

the depths of hatred



A WoD-based game in the Witcher setting
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Crash Course in The Witcher for the GM

Setting in a nutshell:

- Grimdark fantasy. Monsters are everywhere, magic is real.
- Magic users of any skill are rare. Mostly it's low-level curses and hexes and the likewise
- Dwarves and elves are often treated like 2nd class citizens, humans are pretty xenophobic and superstitious.
- Centuries ago mages and sorcerers created witchers, humans with a range of mutations and training that turned them into excellent monster slayers.
- These days witchers are few and far between. Superstitious people are quick to blame them for anything, lynch mobs and the like can sometimes happen.
- Politically, the Northern Kingdoms don't get along, skirmishes are common. The vast empire of Nilfgaard to the south sometimes gives them cause to unite and face down an invasion.
- This game takes place during Nilfgaard's second invasion of the north.
- The kingdom of Cidaris should have been invaded by now, but the Nilfgaardian general has made costly mistakes. King Ethain has teamed up with Crach An Craite, a chieftan of the Skellige, to repel the army. This is all on the far side of the country and not terribly relevant to the players, but you never know...

Witchers explained:

Witchers are professional monster hunters. Taken as orphans to one of the five remote training schools, they undergo intense physical training and study of monsters and curses. They also endure gruelling and painful mutation via alchemy and sorcery to increase their senses, stamina, reflexes and strength beyond human limits. They study alchemy, to create potions that boost even these superhuman abilities. They are taught rudimentary combat magic through hand gestures, or Signs. The result is an expert at tracking and killing the many dangerous monsters that threaten society, almost a warrior monk, only without the baggage that comes from being devoutly religious. They kill monsters and lift curses for money.

Witcher abilities:

- Cat like eyes give them excellent vision in all but pitch darkness
- Incredibly sensitive hearing, taste and smell making them superlative trackers
- Effectively immune to disease
- Basic knowledge of 5 magic Signs which cover everything from telekinetic blasts to fireballs to basic mind control
- Proficient with nearly all weapons, but masters of swordfighting (axes, for the Bear school)
- Accelerated healing which can bring them back from near-death where regular humans would die outright
- All witchers receive a medallion from their school. It identifies them (for better or worse) and is also magical, vibrating when monsters or magic power are nearby.

People have complicated feelings about witchers: There's nobody better for clearing a graveyard of wraiths, but the Northern Kingdoms have become very intolerant of non-humans. All sorts of superstitions grow up around them. For their part witchers don't much care. They wander the cities and countrysides, looking for work.

Summary of System:

This game uses the new World of Darkness system, with some slight variations.

Characters have a certain number of dots in an attribute and a skill.

Basic Rolls: Players roll a number of D10s equal to the number of dots in both the relevant attribute and relevant skill. Each die that comes up 8 or higher counts as a success. If a 10 (0 on most D10) is rolled, it explodes (it counts as a success and is rolled again, potentially adding 2 or even more successes) The more successes, the better the task was performed. 1 success is usually enough for simple tasks. More difficult tasks require more successes. Eg. Lifting a horse would require 5 or 6 successes, impossible for all but the strongest characters.

Apply penalties to the number of dice rolled if the task being attempted is complicated by outside factors. So lifting a horse while archers are shooting at you might cause a -3 penalty due to distraction and fear of getting shot (while they'd still need 7+successes!). Similar for being poisoned, terrified, suffering a broken limb etc.

In combat the amount of dice rolled is reduced by the Defense stat of the opponent, usually no more than 4-5, although faster or tougher opponents might have a higher Defense. Defense is listed on the character sheet of the players, and the stats section of each antagonist.

Contested rolls: Both parties roll the relevant dice pool (less penalties!), the highest number of successes wins.

Characters also have a **Willpower** stat. A point of willpower can be spent before any roll to:

Add a single automatic success to the roll

Add three dice to the roll

Willpower recovers completely after a good night's uninterrupted sleep.

Willpower is also rolled to avoid mental influences. For example if the players are threatened by a ten foot tall goat demon suddenly appearing and attacking, call for a willpower roll. Anyone who fails to get successes takes -3 to all their rolls while the fiend is present and alive. REMEMBER: Spending willpower means you have less dice for willpower rolls!

Combat:

Initiative: Everyone rolls a D10 and adds their Initiative (Dex+Composure) to the result. Go in descending order.

Surprise: If anyone is caught by surprise they can make a Wits+Composure roll to catch it in time. If no successes are rolled, the person is cannot act in the first round and has NO Defense for that round apart from his armour.

Attacking: **Close combat:**
Strength+Brawl for unarmed, Strength+Weaponry for armed.
Ranged combat:
Dex+archery for bows etc., Dex+Athletics for thrown weapons.

In either case, the Damage rating of the weapon used is added to the dice rolled unless otherwise noted . For Close Combat, the target's Defense and Armour ratings are subtracted from the dice pool, so a player would roll 5 less dice if trying to hit an enemy with Defense 3 and Armour 2.

Targets of Ranged attacks do NOT apply their Defense as a penalty to the attack roll. They must look for other ways to avoid being hit, such as finding cover or diving to the ground prone, which presents its own problems...

Dodging: At any point in the round, a player can declare she is **Dodging**. She can declare this before her turn and enjoy the benefits, but she must spend the turn doing nothing else expect move. A character that is dodging normally doubles their Defense. The “Weaponry Dodge” merit however allows the player to add their dots in Weaponry to Defense, instead of doubling it.

Other factors: **Aiming:**
+1 to attack roll. Takes 1 turn. Maximum bonus is +3.
All-out Attack:
+2 with close combat attacks; Player loses Defense until his next turn.
Cover/Going prone:
Prone targets are -2 to hit. Cover gives -1 for barely concealed targets, up to -3 for substantially concealed targets. Targets fully behind cover get extra armour depending on the substance. A wooden door might add 1 to armour, where a stone wall might add 4-5 Armour. GM's discretion.

Dealing Damage: One the appropriate bonuses and penalties are resolved, the remaining dice are rolled. If the penalties would reduce the dice pool to 0 or less, the player still gets to roll a single “chance” die. Any successes are damage, and subtracted from the target's shields or health.

Shields: Players and some enemies may have magical shields. These provide immunity to a set number of attacks before dissipating. If an attack hits someone with a shield, there is no damage, no knockback or other side effect. The players will sorely need this advantage!

Signs Explained:

Witchers can cast very simple combat magic called signs. They require a hand gesture, so their use is heavily restricted if their hands are occupied (although if a witcher had his hands bound they could, with an extra-difficulty roll, cast Igni to burn through the rope holding him).

Each Sign use requires spending 1 Willpower.

Aard (force):

Roll Resolve + Composure and add [Aard rating] in automatic successes. Target difficulty is determined by the size of the target: Difficulty is 5 for most humans, maybe 9 for a troll, or 2-3 for a child (you probably shouldn't use this Sign on children).

If the successes = target size, the target is knocked prone. Each extra success knocks the target [Aard rating] yards in the appropriate direction.

This attack does negligible damage, but knock enemies prone, and clever use can send them flying off rooftops or slamming into walls (apply falling damage as bashing damage), or into hazards like spikes or fires.

Igni (Fire):

Roll Resolve + Composure. This is a ranged attack, and normal penalties/bonuses apply. A successful attack deals lethal damage equal to [Igni rating + Successes], armour soak is halved rounding up.

Igni can also be used to light small torches or campfires, or snuff them out. No roll required unless under pressure (trying to light a torch in the middle of a fight, for example)

Yrden (Warding):

Roll Resolve + Composure. A success creates a zone around the player (radius is [Yrden rating] meters) that gives enemies a penalty of [Yrden rating] to their attacks and Defence. Incorporeal enemies inside the zone become physical. It lasts [Yrden rating] minutes, more than enough for most combat.

Quen (Shield):

Roll Resolve + Composure. Success creates a magical barrier that provides complete immunity to [Quen rating] attacks.

Axii (Mind):

In combat: Roll Resolve + Composure vs target's Wits + Composure. You get [Axii rating] in automatic successes. If you beat your target, they stop fighting for [difference in successes] rounds. If you beat them by 5 or more successes, they fight for you for 2 rounds.

Outside combat: Add [Axii rating] in automatic successes when making persuasion/intimidation rolls against a target. It is obvious to onlookers that you did magic, they may very well react badly to it.

Victims will also be able to tell after the influence has worn off, and they will almost certainly refuse to cooperate further.

Potions Explained:

Part of a witcher's mutations include a high tolerance for poisons and toxins. This is mostly so they can consume ability-enhancing potions which would usually kill regular humans. These potions add further versatility and power to an already highly trained superhuman killer.

Potions require an Intelligence+Alchemy roll and an hour to brew. They also require ingredients, mostly herbs and distilled alcohol and monster parts, which can be acquired with a successful Wits+Survival roll (No successes on roll? Take a point of lethal damage. Hunting for ingredients is dangerous!), or buying from an alchemist/herbalist. For every potion beyond 1 a player attempts to brew in one go, increase the difficulty of the roll by one.

Consuming a potion is a full action in combat. BEWARE! All potions are toxic, and there's only so much even a witcher can handle.

Potions available in this game (and the successes needed on a Wits+Survival roll to obtain the ingredients) are as follows:

Blizzard (Difficulty 2):

Toxicity: 2

Duration 20 min

Improves reaction times and dexterity considerably. -1 difficulty on Dexterity-based rolls (minimum 1)

Full Moon (Difficulty 4):

Toxicity 3

Duration: 8 hours

Significantly raises maximum health. Roll 5 dice. Each success adds an extra health level

White Rafford's Decoction (Difficulty 3):

Toxicity 6

Duration: Instant

Restores all but 1 lost health levels but is highly toxic. Best combined with White Honey and/or Full Moon.

Swallow (Difficulty 1):

Toxicity: 2

Duration: 4 rounds

Heals 1L every second round. Heals 2L in total.

Tawny Owl (Difficulty 2):

Toxicity: 2

Duration: Instant

Regenerates 1 willpower point instantly.

White Honey (Difficulty 3):

Duration: Instant

Reduces toxicity to 0 and cancels all current potion effects immediately.

Blade oils (Difficulty 1):

Duration: 1 scene

Various monster types are susceptible to blades coated in special substances. When attacking a monster with a blade coated in the right oil, any successes on the damage roll count double.

GAME SYNOPSIS:

The players are a group of witchers, professional monster hunters, genetically and magically mutated to be stronger and faster than a human, and withstand the toxic nature of potions that give them incredible abilities to heal, or bleed poison, or see in pitch black. Witchers normally work alone, but large contracts can bring them together. In this case, a kingdom has offered a sizeable amount of money to deal with a very powerful spirit and his minions terrorizing a large section of their coastline.

They'll arrive at Clayton village, only to find it destroyed by raiders. After rescuing a man from ghouls, he'll take them to Manorville, a small village at the foot of a ruined mansion. They have lots of trouble: missing villagers, an increase in local monsters, washed up sailors raving about sea monsters and ghost ships. By helping the villagers they can get leads on what's been going on. It will lead them into the mansion.

In the mansion, the players have more monsters and spirits and even traps to fight while they search for clues. Here they'll learn about the pirate lord Mendoza and how his hatred brought him back from the dead to raid and pillage again. His ships only appear during a new moon, and the players will learn from records that the village elderman's grandfather was once a sailor with Mendoza's crew, laid to rest in the mansion's small catacombs. That'll be enough to convince the elderman to confess the secret to getting into Mendoza's lair.

The witchers will then have a mighty task ahead of them. Armed with knowledge of how to break the curse afflicting the region, the pirate lord will not go quietly, and he is very powerful. And even when he is defeated, they still have the evil spirit who possessed him. And that spirit is VERY powerful...

Scene 1: Ruins of Clayton:

The witchers have already accepted the contract to sort out the supernatural troubles of the region, and they spent the last week travelling. Ethain's armies are needed in the east to fight against the Nilfgaardian Empire, so he's paying anyone mercenary enough to do the job while they're away.

Read or paraphrase the following:

“It has been just over a week since you agreed on terms with an agent of King Ethain of Cidaris. Ethain himself is busy fighting an invasion by the Nilfgaardian Empire to the southeast. The agent was expecting a mercenary company to take the contract, but he was happy to give it to 5 witchers instead, who might avoid the problems an unchecked private army usually causes. Terms agreed, he paid you a small advance and sent you west, to a small coastal village named Clayton.

Now, as you crest the final hill, you see that Clayton has been destroyed. The remains of burnt huts and shattered fishing boats speak of a large raiding party, long gone. You don't need a witcher's nose to smell the death of the place. A man's scream pierces the silence, and is answered by the bestial howls of a ghoul pack. Someone is alive down there, but not for long if you don't hurry.”

There is a survivor, trapped in the top floor of a barn. Ghouls swarm about below, not bright enough to raise the ladder he's kicked down. They try to climb the support beams but he's keeping them at bay with a table leg.

Time to roll initiative. Ghouls are simple pack creatures, not big on tactics. This should be a straightforward fight. There are 2 ghouls per player.

STATS FOR GHOULS ON PAGE 22

When the ghouls are dealt with, they can get the survivor down and ask him questions. He's your typical Witcher-setting peasant, full of rural sayings and, ahem, country accent. Here's what he knows:

- His name is Herb.
- He's a fisherman from the nearby village of Manorville.
- He pops over to Clayton to trade fish for pottery each month, whenever the moon reappears in the sky.
- This time he arrived to find the village on fire, and everyone dead or missing.
- He was attacked by monsters drawn to the killing, and managed to climb up to the barn to safety. That was two days ago. The ghouls alternated between eating corpses and trying to get up to Herb to eat him. He's pretty shaken.
- Manorville itself has had monster (and weirder) troubles lately, and would appreciate a witcher or two. Or even five.
- Manorville got the name from the old mansion on a nearby cliff. Apparently some powerful lord used to live there before disappearing. Before Herb's time though.

Rescue accomplished, Herb can lead the players to Manorville, which is described on the next page.

Manorville:

By the standards of Cidarian villages, Manorville is a bit sorry looking. The houses are small but well built, but there's a distinct lack of pigs, dogs or cats, and their fishing nets are very obviously not seeing a lot of use. The ruins of a once-magnificent mansion can be seen atop a cliff a couple of miles away, obviously where the village got its name.

Herb directs the players to the elderman, sort of village chief. He looks to be in his 70s, stooped and arthritic and a little bit senile, but nobody knows the village better.

He's surprised to see so many witchers at once. It almost never happens. Pick a random player: the Elderman confuses them with a witcher he met in his youth, and calls him/her the wrong name all the time while reminiscing about

When they arrive with Herb, he'll explain what happened. The elderman's thankful Herb was rescued. Give the players 5 crowns each. They have to share the whole reward. The elderman is shocked that Clayton has been destroyed. He had kin over there, and will invite the players to the tavern for a drink to calm his nerves.

The tavern customers will give the players some seriously dodgy looks; witchers are mutants and freaks to them, and all sorts of superstition and bias gets attached to them.

In the tavern, the elderman is able to give them a proper run down of things:

FIRST OF ALL:

- His duty is to Manorville, so they're going to have to work for him if they want help sorting the region's problems.
- There's been a surge in drowners along the coast, snatching people and making fishing impossible. The village will starve if the people can't fish. He could sort out 200 crowns for anyone who dealt with them.
- The drowners have taken half a dozen villagers, who are probably also drowners now. They need to be put to rest for the families sakes. Those drowners likely still have scraps of clothing on them, being recent victims. All in all, you're looking at up to 20 of the beasts.
- If they sort out the drowner nest, he'll send for someone in the mean time who could give them some more details on the troubles of the region, a shipwrecked sailor who washed up about a month ago and took up residence in a neighbouring village.
- The drowner nest is somewhere at the base of the cliff the old mansion sits on top of. Rocky crags and nooks and the like. It's exposed when the tide is out, which should be about 4 hours from now. Gives the players time to prepare.

After that the Elderman goes home to work on getting that ex-sailor over from a village called Driftwood. If things have been zipping along, why not have some of the villagers fling abuse at the players? Depending on how they handle things there could be a tense standoff or a tavern brawl, or outright slaughter, which wouldn't endear the locals to them...

STATS FOR PEASANTS ON PAGE 23

Scene 2: The Drowner Contract:

STATS FOR DROWNERS AND DROWNED DEAD ON PAGE 22

The players have about 4 hours before the tide's fully out and the drowner lair is exposed.

Witchers are a dab hand at this sort of thing. They know the following from their training/past experience:

Drowners:

- When someone dies by drowning, they sometimes come back as a drowner.
- Drowners are necrophages: They are dead, and they eat human flesh.
- Drowners are pack creatures who prefer to ambush in numbers from below. If they can't immediately drown their prey underwater, they resort to wicked claws and teeth.
- Being dead, they're immune to bleeding and the Axii sign.
- They are, however, very susceptible to the Igni sign and blades coated in necrophage oil (all successes on a damage roll with Igni or oil-treated blades count double)
- Drowners are primarily nocturnal, and the tide will be out around dusk. They will be awake and alert.
- Particularly large and strong drowners are called drowned dead. They lead packs. Their claws are poisonous, and could seriously hurt even a witcher.

The lair:

The elderman or locals could probably draw up a passable map of the area from memory. There is maybe a mile of cliffside where the drowner nest could be, full of little caves carved by the sea. With up to 20 drowners, the players will be able to narrow the search to the larger caves. They'll have about 2 and a half hours before the tide comes back in so much they'll have to leave.

Give the players a Wits+Investigation roll, difficulty 4, each roll taking 30 minutes of searching. Success reveals a narrow cave mouth with distinctive clawmarks in the algae-covered walls: Drowners must have clawed at it to fight the current. There is also a powerful stench of rot wafting out. This must be the place.

Inside the cave is mostly a large pool of murky filthy water, surface broken only by water dripping from stalagmites in the ceiling and the players wading in. The water is knee-high, increasing to just below waist height towards the back (-1 and -2 dice to combat rolls, respectively), where a pile of bones and rotting meat is on display. Some of the meat has peasant clothing attached.

A smart player will be expecting an ambush, so give them an extra 2 dice on the Wits+Composure roll to notice when the drowners make a Dexterity+Stealth roll to ambush them from below. Improve their odds if they've prepared with potions like Cat before going in.

Combat ensues. **There are 15 drowners, 3 on each player, and 2 drowned dead, who will wait a turn or two before deciding who the biggest threat is and trying to overpower them.**

Ensure the players are aware of their signs and potions. Drowners are dangerous in packs and should cause a few wounds, but 5 witchers should make mince meat of them pretty quickly.

Scene 3: The Lost Sailor

With the drowner nest destroyed, the Elderman will be very happy. He'll hand over the 200 crowns and inform them that he sent a runner to Driftwood while they were gone. The sailor should arrive in the morning. The players are welcome to the use of his home to recuperate from the fight (wounds to tend, potions to brew, toxicity to lower) while they wait.

Witchers don't need much sleep. They do meditate though which is pretty much the same thing only remaining more alert.

In the middle of the night, give them a chance to hear a peasant or five outside praying to the Eternal fire. If they get up to investigate, they'll see the villagers staring at a whole load of eerie lights out at sea near the cliff. They look kind of like a fleet of ships, but when the moon peeks out from behind the clouds, the lights disappear and there is nothing out there.

The villagers all have different ideas about what it means: A sign from the Eternal Fire that Manorville's faith has lapsed. A curse brought about by the war with Nilfgaard far to the east. An excuse to hurl more abuse at the witchers. The old pirate ghost Mendoza, back to haunt the living. Make up any old superstitious rubbish you like, someone is probably spouting it.

If the players ask about Mendoza, everyone agrees that it was before their time, and there are a hundred different stories:

- He used to live in that mansion atop the hill. Long, long time ago.
- He was inhumanly cruel. "Like, even worse than wot they say the Scoia'tael do to people" (pronounced Skoya-tell, it means Squirrels, it's a terrorist group of elves and dwarves angry at humans treating them so badly)
- He was a cultist of the Lionhead Spider, an evil and forbidden god of death, and his raids were sacrifices in the name of his deity.
- He was possessed by a powerful ghost who gave him long life and powerful.
- He so offended the gods that they sank his pirate fleet in one night, killing Mendoza and his entire crew.
- Make something suitably blood-curdling up. Like he bathed in children's blood or something.

The night otherwise passes without incident.

See next page for the arrival of the sailor.

In the morning the runner arrives back with this ex-sailor in tow. One look at his face and the players can tell, he's seen some heavy shit, man. He's obviously nervous about being here, and keeps glancing nervously at the sea if it's in view (It always is unless they go indoors).

His name is Holmar, formerly of the clan Tuirseach from the Skellige islands. Skellige natives have a reputation as pirates and raiders, which is pretty much completely deserved. Holmar speaks with a Northern Irish accent and mannerisms. He is very reluctant to discuss what he knows, and will require suitable persuasion to coax the full story out of him (Axii if the players don't mind losing brownie points with the locals, otherwise bonus dice on persuasion checks if you buy him a few drinks, make a decent attempt at sympathetic shoulder to lean on, that sort of thing):

- Holmar's ship was sailing back to Skellige after plundering some Nilfgaardian freighters that wandered too far north. There was a new moon (no moon in the sky) and it was very dark.
- The attackers came out of nowhere, a fleet of a dozen ships, grappling hooks already sailing through the air before anyone saw or heard anything.
- The fight was over quickly: The attackers were barely human. Legs and arms too long, teeth too long and pointed. They fought with the strength of werewolves, and half of them would defeat a sailor only to begin feeding on them, tearing out throats and eyes with their teeth, howling like hungry ghosts.
- The leader of these monsters was the most terrifying thing Holmar had ever seen, and he used to wrestle grizzly bears back on Skellige. A tall, reed-thin figure, his face just a skull wreathed in flames, wielding a sword that glowed red like blood and which made a sound like voices screaming in pain when it parried an axe or glanced off a shield.
- Holmar jumped overboard and took his chances in the briny deep, washing up near Manorville a few days later. He's ashamed he didn't die in battle, but what those things did to his friends... That was no good death. He decided to give up his old life and settle down in Driftwood, which is not a coastal village. He wants nothing more to do with the sea after what he witnessed.
- **He particularly hates being near that mansion.** When asked why, he'll say because he saw the sails of the fleet that attacked him in the firelight, and they bore the same coat of arms as the one on the doors of the house. He's convinced that the pirate lord Mendoza is up there right now, watching, and wants to leave as soon as possible.

That should give the players reason enough to investigate the mansion. Give them a little time to prepare potions and the like. If they think to ask the locals, they've seen strange lights in the mansion's windows for the last few months, and sometimes a shriek or two, but no trouble ever came down from there so they're content to leave it alone. Probably ghosts haunt it, which would inform a witcher that Spectre oil and the Yrden sign would be useful tools to deal with incorporeal enemies.

Scene 4: To The Manor

It's a short trek of about 2 miles up the hill to the mansion. It's very big, and used to be magnificent, but a generation of neglect and storm damage has not been kind. The windows are all shattered, walls and floors are crumbling, there's a thick, cloying smell of mould and damp.

As the players enter through the main doorway (the doors themselves long rotted away), candles and torches in the walls and hanging from chandeliers burst into an unsettling greenish flame, illuminating the house. This continues with every room they pass through. The lights cast shadows that look almost alive, and illuminate portraits of long dead people. Some of these people will suddenly change poses when the players aren't looking. Do your best to unsettle the players, this mansion is saturated in dark magic, or a curse, or something.

A few spectres guard the old mansion. They're invisible and incorporeal. They prefer to become physical just before attacking, and then become incorporeal again before the players can counter. The Yrden sign will create zones to force the spectres to take physical form.

SPECTRE STATS ON PAGE 23

There are 3 handouts they can find while searching and battling ghosts. Give them a page after each encounter as they search rooms for old journals and records. Leave the final encounter for a large room that looks like a study in the basement, where the architecture looks decidedly elven in nature. As well as spectres in the final encounter, spring an Archespore on them too: A sort of evil plant that grows on the site of particularly heinous crimes, with bones and skulls intertwined with its leaves and roots. It spits poisonous spores and rakes players with likewise poisonous thorny branch/tentacle/tendrils.

ARCHESPORE STATS ON PAGE 23

The clues from the handouts should convince them that there's a ritual to banish this ghost fleet of pirates, and the village elderman or his ancestors have the information they need.

- The elderman's grandfather is the sailor mentioned by Mendoza in the final page.
- The grandfather saw the whole fleet sink in the bay overnight, and when nothing happened after he assumed the ritual had worked. Nevertheless he taught it to his son, just in case.
- The elderman's father forgot about the ritual as there was no need for it. He buried the records of the ritual with the grandfather, and the current elderman only got stories about how terrible Mendoza was before his dark patrons claimed their due. There might be something in his father's diary but that was interred with his father in the catacombs.
- The elderman, being a pious sort, will not be happy at the thought of 5 witchers rooting through his grandfather's bones, so some persuasion will be necessary. Should Axii be used here the ENTIRE village will turn against them, refusing food, supplies, aid of any sort, and probably try to murder them in their sleep.
- However he's convinced, the elderman will be able to lead the players into the manor's modest catacombs (Mostly a cave high up on the cliff, that is quite hard to reach without ropes and thus monster-free).
- Within the catacombs they can easily find the elderman's grandfather and the book of the ritual. It will take 2 Intelligence+Academics and 2 Intelligence+Occult rolls to figure out. They can try multiple times. Also a Intelligence+Survival roll to find essential ingredients for the ritual.

Scene 5: The Cove of Shadows

Once the players have gathered everything they need for the ritual, they find their way to Mendoza's lair. The ritual book can guide them: There is a Place of Power along the base of the cliff, a point where the walls between worlds are thinner than usual. Witcher medallions will vibrate when they are within a few meters. At the stroke of midnight, it can be pried open with certain gestures, recorded in the book. It will require someone to sacrifice a point of Willpower. Either one of the players, or a coerced villager if they're feeling callous and don't mind backlash.

Once that's done, read or paraphrase:

The place of power flares up, but with shadows where one expects light. Waves of darkness flow out from a single point, through which the world looks... different. Those rocks are more jagged, the ocean is oily and still, and those cliffs seem now to stretch upwards forever. Where once you could see wispy lights in the cove, there are now ships with torches and lanterns. There are longboats from Skellige, freighters from Novigrad, galleons from Redania and Nilfgaard, all flying the same flag: a skull and crossbones atop a blazing red flame.

In the centre of this ragtag fleet, you can see what must be the flagship; a large galleon, adorned with skulls and with sails made from human skin.

There is no sound of a crew, or anyone. Just the half-hearted slap of small, oily waves on the ivory sands. Several rowboats are stationed on the beach, getting out to the ships won't mean getting wet.

Mendoza and his ghost crew won't show up until they're busy getting the ritual of banishment ready. Play up the eeriness. Maybe a raven perched on the prow of one of the smaller ships might stare at them as they sail past. It might even croak something ominous at them, maybe a classic "Nevermore" if the players look like literary types.

When the ritual begins, Mendoza and his crew will appear as if tearing through a hole in space, and attack. Mendoza is absolutely mad, screaming as much to himself as to the players, things like "Kill them kill them kill them! They'll destroy us! Good! NO! They're here to save us I DON'T WANT THEM TO!"

This will be a series of tough fights: Until the ritual is complete, Mendoza and his crew cannot be killed for more than a few seconds. Then when it IS complete, Reim will take his true form and they'll have to defeat that. Don't be afraid to give the players some broken bones at the very least, The Witcher is a nasty brutish world and heroism more often than not results in death, even for a witcher. If you're tight for time, buff Mendoza to do more damage and ignore the kraken, skip straight to the VICTORY bit two pages down.

Battle details on next page:

Final battle phase 1:

- The players will need to enact the ritual on the main deck of Mendoza's ship.
- They will be surrounded by essentially an unending number of wraiths, but they are limited to attacking in tens, 2 on each player.
- Mendoza will be one of these wraiths, attacking a random player. When “killed”, he disappears, allowing another wraith to take his place. He misses his next turn, then reappears in the spot where the next wraith is “killed”. If multiple wraiths are dead, he appears in a random slot.
- The ritual should take 4-5 rounds of combat to complete, depending on how beat up the players are getting.
- When the ritual is complete, something visibly breaks inside Mendoza, and the next attack that causes damage kills him permanently, as he shudders and his sword scatters off the deck into the water. The ghost crew shatter like glass and dissipate.

STATS FOR MENDOZA, HIS PIRATE CREW AND REIM ON PAGE 24

Read or paraphrase:

The wraiths shatter like glass, shards of vengeful soul dissipating like fog in the noonday sun. A deathly quiet falls upon this little pocket world. The silence is broken by your medallions suddenly vibrating like never before. Something is still out there. Something big.

A nearby ship, a Skellige longboat, suddenly shatters in two, the pieces sinking almost immediately. No, not sinking. Dragged under. Another boat, and then another, shattering into splinters, each one closer to the flagship. An explosion of dark oily water showers you, as something massive rears out of the depths. A conglomeration of nightmares, vaguely resembling a kraken in shape. In the moonlight reflecting off its oily hide can be seen faces, or skulls. When it roars, it is as if a thousand victims of murder cry out for the last time. Glowing a dull crimson, you can see the sword embedded at the back of the creature's throat.

Even witchers will need to make a Willpower test against this thing. Unless they get one success they are at -3 dice to all rolls while Reim is still alive. Of course a canny witcher might try using the Axii sign to calm down a panicking colleague...

This is the final fight. A giant manifestation of hate and bloodshed resembling a kraken versus 5 witchers on a galleon. Giant tentacles thumping down on the flagship, trying to crush players, or tangle them and drag them to their doom. Handy tips:

- Treat a tentacle as an enemy with 7 health levels and Armour 3. A player caught in tentacles may do this too, but will be at a -3 penalty due to being dangled around like a dog shaking a toy. Each time a tentacle is hacked off, Give players a shot at hitting the magic sword.
- The Yrden sign would be useful for trapping those giant tentacles, if a player was able to cast it then direct an attack to that zone. While slowed, they could be hacked off. Treat a tentacle as an enemy with 7 health levels and Armour 2. When hacked off, reduce the number of attacks Reim can make by 1.
- They are on a ship. A clever witcher might be able to hack through a mast to make it fall upon Reim, causing considerable damage.
- Should anyone actually make a move to grab the sword, give them an Intelligence+Occult roll with a bonus die to remember that's how all this trouble started in the first place!
- DAMAGING the sword, however, give them a similar roll to determine that destroying the sword might kill Reim off for good!

Victory:

A hairline crack develops on the blade of Reim's sword. Baleful red energies stream out like water under pressure. Hacking again at the blade causes more and more cracks, until suddenly it shatters into countless pieces, revealing the demonic being at its core. It looks... less threatening, now that it has nothing to hide behind, humanoid, but small and petty as the hatred that fuels it. It gibbers in terror as a whirlpool appears in the centre of the cove's circular bay, lightning crackling out of its depths. Reim's claws gouge deep into the wood of the ship, but it is inexorably drawn into the centre of the whirlpool, screaming rage filled curses at you, at Mendoza, at the gods, but nobody seems to be listening as he circles the abyss once, twice, and goes under.

Reim's demise doesn't stop the whirlpool, which begins to expand, and affect the ships, sucking them towards its hungry maw. Give the players a few rounds of escaping by leaping from ship to ship as they collide, swinging from the rigging onto a neighbouring ship, sprinting along masts as the boat capsizes to ONLY JUST make it to the shore, fun stuff like that.

They can open the place of power the same way they did before, and pass through, leaving them to watch as the whirlpool consumes the little pocket dimension, and the place of power to boot. Gone from the world, even if Reim survives he has no way to get back to this world.
Uhm, probably.

Hooray, the players have sorted the troubles plaguing the region. The ride back to Cidaris city is uneventful, and the agent pays the remainder of the fee in full before suggesting they move on before their presence stirs up anti-human sentiment.

Game over, hope everyone had fun.

We are fugitives, now. The dishonour is a stain upon us all. Roderic and Selina are safe, but only one child could be saved from the usurpers, and she took a grave blow to the head. If she recovers, Aria will not be fit to rule. Not that there is a duchy to rule any more. This is Roderic's sin. I warned him of Eric's treachery, but he would not move against his half-brother. Now we all pay for his weakness.

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We made landfall by some elven ruins today. Roderic wishes to keep sailing but he relented after I showed him just how low supplies and morale were after weeks without stopping. We cannot keep running. By my reckoning we are south of Redania, perhaps along the border of Cidaris and Verden. Small and poor compared to Kovir, which should keep attention off our backs as we hunt for fresh food and decide our next move.

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No sleep tonight. Heard voices on the wind earlier. There is someone in those elven ruins. Probably watching us since we landed nearly a week ago. I'm going to take some of the men and find whoever's been spying on us.

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The ruins were empty and maze-like. I got separated from the others for a time, and came across what I think used to be a study. Rotted parchments and books, none readable, but unmistakably elven work. In the middle of the room was a sculpture, a sword buried almost to the hilt in a granite statue of an elf. I swear that sword called my name when I examined it. Of course I fled, and bumped into the men. Roderic is satisfied that there are no spies in the ruins. I couldn't bring myself to tell anyone about what I saw.

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Damn Roderic and his fool family! He wants to let go of our birthrights and just settle here? He would just settle down and start a new life, leaving our royal blood behind! I nearly struck him in front of the crew. More voices on the wind tonight. The sword sculpture is calling to me. I'm not foolish enough to go up there alone.

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I awoke to find myself in the ruins, staring at the sword. It told me I stood out amongst the others, my desire to return this family to its rightful place is something it can understand. I don't understand how, but the statue used to be a real elf named Reim, and the sword somehow contains his soul.

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I visited the sword again tonight. Reim told me about his past, how he used to be a lord that ruled over this land many centuries ago. He was betrayed, much as I was, but did not escape in time. Great magic was unleashed in the attack, destroying his palace here, and an enchanted sword turned his body to stone but left him here, immortal but powerless, to watch all he once ruled taken away, first by usurper elves, then humans.

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Roderic wants to tear my ship apart for wood to build houses! Our one remaining link to our lives in Kovir! I confronted him, told him we could sail to Skellige, buy an army and retake our homes, but he laughed in my face! Reim says he is unsurprised. He can smell the weakness in Roderic. I'm beginning to think I can too.

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We could retake our homes, our birthright, but Roderic refuses. He denies me as much as those who ousted us. I despise him just as much. Perhaps more. Betrayed by my own lord. Reim says he can help, but it would require "sacrifice". When pressed, he said the blood of a noble child could break his binding to the statue. With the power of the sword we could defy Roderic, amass our army, and sail back to Kovir to avenge ourselves.

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Aria is dead. With the Reim the sword in my hand, I feel invincible. When Roderic heard he was furious and ordered me slain, but Reim caused my wounds to heal as soon as they were inflicted. I struck down my former lord and lady, and the rest bowed before me, terrified. Now we can retake Kovir. I can go home.

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Reim has called for patience. I yearn to attack my usurpers, but he's right, we need to plan. I've directed the men to build a home over the ruins, while I make contact with local towns, and build up a network. We can recruit from the villages, and they can build ships from the nearby forest. I have no desire to rule over this squalid region, but I will need some influence here before I return to Kovir.

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We raided some Skellige ships today. Everything went as planned, and better, brave Skellige warriors fleeing at the sight of me to be cut down by my men. They are weak. They are all weak. Reim says he can make sure we are never weak like our **PREY** enemies. I don't know what he has in mind, but I will have no place for the weak when I sail to Kovir to reclaim my home.

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Another raid went almost too well. I caught my reflection in the midst of the battle, and beheld a skull, scorched by flame. My crew, in the reflection they were little more than monsters, tearing apart far more human sailors. I don't believe Reim cast an illusion on us, for after the battle I saw the same flaming skull in a mirror plundered from the last ship. What has happened us?

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It seems in betraying Roderic, I have been betrayed myself. Reim was never an elf lord. He is something dark and powerful and by drawing the sword, I have entered into some kind of pact. Every day I gain in strength, but lose more of myself. Am I becoming Reim's puppet? He says no, we are becoming one. I hate him, but he says that he feedson hate. We both feed on it now. All I know is that I am cursed, and so is my monstrous crew. We are bound to these ruins. Kovir is lost to me. All is lost.

...

...

he is in my head and I can't get him out out out get out get out get out get out
get out get out **NO. I OWN YOU.**

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...

So much death and cruelty. I have done such terrible things **AND ENJOYED THEM.** Kovir is better off without a bloodthirsty duke like me **YES YOU WILL KEEP KILLING FOR ME.** Reim can't control every little thing I do though. I collected knowledge as well as plunder, and I know how to break this curse **YOU LIE. WE ARE ENDLESS.** Reim was trapped once before, he can be trapped again **I WILL NOT SUFFER A CAGE.**

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He is less powerful when the moon is full, and my mind can be calmed. A ritual can be performed, I wrote it all down carefully, bit by bit during each full moon. Complete directions. One of the sailors who retired before the curse took hold has them, his line will be village chieftain or elderman or whatever they call themselves down here. If I fail, it falls to him to keep knowledge of the banishment alive. Tonight, I will banish Reim back to the dismal realm he crawled out from. On the deck of the flagship, I will enact the ritual.

ANTAGONISTS:

Ghouls: Undead humanoids with a pack instinct and a taste for human flesh. It is said they were once humans who resorted to cannibalism. They prefer rotted meat but if corpses are scarce they have no issues with creating some. **Necrophages.**

INT: 2 STR:4 PRE: 3
WIT: 2 DEX: 3 MAN: 2
RES: 2 STA: 4 COM: 2

Size: 5

Health: 8

Defense: 2 (+1 thick hide)

Skills: Investigation 2, Athletics 3 Brawl 4, Stealth 2

Abilities: Immune to poison

Weapons:

Claws:

Dam: 4 **Notes:** **Armour piercing-** Ignores 1 point of armour.

Drowners: Undead created from people who died by drowning. They prefer to lie in wait underwater and ambush victims, dragging them under and eating them once they've drowned. Sometimes this create new drowners. Clammy fishy skin makes them vulnerable to fire. **Necrophages.**

INT: 2 STR:3 PRE: 3
WIT: 3 DEX: 4 MAN: 2
RES: 2 STA: 4 COM: 2

Size: 5

Health: 9

Defense: 3 (+1 thick hide)

Skills: Investigation 2, Athletics 4 Brawl 4, Stealth 3

Abilities: Immune to bleeding

Weapons:

Claws:

Dam: 4 **Notes:** **Armour piercing-** Ignores 1 point of armour.

Other: Vulnerable to fire (Successes on damage roll for Igni/other fire attacks do double damage)

Can Dodge: Drowner's Defense becomes 7. They forfeit their attack for that round.

Drowned Dead: A larger, tougher form of drowner. Their claws drip with a poison dangerous even to witchers. **Necrophages.**

INT: 3 STR:4 PRE: 3
WIT: 3 DEX: 4 MAN: 2
RES: 2 STA: 5 COM: 2

Size: 6

Health: 12

Defense: 3 (+2 thick hide)

Skills: Investigation 2, Athletics 4 Brawl 5, Stealth 3

Abilities: Immune to poison and bleeding.

Weapons:

Claws:

Dam: 4 **Notes:** **Armour piercing-** Ignores 1 point of armour.

Poisonous-When damaged, the player must roll Stamina+Resolve or gains a point of Toxicity. Lasts 3 rounds, roll each round.

Other: Vulnerable to fire (Successes on damage roll for Igni/other fire attacks do double damage)

Can Dodge: Drowned Dead Defense becomes 7. They forfeit their attack for that round.

Spectres: Restless spirits of those who died suddenly, violently or with unfinished business. They suffer endless pain, which makes them envy and despise the living. Invisible and invulnerable until they decide to become corporeal to attack. The Yrden sign forces them to become physical.

INT: 3 **STR:** 4 **PRE:** 3
WIT: 3 **DEX:** 4 **MAN:** 2
RES: 3 **STA:** 3 **COM:** 4

Size: 5

Health: 10

Defense: 3 (+1 deathly agility)

Skills: Athletics 3 Brawl 4, Stealth 4

Abilities: Immune to poison, bleeding

Weapons:

Sword:

Dam: 4 **Notes:** Due to their speed, Spectres get 2 attacks per round

Peasants: The common people. Farmers, fishermen, tavern owners, shepherds. Most are barely literate, because survival is more important than reading.

INT: 2 **STR:** 2 **PRE:** 2
WIT: 2 **DEX:** 3 **MAN:** 2
RES: 2 **STA:** 3 **COM:** 2

Size: 5

Health: 7

Defense: 2

Skills: Athletics 1 Brawl 2, Archery 1, Weaponry 1

Abilities: None

Weapons:

Pitchforks/knives/cudgels:

Dam: 1 **Notes:** Change damage to bashing/lethal depending on nature of “weapon”

Archespore: Half plant, half undead corpse, they grow at the scenes of particularly horrible crimes and attack all living things. Spits spikes and lashes with thorny brambles. Quite poisonous, even to witchers. Vulnerable to fire and poison.

INT: 0 **STR:** 4 **PRE:** 3
WIT: 0 **DEX:** 4 **MAN:** 0
RES: 0 **STA:** 4 **COM:** 0

Size: 9

Health: 15

Defense: 2 (+4 thick bark)

Skills: Brawl 3, Archery 4

Abilities: Immune to knockdown, stun, mind control, bleeding

Weapons:

Spitting thorns:

Dam: 4 **Notes:** **Armour piercing-** Ignores 1 point of armour.

Poisonous-When damaged, the player must roll Stamina+Resolve or gains a point of Toxicity. Lasts 3 rounds, roll each round.

Lashing brambles:

Dam: 3 **Notes:** **Poisonous-**When damaged, the player must roll Stamina+Resolve or gains a point of Toxicity. Lasts 3 rounds, roll each round.

Massive attack- Can attack all players at once with this move.

Pirate Lord Mendoza: A tall, imposing figure with a burning skull where his head should be. Dressed in the tattered remnants of the Kovir naval service from 3 generations ago. Wields a magnificent elven sword that glows dull red in battle.

INT: 4 **STR:** 4 **PRE:** 5
WIT: 4 **DEX:** 4 **MAN:** 4
RES: 4 **STA:** 4 **COM:** 4

Size: 5

Health: 7

Defense: 4(+2 magical aura)

Skills: Intimidation 4, Weaponry 5,

Abilities: Immune to mind control, bleeding.

Weapons:

Reim, the elven longsword:

Dam: 4 **Notes:** **Armour piercing-** Ignores 2 points of armour.

Sting of hatred- Anyone taking damage must roll Willpower or take a -3 penalty to their next roll.

Other: Is actually susceptible to poison- Mendoza is not dead. Reim keeps him alive, sustained on hate. The Viper School witcher should have some fun with this.

Ghost Crew: Once men, their souls are bound to Reim/Mendoza and twisted into monstrous shapes by the sword's hatred of all life.

INT: 3 **STR:** 4 **PRE:** 3
WIT: 3 **DEX:** 4 **MAN:** 2
RES: 2 **STA:** 4 **COM:** 2

Size: 5

Health: 7

Defense: 3(+1 magical aura)

Skills: Intimidation 3, Weaponry 3,

Abilities: bleeding, poison.

Weapons:

Swords:

Dam: 4

Other: Until Mendoza is defeated by the ritual, there is an endless supply of ghost pirates and they know it. Utterly fearless.

Reim, Demon of Hatred, Kraken form: An evil spirit of pure malice. Exists only to dominate and inflict suffering. Bound to a sword centuries ago when elves ruled the continent, released by Mendoza 3 generations ago.

INT: 5 **STR:** 7 **PRE:** 9
WIT: 5 **DEX:** 2 **MAN:** 2
RES: 5 **STA:** 9 **COM:** 2

Size: 20

Health: As dramatically appropriate (20-30 is probably appropriate)

Defense: 0(+6 magical aura)

Skills: Brawl 3 (Grappling +3)

Abilities: Immune to bleeding, poison, mind control, knockdown...

Weapons:

Giant tentacles:

Dam: 4 **Notes:** **Grappler-** Reim is more likely to grapple opponents and fling them about rather than try to crush them. Players still get to take falling/impact damage, but can also ready a Quen shield or make a grab for ropes/rigging mid-air for dramatic effect.

Alric, Griffin School Witcher:

You were an orphan on the mean streets of Vizima once, doing odd-jobs and picking pockets to keep your ribs from meeting your spine. Your fellow orphans were all you had, and friendships were forged in those childhood days that nothing could break. Gods know, the world tried: The city was plagued by a coven of vampires, picking the homeless off the streets. Such was the danger that several witchers arrived in Vizima to destroy the vampires. For their price, they named you and your friends. Carted off to the ends of the world to become like them. Before being separated, you each swore an oath to keep in touch, no matter the distance. Those of you who survived the training did just that.

You went far to the east, past the deserts over the mountains, to the Griffin School. There, amid the gruelling physical training and agonizing alchemical surgeries, you studied the occult, leaving you with a vast wealth of knowledge on magic and how to fight it. You also became highly adept at Signs, simple but potent magical hand gestures to augment your skill with a blade.

Once the training and the trials were complete, once you had been changed from an orphan boy into a magically and genetically engineered monster hunter, you were handed your medallion and sent on your way to roam the land, protecting folk from the horrors that lurk beyond the firelight. You did not forget your childhood friends, and as soon as you could, you met, near Oxenfurt on the Pontar river. After a mighty drinking session, you decided to travel together, taking on the big contracts. For what could stand in the way of 5 witchers?

Reaction to other characters:

Jenna, of the Cat School:

We all changed over the course of our training. I think Jenna changed the most. She's a lot more... Let's say "morally flexible" now. Still, when the chips are down she'll have my back. Possibly by stabbing someone else in theirs.

Harper, of the Wolf School:

Harper was kinda shy before we were taken in by witchers. He's still quiet today, but there's a confidence to it, cold and steely. And his skill with a sword is breathtaking, even for a trained witcher. Calm and collected, he won't let you down in or out of a fight.

Bran, of the Bear School:

Bran was always a tough kid. Seems his training on Skellige really brought that out in him. He's a mountain of a man, and brutal in a fight, utterly destroying an enemy. Thankfully the only hurt he causes his friends is the mighty headaches we get for trying to out-drink him.

Omar, of the Viper School:

I think maybe Omar is the least changed of us. Perhaps the viper school suited him? He was always a dirty fighter (saved our skin more than once as kids), but I didn't even **know** ghouls had balls to kick. His knowledge of poisons and alchemy are invaluable against the things we fight.

Bran, Bear School Witcher:

You were an orphan on the mean streets of Vizima once, doing odd-jobs and picking pockets to keep your ribs from meeting your spine. Your fellow orphans were all you had, and friendships were forged in those childhood days that nothing could break. Gods know, the world tried: The city was plagued by a coven of vampires, picking the homeless off the streets. Such was the danger that several witchers arrived in Vizima to destroy the vampires. For their price, they named you and your friends. Carted off to the ends of the world to become like them. Before being separated, you each swore an oath to keep in touch, no matter the distance. Those of you who survived the training did just that.

You were taken southwest, to the Bear School of the Skellige Islands. The cold mountainous Isles are harsh, brutal and unforgiving, and the monsters that dwell there have learned well from nature's example. The witchers of Skellige made you just as harsh, just as brutal. You grew strong and tough because there was no other choice. The witchers on the Continent, they may use swords, but it takes a heavy axe blade to cut the giants and ice trolls.

Once the training and the trials were complete, once you had been changed from an orphan boy into a magically and genetically engineered monster hunter, you were handed your medallion and sent on your way to roam the land, protecting folk from the horrors that lurk beyond the firelight. You did not forget your childhood friends, and as soon as you could, you met, near Oxenfurt on the Pontar river. After a mighty drinking session, you decided to travel together, taking on the big contracts. For what could stand in the way of 5 witchers?

Reaction to other characters:

Jenna, of the Cat School:

Wee Jenna has stayed wee, it seems. But she's made up for it, aye. When yer no' big as me, I guess it pays to be fast instead. Ye wouldnae think her little fire poker would scratch a ghouls thick hide, but when you stick it right in their wee eye sockets, it doesnae matter! She's good craic, more laid back than th'others. The best one tae go drinkin' with.

Harper, of the Wolf School:

Harper may be quiet and unassuming, but we all see the steel in his eyes. Those lads in Kaer Morhen taught him well, he's a wolf in more ways than one. He's a quick thinker, I've seen him lay traps with his blade in the middle of a fight. If we weren't equals, he'd be a leader.

Alric, of the Griffin School:

Alric's a dab hand at combat magic, but no' so good wi' a blade. The Signs make up for it big time though, I've sparred him to a standstill despite bein' twice the size. He's the best when it comes to figurin' out legends and myths, makes lifting curses a whole lot easier.

Omar, of the Viper School:

Omar's always been a slippery one, and the snakes really brought it out in him. No time for poisons myself, but given the things we have to fight I've no problem with him makin' use of them. And his tricky fightin' style... how do you even blindside something made entirely of eyeballs?

Jenna, Cat School Witcher:

You were an orphan on the mean streets of Vizima once, doing odd-jobs and picking pockets to keep your ribs from meeting your spine. Your fellow orphans were all you had, and friendships were forged in those childhood days that nothing could break. Gods know, the world tried: The city was plagued by a coven of vampires, picking the homeless off the streets. Such was the danger that several witchers arrived in Vizima to destroy the vampires. For their price, they named you and your friends. Carted off to the ends of the world to become like them. Before being separated, you each swore an oath to keep in touch, no matter the distance. Those of you who survived the training did just that.

You're not actually sure where the Cat school was. You were taken there in a blindfold, and when your training was done you left the same way. It's little surprise: The school isn't as focused on monsters as you'd expected, and does a lucrative side trade in assassination and the rather illegal drug fisstech. Still, you learned plenty about monsters and their weak points, and picked up a few less-than-honourable skills. They're really more perks. I mean, if a baron isn't paying the full amount for a contract, it's only right to make up the balance with one of his priceless gold goblets, right..?

Once the training and the trials were complete, once you had been changed from an orphan girl into a magically and genetically engineered monster hunter, you were handed your medallion and sent on your way to roam the land, protecting folk from the horrors that lurk beyond the firelight. You did not forget your childhood friends, and as soon as you could, you met, near Oxenfurt on the Pontar river. After a mighty drinking session, you decided to travel together, taking on the big contracts. For what could stand in the way of 5 witchers?

Reaction to other characters:

Bran, of the Bear School:

Bran is gruff and crude, so Skellige has definitely rubbed off on him. But underneath the booming, table thumping bravado he's still a dear. Well, to his friends at least. He'll snap anyone who wrongs him or his friends in two like dry twigs. Like I said, he's a dear.

Omar, of the Viper School:

Omar understands. You hear rumours that the Viper school has taken a slightly... new direction under the Nilfgaardian empire. Perhaps a little more like the Cat school, if his enthusiasm for poisons is any indicator.

Harper, of the Wolf School:

Harper hasn't changed much. Still quiet and unassuming. I think that makes him more dangerous. Teaming up was his idea. It's a good plan, makes us good coin. Funny how village chiefs are reluctant to short-change a witcher when there are four more looking on...

Alric, of the Griffin School:

Alric's alright. Bit stuffy, he definitely did more book learning than fighting. When I see him burn a pack of ghouls to ash with a flick of the wrist though, I kinda wish I'd spent more time in the library myself...

Omar, Viper School Witcher:

You were an orphan on the mean streets of Vizima once, doing odd-jobs and picking pockets to keep your ribs from meeting your spine. Your fellow orphans were all you had, and friendships were forged in those childhood days that nothing could break. Gods know, the world tried: The city was plagued by a coven of vampires, picking the homeless off the streets. Such was the danger that several witchers arrived in Vizima to destroy the vampires. For their price, they named you and your friends. Carted off to the ends of the world to become like them. Before being separated, you each swore an oath to keep in touch, no matter the distance. Those of you who survived the training did just that.

You were taken south to the Viper school in the empire of Nilfgaard. Or what remains of it. The Emperor made some kind of deal with the school, and you had to work for the Empire's military more than once during your training. You've since gathered from your friends that your training was... Unconventional. An unusual focus on poisons and the kind of dirty tricks usually employed by assassins. Still, one can assassinate monsters, no?

Once the training and the trials were complete, once you had been changed from an orphan boy into a magically and genetically engineered monster hunter, you were handed your medallion and sent on your way to roam the land, protecting folk from the horrors that lurk beyond the firelight. You did not forget your childhood friends, and as soon as you could, you met, near Oxenfurt on the Pontar river. After a mighty drinking session, you decided to travel together, taking on the big contracts. For what could stand in the way of 5 witchers?

Reaction to other Characters:

Bran, of the Bear school:

Bran is big and scary. Little finesse, but resolute and unbending in a fight. He sometimes frowns when he sees me distilling poisons, particularly those effective on humans. He is a good friend, but unwilling to use all means at this disposal.

Jenna, of the Cat school:

Jenna is something of a kindred spirit. Her training was also... unconventional, although more blatantly criminal. Moral flexibility can mean survival as a witcher, and I feel we have a mutual respect for each other. She is also, admittedly, very entertaining company.

Harper, of the Wolf school:

Harper would scare me, were he not my friend. Once he was quiet because he was shy. Now he is quiet because he hides his strength and skill until the right moment. And such skill! His swords are like lightning in his hands.

Alric, of the Griffin school:

Alric is the most learned of us. Few are more knowledgeable about curses, magic and legend, a tremendous asset to our profession when violence is either pointless or unnecessary. He has studied combat Signs equally well. Reliable and honourable, although Bran and Jenna are more fun...

Harper, Wolf School Witcher:

You were an orphan on the mean streets of Vizima once, doing odd-jobs and picking pockets to keep your ribs from meeting your spine. Your fellow orphans were all you had, and friendships were forged in those childhood days that nothing could break. Gods know, the world tried: The city was plagued by a coven of vampires, picking the homeless off the streets. Such was the danger that several witchers arrived in Vizima to destroy the vampires. For their price, they named you and your friends. Carted off to the ends of the world to become like them. Before being separated, you each swore an oath to keep in touch, no matter the distance. Those of you who survived the training did just that.

You were taken north, to the fortress of Kaer Morhen. They taught you about the strengths and weaknesses of more monsters than you knew existed, and they gave you the skill with a sword to best them all. They taught you about magic and curses, and how to fight them. They moulded you into a hunter, cold and cunning like the wolf.

Once the training and the trials were complete, once you had been changed from an orphan boy into a magically and genetically engineered monster hunter, you were handed your medallion and sent on your way to roam the land, protecting folk from the horrors that lurk beyond the firelight. You did not forget your childhood friends, and as soon as you could, you met, near Oxenfurt on the Pontar river. After a mighty drinking session, you decided to travel together, taking on the big contracts. For what could stand in the way of 5 witchers?

Reaction to other Characters:

Bran, of the Bear school:

Bran was always tough. It was lucky, in a way, that he was taken to the Bear school, as I doubt the rest of us might survive the harsh training he doubtless endured. He is boistrous, but fiercely loyal and dependable.

Jenna, of the Cat school:

Jenna is a hair's breadth away from being a criminal. The Cat school is not well-regarded in Kaer Morhen, there is great animosity between the two schools. But I know Jenna of old, and I have trusted her with my life before and after we became witchers. She won't let me down.

Omar, of the Viper school:

Omar is a good friend, but I worry sometimes. Not for him, exactly, but what little he's told me of the Viper school makes me sad that it's deep in Nilfgaard. Sounds like they're dismantling it and making mercenaries of the witchers there.

Alric, of the Griffin School:

Definitely the scholar among us. Studying combat magic means he neglected his melee training, but seeing him in action makes me wonder if that even matters. He knows more about curses and magic than I found in all of Kaer Morhen's libraries. And he adds some decorum to balance out Bran and Jenna's more... crude humour.

Alric, witcher of the Griffin School:

INT: 3 **STR:**2 **PRE:** 2
WIT: 3 **DEX:** 3 **MAN:** 2
RES: 4 **STA:** 3 **COM:** 4

Size: 5

Initiative: 8

Toxicity: _____

Health: 8

Toxic Penalty: -1 -2 -3 -4 -5

Defense: 3 (+2 Griffin School armour)

Willpower: 8

Skills:

Mental (-3 unskilled)

Academics	2
Alchemy	2
Crafts	1
Investigation	3
Medicine	0
Occult	4
Politics	1
Law	1

Physical (-1 unskilled)

Athletics	2
Brawl(fists)	2
Ride	1
Archery	1
Larceny	0
Stealth	2
Survival	2
Weaponry	3

Social (-1 unskilled)

Animal Handling	1
Empathy	0
Expression	0
Intimidation	1
Persuasion	1
Socialise	0
Streetwise	0
Subterfuge	0

Abilities:

Quickdraw: You may draw a weapon as a free action.

Weaponry Dodge: If dodging for a turn, add 4 to defense instead of doubling it

Fast Reflexes: +2 Initiative (included above)

Fighting Finesse: You can use Dex instead of Str in your attack rolls

Quick Healer: You heal rapidly. +1L health a day, or [Willpower roll] health restored with 1 hour meditation. Bashing damage heals at 1B a minute.

Night vision: Your amber cat eyes let you see in all but pitch black.

Signs:

Aard: 3 **Igni:** 2 **Yrden:** 3 **Quen:** 2 **Axii:** 3

Starting Equipment:

1 Tawny Owl 1 Swallow 1 White Honey

Weapons:

Steel Sword:

Dam: 4L **Notes:** Monsters Have +1 armour against mundane weapons like this.

Silver sword:

Dam: 4L **Notes:** Only used for monsters: Regular creatures just damage it.

Bran, witcher of the Bear School:

INT: 2 **STR:**4 **PRE:** 3
WIT: 3 **DEX:** 3 **MAN:** 2
RES: 3 **STA:** 4 **COM:** 2

Size: 5

Initiative: 7

Toxicity: _____

Health: 9

Toxic penalty: -1 -2 -3 -4 -5

Defense: 3 (+4 Bear School armour)

Willpower: 6

Skills:

Mental (-3 unskilled)

Academics	1
Alchemy	2
Crafts	1
Investigation	2
Medicine	0
Occult	2
Politics	1
Law	0

Physical (-1 unskilled)

Athletics	3
Brawl(fists)	3
Ride	1
Archery	1
Larceny	0
Stealth	1
Survival	3
Weaponry	4

Social (-1 unskilled)

Animal Handling	1
Empathy	0
Expression	0
Intimidation	3
Persuasion	1
Socialise	2
Streetwise	0
Subterfuge	0

Abilities:

Quickdraw: You may draw a weapon as a free action.

Weaponry Dodge: If dodging for a turn, add 4 to defense instead of doubling it

Fast Reflexes: +2 Initiative (included above)

Quick Healer: You heal rapidly. +1L health a day, or [Willpower roll] health restored with 1 hour meditation. Bashing damage heals at 1B a minute.

Night vision: Your amber cat eyes let you see in all but pitch black.

Iron Stomach: You can handle 2 extra levels of Toxicity before feeling the effects.

Signs:

Aard: 0 **Igni:** 2 **Yrden:** 0 **Quen:** 3 **Axii:** 0

Starting Equipment:

1 Tawny Owl 1 Swallow 1 White Honey

Weapons: NOTE: When rolling damage with axes, 9s explode as well as 10s

Steel Axe:

Dam: 4L **Notes:** Monsters Have +1 armour against mundane weapons like this.

Silver Axe:

Dam: 4L **Notes:** Only used for monsters: Regular creatures just damage it.

Jenna, witcher of the Cat School:

INT: 2 **STR:**3 **PRE:** 2
WIT: 3 **DEX:** 5 **MAN:** 3
RES: 3 **STA:** 3 **COM:** 2

Size: 5

Initiative: 9

Toxicity: _____

Health: 8

Toxic Penalty: -1 -2 -3 -4 -5

Defense: 4 (+1 Cat School armour)

Willpower: 6

Skills:

Mental (-3 unskilled)

Academics	0
Alchemy	2
Crafts	0
Investigation	3
Medicine	0
Occult	1
Politics	0
Law	0

Physical (-1 unskilled)

Athletics	4
Brawl(fists)	1
Ride	1
Archery	0
Larceny	4
Stealth	3
Survival	1
Weaponry	4

Social (-1 unskilled)

Animal Handling	0
Empathy	0
Expression	0
Intimidation	0
Persuasion	1
Socialise	0
Streetwise	2
Subterfuge	3

Abilities:

Quickdraw: You may draw a weapon as a free action.

Weaponry Dodge: If dodging for a turn, add 4 to defense instead of doubling it

Fast Reflexes: +2 Initiative (included above)

Fighting Finesse: You can use Dex instead of Str in your attack rolls

Quick Healer: You heal rapidly. +1L health a day, or [Willpower roll] health restored with 1 hour meditation. Bashing damage heals at 1B a minute.

Night vision: Your amber cat eyes let you see in all but pitch black.

Trapper: You are an expert at disarming and making traps. Uses **Wits+Larceny**. Can make traps that replicate offensive Sign effects.

Signs:

Aard: 1 **Igni:** 0 **Yrden:** 2 **Quen:** 1 **Axii:** 1

Starting Equipment:

1 Tawny Owl 1 Swallow 1 White Honey

Weapons:

Steel Rapier: NOTE: Rapiers ignore 1 armour and 8+ on a roll explodes

Dam: 2L **Notes:** Monsters Have +1 armour against mundane weapons like this.

Silver sword:

Dam: 2L **Notes:** Only used for monsters: Regular creatures just damage it.

Omar, witcher of the Viper School:

INT: 4 **STR:**3 **PRE:** 2
WIT: 3 **DEX:** 3 **MAN:** 2
RES: 3 **STA:** 3 **COM:** 3

Size: 5

Initiative: 8

Toxicity: _____

Health: 8

Toxic Penalty: -1 -2 -3 -4 -5

Defense: 3 (+2 Viper School armour) **NOTE:** Provides full immunity to poison

Willpower: 7

Skills:

Mental (-3 unskilled)

Academics	1
Alchemy	4
Crafts	1
Investigation	2
Medicine	3
Occult	2
Politics	0
Law	0

Physical (-1 unskilled)

Athletics	3
Brawl(fists)	1
Ride	1
Archery	0
Larceny	0
Stealth	2
Survival	3
Weaponry	4

Social (-1 unskilled)

Animal Handling	1
Empathy	0
Expression	0
Intimidation	0
Persuasion	0
Socialise	0
Streetwise	2
Subterfuge	0

Abilities:

Quickdraw: You may draw a weapon as a free action.

Weaponry Dodge: If dodging for a turn, add 4 to defense instead of doubling it

Fast Reflexes: +2 Initiative (included above)

Dirty fighting: If an attack has more successes than target's Composure, they lose their next turn!

Quick Healer: You heal rapidly. +1L health a day, or [Willpower roll] health restored with 1 hour meditation. Bashing damage heals at 1B a minute.

Night vision: Your amber cat eyes let you see in all but pitch black.

Signs:

Aard: 1 **Igni:** 2 **Yrden:** 0 **Quen:** 1 **Axii:** 1

Starting Equipment:

1 Tawny Owl 1 Swallow 1 White Honey 1 Necrophage oil

Weapons:

Steel sword: **NOTE: Viper School swords have a poison effect: Target rolls Res+Com, or take 1L extra**

Dam: 4L **Notes:** Monsters Have +1 armour against mundane weapons like this.

Silver sword:

Dam: 4L **Notes:** Only used for monsters: Regular creatures just damage it.

Harper, witcher of the Wolf School:

INT: 2 **STR:**3 **PRE:** 2
WIT: 4 **DEX:** 3 **MAN:** 3
RES: 3 **STA:**3 **COM:** 4

Size: 5

Initiative: 9

Toxicity: _____

Health: 8

Toxic Penalty: -1 -2 -3 -4 -5

Defense: 3 (+2 Wolf School armour)

Willpower: 8

Skills:

Mental (-3 unskilled)

Academics 1
Alchemy 2
Crafts 1
Investigation 4
Medicine 0
Occult 2
Politics 1
Law 1

Physical (-1 unskilled)

Athletics 2
Brawl(fists) 1
Ride 1
Archery 0
Larceny 0
Stealth 2
Survival 2
Weaponry 5

Social (-1 unskilled)

Animal Handling 1
Empathy 2
Expression 0
Intimidation 0
Persuasion 0
Socialise 2
Streetwise 0
Subterfuge 0

Abilities:

Quickdraw: You may draw a weapon as a free action.

Weaponry Dodge: If dodging for a turn, add 4 to defense instead of doubling it

Fast Reflexes: +2 Initiative (included above)

Quick Healer: You heal rapidly. +1L health a day, or [Willpower roll] health restored with 1 hour meditation. Bashing damage heals at 1B a minute.

Night vision: Your amber cat eyes let you see in all but pitch black.

Fighting style: Longsword: You have special manoeuvres when fighting with swords (See sheet)

Signs:

Aard: 1 **Igni:** 1 **Yrden:** 1 **Quen:** 1 **Axii:** 1

Starting Equipment:

1 Tawny Owl 1 Swallow 1 White Honey

Weapons:

Steel sword:

Dam: 4L **Notes:** Monsters Have +1 armour against mundane weapons like this.

Silver sword:

Dam: 4L **Notes:** Only used for monsters: Regular creatures just damage it.

Fighting Style: Longswords:

You have exceptional skill with swords, giving you access to these manoeuvres in combat:

Feint: Your character knows how to make a fake attack intended to throw off an opponent. Make a “normal” attack roll, and this roll is penalized by the opponent’s Defense, par usual. This attack is fake; it does not strike the foe or do any damage. If your character achieves even a single success, however, the opponent is momentarily confused and off-balance, and may not apply her Defense against the next attack she suffers (which may be from your character the following turn or may be from some other source beforehand).

Fool’s Guard: Your character knows how to hold his weapon low to seemingly invite attack, but when the opponent strikes, he can quickly raise it to counter. Instead of offering a normal Defense, roll Strength/Dexterity + Weaponry + 1 die against the opponent’s attack. This is an instant action. Each success reduces the attack’s damage by 1, and if the characters successes exceed the attacker’s, the difference is inflicted upon the attacker as damage from the character’s weapon. Drawback: The character cannot employ his Defense in any turn where he uses the Fool’s Guard.

Riposte: A Riposte requires an attack to be made against your character. He steps out of the way of the attack using his Dodge (i.e., her Defense, doubled). While his opponent is open, he can then make a sudden and quick attack, which is performed at a –1 penalty. However, the opponent’s Defense does not further penalize the attack roll. Drawback: If your opponent suffers any further attacks on a turn where she has used Riposte, she cannot apply her Defense against them.

Doubling Cut: Your character strikes the enemy with two quick cuts. He can make two Weaponry attacks against an opponent in the same turn. Drawback: Your character cannot employ his Defense or the Fool’s Guard in the same turn as he uses this maneuver.

Wrathful Cut: Your character steps in with a powerful blow, capable of overwhelming is enemy’s defenses. When he makes an All-Out Attack (see the World of Darkness Rulebook, p. 157), add his Weaponry dots instead of the normal +2 bonus. Drawback: Your character cannot employ his Defense or the Fool’s Guard in the same turn as he uses this maneuver.