An Illustrated Example of Play

Sometimes a rule can seem confusing until you see it in play. With that in mind let’s take what we’ve learned and see some of the rules used during an actual game session.

For this example we’re going to have a little fun and see how the characters from the popular gaming comic book, Knights of the Dinner Table handle themselves playing HackMaster.

B.A. will be stepping behind the screen as the Gamemaster. He’s prepared a special adventure to introduce his players to this edition and they’ve shown up with new characters for the occasion.

Note: the characters listed here are abbreviated representations of player characters used in the adventure — reduced to only the essential information needed for that purpose (i.e. primary ability scores, quirks, flaws etc are not listed).

Knuckles

Race: Dwarf
Class: Thief
Level: 1
Size: Medium
Movement: 5
Alignment: CN
Luck Points: 21
Honor: 15
Fatigue: -1
Hit Points: 25

Proficiencies: shield proficiency, light crossbow

Equipment: leather armor, small shield, dagger, light crossbow, 5 bolts

NOTES: Knuckles purchased the shield proficiency. He is also proficient with light crossbow but he couldn’t afford one during character creation. He obtained his weapon in the early stages of the dungeon from a fallen foe.

Dagger

SPEED
7 (5)

ATTACK
+3

INIT
0

THRESHOLD
6

REACH
0′

2d4

6

Top

NOTES:

Noir Lotus

Race: Dwarf
Class: Mage
Spells Points: 140
Level: 1
Size: Medium
Movement: 5
Alignment: LN
Honor: 10
Fatigue: 1
Hit Points: 26

Equipment: thick robes, staff

Spells:
(4) Feat of Strength, (A)Springing (J) Aura of Protection, (1st) Scorch

Justinia VII

Race: Human
Class: Cleric (The True)
Level: 1
Size: Medium
Movement: 10
Alignment: LG
Honor: 16
Fatigue: 2
Hit Points: 29

Equipment: Leather armor, longsword

Spells: Know North, Cure Trifling Wound

El Ravager

Race: Human
Class: Fighter
Level: 1
Size: Medium
Movement: 10
Alignment: N
Honor: 12
Fatigue: -2
Hit Points: 30

Equipment: leather armor, medium shield, battle axe

NOTES: El Ravager has specialization of +1 Attack, +1 Damage & -1 Speed with his battle axe
Hoping to shave a day off their travel time to the town of Giloreal (perched on the sleepy shores of Randor Lakes), the Knights of the Dinner Table decided to take a short cut through the Kalali Forest. Unfortunately, a thunderstorm soon set in and the party quickly found themselves lost as a heavy fog set in. After many hours fighting their way through the twisty, gnarled, undergrowth they stepped into a small clearing—where the dark, inviting maw of a large cave stood. As four goblin guards drew swords and shouted an alarm the party found themselves engaged in an unexpected fight for their lives...

Okay—your search of the cavern turns up nothing else of value.

You search the side passageways but to no avail.

It appears they lead nowhere but to dead ends.

Say what...? That little bit of nothing was it?

Just four stinkin’ goblins and a few silver pieces?

Oh no... there’s gotta be more to it.

Those guys fought tooth and nail.

Where’s the good stuff, B.A.?

There are five Bob.

Kewl beans!

Hrrmph—well it would be nice if you did yer job... c’mon, mister thief. How ‘bout searchin’ for secret doors?

B.A. I dance a victory jig!!

I scored a frickin’ light crossbow off that one dude’s body!!

I can scratch that off my wish list.

Hrrmph—well it would be nice if you did yer job... c’mon, mister thief. How ‘bout searchin’ for secret doors?

Okay, roll for it.

Hrrmph... hardly worked up a sweat.

Complete waste of our time.

Alright, alright... I’m on it.

Stand back—gimme some room.

B.A. I’m gonna check the west wall of this chamber... looks suspicious.

Okay, roll for it.

Dave’s right, Bob. There’s got to be more to this place...

By the way, B.A., I’m makin’ sure this thing is in working order.

Example of Play Legend

**Action Count:**

A shows the exact “Count” in seconds during combat.

1

Combat ring — indicates target is being engaged in an attack.

Player character token.

Monster token

Dead Monster or PC.

Combat Rose—this a tool to present all the combat essential data for PC, NPC or Monster at a glance.

Also used in the Hacklopedia and the new HM character sheets.
Bob used his Scrutiny Skill here to search for secret doors. Bob rolled against a difficulty set by the GM.

See Skills, page 186

A SHORT DISTANCE LATER...

You enter another natural cavern. Your torchlight reflects off the damp stone walls...

revealing two passages, one to the right and one on the left, both areas appear to open into other chambers.

Now we’re talkin’.

OKAY, KNuckles will take point... Dave -- you get my back.

and why exactly am I playing torch bearer again?

You got it, dude. Sara hold that torch up high!!

WHOAH, down, cujo.

Bob’s got a crossbow now. and I got a shield.

Cujo??

Uh huh... just what I thought... dead end my ass...

Oh boy, here we go guys...

Torch... bad guys must be close!

Everyone make a listening skill check.

Aside from the sound of water dripping from ceiling somewhere in the distance, the room is quiet. hrrmph...

quiet indeed.

Alright, Dave keep an eye on the right tunnel.

I’ll check out the left.

Sara yer with me.

Roger that!

Let’s do it

Keep those weapons at the ready.

Okay, Dave, peers into the right hand tunnel.

It opens into a dark foreboding chamber that swallows up the light from the torches.

Okay - I’m not going any further.

I’ll just stand there and keep watch.

Eeeew.

Okay, knuckles discovers part of the cavern wall is fake -- it actually slides back, revealing a hidden corridor behind it...

Here BA asks the players to make a Listening check to see if they can hear the goblins waiting to ambush the PCs in the other room.

This is a real skill check, but it could easily be a decoy from a clever GM simply trying keep his players on their toes.

Bob’s Listening skill is 50. He rolls an 42 on d100p for a total of 92.

BA rolls a Sneaking check for the Goblins, getting an 89 and adding the goblins’ Sneaking skill of 17 for a total of 106.

Since Bob’s roll is lower than the Goblins’ total, he fails. Dave, Sara, and Brian do the same thing, but all fail as well.

See Opposed Checks, page 155

Bob you and Sara venture into the other tunnel -- the light from your torch reveals an irregularly shaped chamber.

It’s about 25 feet in width and fifty to sixty feet in length...
The Chamber bends to the left at the other end — toward what appears to be a larger cavern. The flickering glow of torch light comes from that area.

Backlit just at the entrance...?

Three small hunkering forms with beady yellow eyes...

Okay guys... you've got three goblins armed crossbows... readied and aimed at you!!

You do realize it wasn't loaded...?

BA has ruled the goblins have been aiming since the PCs arrive in this area and can fire immediately on one.

Had they not been aiming they would have been subject to either a penalty for firing without aiming, or forced to wait 4 seconds to take aim.

Note that B.A. has ruled, Bob did not load the crossbow he took from the dead goblin — in this case the GM was looking for a specific called action stating this had been done.

Action Count: 1

Bob the first goblin rolls a 17 to hit on you.
The second fires at you and rolls a 12!

Ka'chunk!! What is this...? Pick on Bob Day?

Just give me some defense rolls.

Nice try Bob — but you said you had your crossbow at the ready — so no shield block roll for you!

Ahh, man. You were robbed dude. Gotta take the hit, Bob.

Sara the third goblin has you in his sights...

Crossbow bolt comin at ya --- a 16!

Roll defense!

Crap — I only got a 15 on my first defense roll, and a 19 on the second.

I got a small shield however — so I have a chance to block that first bolt.

Sweet!

The bolts hit, but neither is serious. Bob you take a whopping 3 points.

Sara yer tapped for 5.

Mark 'em off.

Normally, when a character is struck by a missile weapon, they may roll against their shield's cover value to see if they block/catch the projectile. Unfortunately, Bob didn't have his shield ready and Justina doesn't have one at all.

See page 219

Since both Bob and Sara were struck with missiles, BA now rolls 2d6p for each bolt to see how much damage their characters sustain. BA rolls a 2 and a 1 for the damage on Knuckles for a total of 3, and a 2 and a 3 on Justina, for a total of 5.

See Ranged Attacks, page 218

See Initiative, page 216

See Ambushes, page 218
Each time a PC, NPC, or monster is struck for damage they reduce the rolled damage by their DR (Damage Reduction) from their armor or natural protections. In both cases Knuckles and Justina are wearing leather armor which has a DR of 2. See Damage, page 222.

PCs can start moving with a walk or a jog, but not a run or sprint.

- Since Knuckles is a dwarf he can jog 5' a second.
- Justina, being a human, can begin moving 10' a second.
- Since the goblins are 15' feet away they will close the gap rather quickly, unless the goblins start hauling ass. See Movement, page 218.

In the heat of the moment, Bob has apparently lost his focus. Had he declared he was moving from a Jog to a Run he could have moved 10' and reached his opponent this count. See Movement, page 218.

Once hit both Bob and Sara record the wounds on their character sheets, reducing their Hit Points by the appropriate number. However, it's important that they record each wound separately since it factors into how wounds are healed. See Damage, page 222.

Dropping an item takes no time at all and the goblin can do so without taking any additional time. Furthermore, drawing a small weapon takes 0 seconds. As Justina closes the goblin draws his dagger waiting for combat. See Movement/Action Rates, page 218.

Dropping a weapon is a move action and it shouldn't be taken as a drift while actions. Goblins are small creatures (like dwarves and halflings) and essentially have a 1-foot penalty to their reach. Since they are using daggers both Justina and Knuckles will strike first in combat when they arrive because their reach is longer. See Reach, page 223.
For this attack Sara rolls d20p and adds her Attack Bonus (+1). She rolls an 8 and adds 1 for a total of 9.

BA rolls d20p-4 and adds the goblin’s Defense Bonus (+2 without a shield) to see if the goblin successfully evades the blow. BA rolled a 3 and adds 2 for a total of 5. Since 5 is lower than 9 Justina successfully hits the goblin and can now roll damage.

See Melee Attacks, page 223

Not only has Sara knocked the goblin backwards, but she has also forced a trauma check by doing more than 8 points of damage to it. See Trauma, page 235.

Goblins have a Trauma Save of 6 so BA rolls a d20. If he rolls 6 or less the goblin remains standing and can retaliate. Anything more than a 6 and the goblin is incapacitated.

BA rolled a 16 and the goblin thus missed his check by 10 points. It is traumatized for a lengthy period of time (10x5 seconds = 50 seconds!)

See Trauma, page 235

Brain asks Dave to assist him by mitigating surprise. Brian is clearly acting on knowledge his character shouldn’t have — something most GMs frown upon.

Until Brian’s initiative comes up at 11, he is momentarily stunned by the action with his thumb up his butt — unable to do anything.

Dave can choose to assist Brian by stopping and pointing out the danger.

In this latter instance, they would split the initiatives by averaging the count in which Dave helped Brian (5) and when Brian can act (11) — making both Brian’s and Dave’s initiative 8.

See Mitigating Surprise, page 217

Brain rolls 2d8p and adds (or subtracts) her Damage Bonus (-3) to the roll to determine the total amount of damage.

Her first roll is a 7, but her second roll is an 8.

Since Sara rolled the maximum on one of her dice (i.e. a penetration roll), she can roll that die again. All additional rolls must subtract 1 from the result. However, getting the max value a 2nd time permits a 3rd roll and so on.

See Dice Penetration, page 8

Sara rolls 2 on her second roll. Subtracting 1 from this bonus roll yields 1 extra point of damage.

Her damage is 7+8+1 = 16. She then subtracts 3 points (on account of her poor strength) for a total of 13 points of damage.

See Damage, page 222

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See Dice Penetration, page 8

BA first reduces the damage from 13 to 11 because goblins have a DR of 2.

However, goblins are small creatures; thus any amount of damage more than 10 points results in a knockback.

Even if the goblin’s DR had reduced the damage under 10 he still would have been knocked backwards 5 feet!

See Knock-Backs, page 231

Hey! Save some for me!
Secondly BA has ruled that since both Justina and the goblin are attempting to move into the vacant square between them, the goblins arrives first. There are a number of ways to determine who arrives first in such situations, but BA has decided the goblin took advantage of the extra time he had while Justina was killing his comrade.

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**THE GOBLIN NOW ATTACKS HIS ATTACK ON YOU, SARA.**

**I ROLLED A NATURAL 19 -- FOR A MODIFIED 16!**

**THAT’S A NEAR PERFECT DEFENSE, SARA!**

**NICE!**

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**OKAY, B.A. OVER HERE!! I’M ATTACKIN’ THIS DUDE RIGHT HERE!**

**OKAY... GO AHEAD AND ROLL, BOB.**

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**SARA YOU’RE GOT REACH ON YOUR GOBLIN SO YOU CAN ATTACK FIRST.**

**BOB, YER USIN’ A DAGGER SAME AS YOUR OPPONENT WITH THE SAME PENALTIES... YOU TWO WILL ATTACK SIMULTANEOUSLY.**

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**SARA, THE GOBLIN YOU WERE MOVING TOWARD WAS MOVING TO ENGAGE YOU AS WELL...**

**SINCE YOU WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH KILLING HIS BUDDY THE SECOND BEFORE...**

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**I’M GONNA RULE HE MOVES INTO THE SPACE HIS BUDDY JUST GOT KNOCKED BACK FROM.**

**HE MUTTERS A GROWL AND SPITS INTENT ON AVENGING HIS COMRADE.**

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**Since Sara gets a Near Perfect Defense she now makes an attack roll vs. the goblin’s defense. If she hits, she rolls (d4-2 + d4-2) + Str bonuses for the damage. Near Perfect Defense damage ignores DR (unless it’s natural — such as scaly skin).**

See Near Perfect Defense, page 241

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**BA rolls an 11 for the goblin’s attack and adds his Attack Modifier of +3, for a total of 14. Since Sara’s roll is higher (19-4+1 = 16) she successfully defends the attack. Sara receives a -4 to her defense roll because she is not using a shield. In addition, since she rolled a ’natural’ 19 AND beats her attackers roll she gets a Near Perfect Defense result.**

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See Critical Defense, page 241

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**Bob rolled a Natural 20 on his attack roll. If his roll is greater than the defender’s Defense roll then he not only hits but scores a critical hit.**

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**Critical Hit**

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**Near Perfect Defense**

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See Critical Defense, page 241
okay - movin' along...

SIX!!

BOB, SARA...

MAKE OPPOSED OBSERVATION CHECKS PLEASE!

H-HUH..?

ut oh...

NOW WHAT.

BA is asking Bob and Sara make an observation check to notice a second group of goblins sneaking into the room from area 4.

BA could also ask for an opposed Listening skill check, but he has ruled the noise of combat is concealing the sounds of the goblins movement.

Opposed skill checks are made by rolling d100p and adding the result to the requisite skill value.

In this case Bob has 31 percent in Observation and rolls a 59, for a total of 90. Sara rolls a 34 and adds her skill of 27 percent, for a total of 61.

Next BA secretly rolls the Sneaking skill check for the goblins. If Bob or Sara’s results are higher than the goblins Sneaking skill checks they notice something!

See Encounters, page 215

Dave can move from a jog to a run, and in doing so increases his movement to 15 feet/second.

Since Knuckles is a thief he performs coup de grace faster than other classes. Most classes require 10 seconds to kill a fallen foe, but the time required for Thieves to perform the task is 3!!

See Coup de Grace, page 236

- SIGH- AND GOBO MISSES ON HIS SIMULTANEOUS ATTACK. LOOKS LIKE HE GOES DOWN WITH A CUT THROAT UNABLE TO WHET HIS BLADE.

He COLLAPSES IN AGONY, FAILING HIS TOP CHECK.

HOODY HOO!!

Note how B.A. keeps the count moving. Nobody has any declared actions so he moves on.

Dave has to slow his momentum down else he will collide with the goblin.

He has the option to slow down two movement increments per second. However, since he is still 15 feet away from the combat he chooses to slow down to a jog – thus he moves 10 feet and can cover the last 5 feet and engage the goblin on 8.

See Movement, page 218
UNFORTUNATELY, BRIAN YOU ARE CORRECT.  
LOTUS IS EXPOSED, AND IS ABOUT TO FEEL IT.

FOR ON EIGHT --- TWO GOBLINS LEAP FROM THE SHADOWS OF THE HALLWAY WHERE EL RAVAGER HAD BEEN KEEPING WATCH...
WITH A GUTTERAL WAR CRY THEY COME RACING TOWARD WITH MURDER IN THEIR EYE!!

GAA!!!

OH DEAR...

HUH...?/

AND TWO MORE GOBLINS COME RUSHING OUT OF THE SHADOWS BEHIND THE MELEE TO THE AID OF THEIR COMRADES...

SCREW IT - I’M USIN’ A COMBAT MANEUVER ON THIS GOBO, B.A. I’M ENGAGED THIS COUNT.

GOOD CALL DAVE...

WE’RE SURROUNDED!!

DAMMIT, DAVE! I TOLD YOU NOT TO LEAVE ME EXPOSED!

Screw it - I’m usin’ a combat maneuver on this gobo, b.a. I’m engaged this count.

OH C’MON, B.A...
DON’T YA THINK DAVE AND I SHOULD HAVE BEEN AFFORDED OBSERVATION CHECK TO SEE THOSE GOBLINS?

I MEAN I WAS STANDIN’ RIGHT THERE FOR CRYN’ OUT LOUD!

WHAT A RIP OFF! I’M GETTIN’ HOSED HERE!!

BA has ruled that since the goblins were hiding out of sight at the beginning of the combat there was no need for an Observation skill check.

Furthermore, since Brian is still surprised and his attention is likely drawn to the ongoing combat, he is already looking the wrong way and thus didn’t get a skill check.

Note: this is purely a GM decision. There’s no right or wrong in these types of situations and BA has used his best common sense to rule in order to ensure fair game play.

Despite Brian’s protests and whining — at the end of the day the GameMaster is always right and he must ultimately concede the point.

Dave has decided to use the special combat maneuver; Aggressive Attack. This enables him to simulate a flurry of blows without regard for his defense.
As such he adds +5 to his Attack Roll. Unfortunately he also suffers -2 to his next Defense Roll.
Should the goblin choose, he could Scamper Back to mitigate the damage, but in this instance BA rules the goblin stands his ground.

See Special Combat Moves, page 228

Dave fumbled his attack roll by rolling a ‘natural’ 1 on his Attack Roll.
His attack is calculated as; 1 (die roll) + 4 (Attack Bonus) + 5 (Aggressive Attack) = 10.
However, since Dave rolled a 1 on his Attack Roll he might fumble! If the goblin’s Defense Roll is higher than his Attack Roll, El Ravager will fumble.
In this instance Dave exceeds the goblin’s Defense Roll.
Despite his success, he still doesn’t hit. Any ‘natural’ 1 on an attack roll is always a miss!

See Misses/Fumbles, page 241
Typically, in order to cast a spell a mage must ready components for the appropriate spell beforehand. The spell Scorch however, has no components.

To ready components the mage rolls d4p to see how many seconds it takes to get the necessary material components ready.

He then may begin casting, thus he adds the appropriate casting time for the spell in question.

See Spell Casting in Combat, page 241
ACTION COUNT: 11

ELEVEN!!

BRIAN, ONE OF THE GOBLIN REACHES YOU THIS COUNT.

YOU CAN SMELL ITS FOUL BREATH AND HEAR THE SNARLS OF ITS WAR GRUNTS AS ITS BEEDY YELLOW EYES CLOSE IN.

IT STABS AT YOU WITH ITS DAGGER ATTEMPTING TO DISRUPT YOUR SPELL... AND GETS A 7. [SIGH]

HA HAA! EL RAVAGER BLOCKS HIS ATTACK WITH A 16.

SARA, YOU TAKE A SMALL WOUND OF 3 POINTS

DAVE YOUR ATTACKER HITS YOUR SHIELD

DAVE, THE GOBLIN ON YOU ROLLS 15!

SARA YOURS GETS A 9.

AHHHHH!! JUSTINIA IS HIT!!

BRIAN, ONE OF THE GOBLIN REACHES YOU THIS COUNT.

When an attacker hits a shield he will roll the appropriate Shield Damage listed in the weapon chart. This is typically a reduced set of dice which are then rolled to see if they get past the shield, thus damaging the shield bearer. In this instance dagger has no listed Shield Damage, thus BA doesn’t need to roll to see if the attack penetrates El Ravager’s shield.

Sara sustained another small wound of 3 points, however, she first reduces this number by the DR of her armor (2 points). Thus she only sustains a measly 1 point wound. She will record this wound on her sheet and reduce her Hit Points by 1.

See Shields and Armor, page 224

See Spell Casting in Combat, page 241 and Saving Throws vs. Spells, page 242

You can smell its foul breath and hear the snarls of its war grunts as its beedy yellow eyes close in.

It stabs at you with its dagger attempting to disrupt your spell... and gets a 7. [SIGH]

Heh -- well it sucks to be him 'cuz I got a 9 for defense...

My scorch spell goes off!!

Roast 'em and toast 'em, big guy!

I should get both of 'em!!

Remember, I put 40 spell points into this baby.

Your spell envelops both goblins and blasts into a fiery mess!!

Screaming and clutching at their eyes they stumble back and fall to the ground, writing in agony.

Heh -- they just got a little taste of Lotus Fury!

B.A. I start jogging to rejoin the group!

Hoody hoo!!

Oh no... not until the next count there, Bruce Jenner - and no faster than a walk.

After his spell Noir Lotus is under the effects of Spell Fatigue for 6 seconds (casting time of the spell + 5). During this time mages are particularly vulnerable and suffer reduced defense rolls and limited actions.

See Spell Fatigue, page 242

Twelve!!!

The first goblin you engaged Sara is attacking you, an 11 to hit.

Roll for defense!

Heh -- why did I even bother? I fumbled!
Sara fumbled her Defense Roll when she rolled a natural 1 AND her total was less than the attackers to hit.

Not only is she hit but her attacker receives an automatic free attack on the next second (in this case 13).

In addition, since this isn’t the first combat of the day and it past the first 10 seconds of combat, Sara also becomes fatigued because she rolled less than her Fatigue number on a Defense Roll (her Fatigue number is 2).

She now suffers -1 to her Attack, Defense, and Damage rolls, and +1 to speed as she slowly tires out. A second failed Fatigue check will increase these penalties.

See Misses and Fumbles, page 241

Sara has rolled a natural 20 on her defense.

Her total roll is 20-4 (no shield) + 1 = 17. Since her roll is greater than the goblins attack and a natural 20 she gets a perfect defense, which results in an immediate counter attack.

This counter attack does not reset Sara’s count.

See Perfect Defense, page 241

Sara hits with her counter attack and her Damage Rolls penetrate. She rolls 2d8 and her totals are, 8+[8-1]+[1-1] and 8+[5-1] = 27.

See Dice Penetration, page 8

Sara then subtracts her damage bonus of -3, for a total of 24.

Not only does her attack kill the goblin outright, it knocks the poor creature backwards 10 feet, for a double knockback!

Had the goblin survived the attack it would have been knocked prone and had its count reset on account of a double knockback result!

See Knock-Backs, page 231

GEEZE, B.A. THAT’S ALL THEY HAD...?

YES WHAT A BUNCH OF WHIMPS.

HOW ‘BOUT GIVING US SOMETHING WORTHY OF OUR TIME? HEH...

KEEP TALKIN’ TRASH WISE GUYS.

LET’S SEARCH THE BODIES!!

ONE CHAMBER LATER...

YOU WALK JUST A FEW FEET ONLY TO DISCOVER LARGE OMINOUS SHADOWY FIGURES RACING TOWARD YOU OUT OF THE DARK!

FOUR ORCS ARMED WITH SHIELDS AND MACES SHOUT OUT A WAR CRY!!!

GAAA!!

WHAT THE HELL...?

READYIN’ MY SWORD HERE, B.A.!

MORAL OF THE STORY: “NEVER MOCK A GM’S ADVENTURE ELSE THE GRUDGE MONSTERS BE LOOSED”.

Okay the goblin on you is taking his free attack, Sara...

Okay, okay, little Miss Lucky...

He misses and you get a free counter strike.

Sara’s counter attack hits...

WOW - FOR 24 POINTS OF DAMAGE!

OUCH! That goblin has her riled up!

My coup de grace is completed -- another gobo bites the big one!

Perfect defense!!

Seeing their friends annihilated -- the remaining two goblins promptly turn and flee for their lives...

Dave and Sara -- You can take a free attack as they do so...

Sara and Dave get a free attack since both their attacks would have come within half their count.

With the free attacks on the fleeing goblins the group will easily win this combat and move on into the dungeon.

See Flee, page 229