants" isn't going to be a priority of play – the priority will remain with the old-school "my guy succeeds a lot," which is ... well, not likely to happen.

ELFS flies best when the GM is committed to the open, vicious, completely unapologetic skewering of old school play. Even "I want my character to succeed a lot" has to get chucked.

The best way to do that is the NPCs, the NPCs, the NPCs. Get into the NPCs and their problems: gnoll guards at the gate? They're bitchin' about pay cuts. Ogre assassin? Oh, his achin' hemorrhoids. Villagers? They insist on "fooling" you with painfully-slow card tricks.

One customer wrote to say that he thought the satire was too pointed and unfair. Well, ELFS is an angry game, and the humor is there to make the anger accessible and entertaining. Tap into that and you'll be well on your way.

## FIGHTIN'

The rules about armor say, "a single success has no effect on the creature; for really awful-tough armor, only three successes will do." What is the mechanic for this? Is the armor rating subtracted from the number of successes the player rolls, or is it just a threshold?

For example, if an NPC has two points of armor and a player-character rolls three successes, how much damage does the character do? Is it just 1 point (3 successes - 2 armor), or do all three successes count?

It gets even more confusing if you compare this to player-character armor on page 20, which seems to just be extra Spunk.

No need to think in terms of points and subtraction. When a creature has armor, getting one success against it means nothing happens. Getting two successes means getting two successes. It's a threshold. 'Course, one might then posit a creature against whom two successes isn't enough, requiring three (which then lands three successes if you get it).

Player-characters' armor works differently. Player-characters are one thing and foes are another.

Then the description of the “alarming” characters says: “Two successes are required to hurt them at all.” I thought this was what armor does, but then it says: “and each has 4 points of armor.” \*confuzzlement\*

Whoops, you got me with the alarming party. Never mind the part about the four points of armor, or if you want to be nasty, treat it like PC armor.

There are all sorts of weapons in the list, but only the big cartoony hand weapon is given a specific function by the game text (on a Total Success it does 4 damage instead of 3). So, what are all those other weapons on there for? Also, do you include “unarmed fighting” as a weapon?

All weapons are the same except for the cartoony ones. Without weapons, you’re hosed. Ever try to hurt someone with unarmed combat in old-school fantasy role-playing? Doesn’t work. Unarmed elves really oughta run fast.

Then again, a hastily-grabbed fireplace poker will do fine. Or a rock. Or a big ol’ Dumb Luck roll that makes use of an especially long stalactite when he evades, or this Low Cunning roll that makes use of the dagger that the guy had in his belt but is now sticking out of his chest.

## WISH-FULFILMENT

Yesterday some old friends came by my place, and we decided to play a session of ELFS. I pitched it to them as a “simple game of murder and larceny,” and told them that they wouldn’t have to role-play if they didn’t feel like it – they could just be themselves, so to speak. They liked that.

#1 is the best role-player of the bunch. He is too laid-back to care about rules minutiae, and he genuinely likes to find unusual and humorous solutions to obstacles put in his (character’s) way. He played Lytria, an oral, ego-tripping bimbo (S:3, LC: 2, DL:2).

#2 - always play guys who skulk in the shadows, always looks out for himself, and never takes one for the team. He played Cassius, a genital sadomasochist (S:1, LC:4, DL:4).

And #3 is the guy who’s clinically incapable of agreeing with the GM, always rules-lawyering and looking for a free ride. On the other hand, he seldom min-maxes. He played Sleazy, an anal, unpleasant bum (S:3, LC: 2, DL:2).

As I had virtually no prep, I ran the supplied starting adventure “Ice & Fire.” High points included:

- The team instantly antagonizing half of the tribe by acting just as arrogantly as Tobias.
- Lytria and Cassius double-teaming the chieftain’s daughter in her quarters.
- Deciding to explore the castle in the middle of the night “so these losers won’t try to follow us and steal OUR treasure!”
- Beating the hell out of three Ice Elfs when attempting to sneak up the stairs, killing one. (Said Ice Elfs wanted to beat \*them\* up for being assholes.)
- Jumping through one of the mirrors that leads to the Fire Creatures and instantly attacking them (well, Sleazy did).
- Lytria calming the incensed fire creatures by sucking her swordhandle in a most suggestive manner.
- Going back down to retrieve Tobias, they encounter two other Ice Elfs who question them about their

dead and KO'ed buddies. Lytria and Cassius spin a yarn about how they're too weak to drag the massive amounts of treasure down the stairs, and these guys (the KO'ed ones) tried to kill and rob them. "If you'll help us, we can split the treasure!"

- They then trade the two boneheads in for the pipe, and one spell each. Case closed.

A few problems and snags arose here and there, mostly from my imperfect mastery of the rules. I did note that people tend to underestimate Dumb Luck. I solved that problem by doing two things: (1) coaching the players i.e. providing concrete examples in play, and (2) being very strict with the use of Low Cunning. That means not giving players the bonus if they use it to perform actions that are even \*slightly\* repetitive. 1st round: "I smack him on the left ear, really hard!" "OK, sounds like Low Cunning." 2nd round: "This time I smack him hard on the right ear!" "Straight Spunk, spud."

Once people have learned the basics – NO takebacks on statements!

But overall it was very pleasant. It even brought a few smidgeons of role-playing out of #2 and #3, and that happens only once in a blue moon. Plus, the fights were wonderfully detailed and heroic – so detailed in fact that more mainstream systems actually seem congested because the plentitude of rules locks you down.

And ELFS is fun. Even with my friends, which makes it an unqualified success!

*I might be reading something into your prose, but do I detect a slight similarity between the characters and their respective players? Remarkable. ELFS as gut-level wish-fulfilment.*

Oh, absolutely. The majority of the friends that I play with treat all games as "gut-level wish-fulfilment." When it comes to "non-role-playing," I must admit that two of the worst offenders were present. But even so, they role-played a lot more than usual. (Alternatively, their personalities are a lot like elves. But I don't like to think about that.)

## DISTURBING FUN

Last night was a disturbingly fun game of ELFS. I played a plain mean Elf named Wype, with (of course) an anal fixation. I'm proud to say that Wype killed him no less than three stupid paladins (stupid may be an understatement) and a large mastiff and took their stuff. Right before he was eaten by a demon, he had amassed 100 coins.

Anyway, I found the style of play to be really fun, and really challenging. I started running out of good Low Cunning ideas somewhere in the middle of the game, so I figure my best bet would be to be a little more thrifty with 'em and use them when the situation is dire.

Fun Low Cunning ideas: pushing Dozer into the underbrush to see what the noise was, so Wype could surprise it. Pulling a rug out from under a paladin's feet. Standing between a paladin's legs so the other paladin couldn't easily attack Wype.

An elf with an anal fixation is a powerful counterattack to a sorceress with flame spells. As Clinton narrated, "It's like the movie Backdraft for a few moments." And another player's elf actually managed, um, a seduction. Two paladins. At the same time.

That says it all, doesn't it? Better than any game I played when I was 15.

## HIT BY A MONSTER

**E** When do monsters do damage? Is it when you fail  
**L** your roll that they automatically hit you, or do they  
**F** always hit you and failing just costs an extra spunk?

**S** Monsters do damage whenever a player's roll fails. The default is 1 Spunk unless the monster description indicates more.

## BEST VILLAIN CHARACTER EVER

They go to the Snoogan's Head Inn where the innkeeper, Mac, tells them to get out because he had just gotten the chandelier fixed. They ask him about the job, and he points them to a black-cloaked guy in the dark corner who's been drinking water all day, the cheap bastard.

They approach Elmer who has a dark cloak, dark glasses, a white sheet tied around his head, pasty white skin, and an Elmer Fudd lisp. He wants them to retrieve the Brass Monkey, an artifact of great power that will look lovely on his mantle. They try to nail him down on a price, but he only says he will reward them handsomely. For whatever reason, they went anyway. ("So we're expendable?" "Exactwy.")

*[much chaos skipped as they acquire the Brass Monkey - RE]*

They ask Elmer for a price. When they get back to Snoogan's, Elmer says he'll give them 500 gold coins and a piece of coconut crème pie.

They decide to kill Elmer. To do this, Cherry messes up her clothes and says the others are dead, but she has the Brass Monkey in the woods outside of town. He reluctantly follows. Nipple ambushes him and knocks

his head into the coconut crème pie. Nipple tries to strike again, and he blocks the mallet with a single finger. Elmer wipes off his face with a polka-dotted hanky and the white make-up comes off as well, revealing he has dark purple skin. That's right. Elmer is a Dwow. He was about to use nasty, nasty magic when Cherry whacked him in the balls and Nipple pounds his purple head into the ground.

The group then decides to go to Madam Cockrel's Curio Shop where they learn that the Brass Monkey is anti-alchemy so it turns gold into lead.

*A Dwow! Brilliant!*

## MAGIC SPELL LIST OR FUMBLE LIST?

One of the player took a magic slingin' elf, and he noted that in practice he doesn't have a spell list. He has a fumble list. He has yet to get a spell to work properly, because that would require three successes.

Obviously, I think we're missing something in the intended play for ELFS. The player is taking the game rather seriously. He spends more time plotting than I do (but that don't take much) But he's not playing much with that division line between player & character, either. I think this is part of it, but he chooses the fallout effect and has to be told to pick a spell that the character is trying to cast because he figures, why bother, it'll never work anyway. And so far he's been right, and he needs 8's or less.

*Can't get three successes on 8 or less? That's some lousy luck. "Casting the right spell" is not an especially powerful tactic in*



the game. Spell-casting introduces chaos, rather than honing or clearing-out a situation. The challenge for him is how to apply that chaos most effectively.

I think your player will find that his strategic and tactical desires can be met with ELFS magic. But to do that, check out the Wonky Spell Effects list and get away from the "I cast Spell X because it's the perfect spell for the situation" mindset.

The most useful trick for spell-casting is to use Spurt, because then you're all set for improvising off the other spell that gets cast, whatever it might be. It's a fumble list, sure, but it's not a **player** fumble we're talking about.

## ABOUT THE (BAD, BAD!) CREATORS



### Jeff Diamond

The illustrator is also the author and illustrator of the role-playing game ORBIT, a light science fiction romp turned up to eleven.

Details are available at: <http://www.orbit-rpg.com>

### Ed Heil

Ed Heil is a long time gamer and artist who wishes he had more time to game and draw these days. He thinks that with the exception of a few fine products like ELFS, roleplaying games have gone to hell in a handbasket since the glory days of TUNNELS & TROLLS.

### Ben Morgan

The cartographer and character sheet designer has contributed his creations to many independent role-playing games. He operates A.D. 1066 Design Studios, found at:

<http://www.ad1066.com>

### Matt Snyder

The layout designer freelances for indie role-playing game publishers. He also designs his own games, including the award-winning Old West game, DUST DEVILS. Visit his site:

<http://www.chimera.info>

## Antti Karjalainen

This Finnish mad-fellow couldn't help himself and contributed all the goth-posers ELFS. His artwork and more information is at Anticide <http://www.kotiposti.net/xakarjala/>.

## Ron Edwards

The author has been playing role-playing games for a really long time. He is the author of the game SORCERER, which is not very much like ELFS at all, and it may be found at: <http://www.sorcerer-rpg.com>

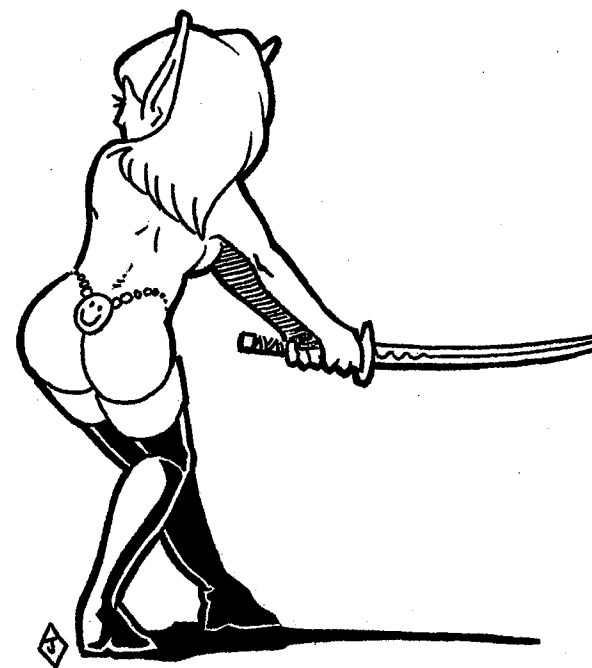
He is also the author of the TROLLBABE RPG and comic series, both available at: <http://www.adept-press.com/trollbabe>

He advocates and supports creator-owned and independent role-playing games at The Forge, at:

<http://www.indie-rpgs.com>

His greatest sadness regarding this hobby is that fantasy role-playing was swiftly corrupted, barely was it born, into dungeon crawls and kill-fests rather than exploring the great and wonderful potential of myth, phantasmagoria, and humor. If ELFS offends you, you deserve to be.

He really does play ELFS and ...



... He still isn't sorry.