

## The Barbarian's Bloody Quest: Volunteer's Guide

THANKS FOR volunteering to play The Barbarian's Bloody Quest with me! Here are the rules.

### **1. Your Goal in the Game:**

You're doing me a favor just by playing, so you don't have to worry about winning or losing the game. Your goal is just to say things that you, personally, find honestly entertaining.

### **2. Your Main Job:**

Almost your only job is to get with the other volunteer and make up answers to my questions.

I'll ask things like "I'm set upon by raiders. What are they like?" You and your fellow volunteer can imagine any raiders you want, exactly the raiders you find most fun, and tell me about them together.

If you want to ask me any clarifying questions, please do! I'll be more than happy to answer them.

Sometimes the answer to one of my questions will be obvious, or you'll already know it from what somebody's said before. In that case, just give the obvious answer, no need to second guess.

Sometimes one of my questions will be way out, weird, maybe contextless. You can always ask me clarifying questions, but you can also just say whatever pops into your head and let me be the one who has to make sense of it.

Sometimes I'll show you one of my sheets and have you choose something from a list, too. Always choose whichever option seems best to you at the moment.

On the reverse, see also "A Bestiary," which includes some ideas that you can use and build on.

### **3. The Book of Doomed Wizards:**

Be sure that I hand "The Book of Doomed Wizards" over to you. Get with the other volunteer, take a look at it, and follow the rules you find there. I'll direct you to refer to it when I need you to.

### **4. You and the Other Volunteer:**

In order for anything to really count, you and the other volunteer have to agree on it. If you don't agree about something, it's not true until you do. Talk it over until you're both satisfied. I'll wait!

The reason there are two of you, by the way, is that this way you can trade off and build on each others' ideas. Neither of you has to do all the work.

If you have any trouble coming to agreement and you want to use some kind of system to decide, like R-P-S or flipping a coin or dibs or something, that's none of my business. Whatever works for you. Just let me know what you've decided.

I have a 6-sided die you can borrow if you want to roll it.

### **5. Ending the game:**

Any of us can end the game whenever we want, for any reason or none at all. It doesn't matter how abrupt it might be.

If, at any point, it seems impossible to entertain yourself, or not worth it, or anything like that, don't hesitate, just call an end.

### **6. Thank you!**

You're the best! I'm lucky to have you.

# The Barbarian's Bloody Quest: A Bestiary

## 1. The World:

It's the Ancient World, before the Age of Empires.

It's not Earth, probably, although it has a single yellow sun and a single white moon and three stars in a row in the winter sky that everyone recognizes. It has summers and winters, forests and deserts, great various continents and unmeasured salt seas. It has horses, dogs, cats, birds, cattle, lions, hyenas, camels, llamas, marsupials, mustelidae, primates, pachyderms.

If you went there you could breathe the air but the language would be unknown to you and the food and fashions unfamiliar.

## 2. Human Nature:

Human beings love to have full bellies, warm rugs, sweet sad music, and their loved ones nearby.

They hate violence, hunger, fear, cold, injustice, and their friends who have wronged them.

They work stone, clay, wood, metal, cloth, fur, glass, horn, sinew, bark, leaves, leather, and reeds. They cook their food, brew their drink, bury their pickles, eat fruit in season, eat fish when it runs, and eat salt when they have it. They hold their nose when the healer makes them swallow balms and pungencies.

## 3. Civilization and "Barbarity":

Human beings create polities no bigger than city-states, usually, and usually no longer-lived than dynasties. The greatest and the least usually eat grain from the same fields and hunt ducks on the same rivers.

Standing armies are vanishingly rare. Professional law enforcement is unknown. There are professionals of law in many cities, but they're clerks and interpreters, lawyers and arbiters. For enforcement, they depend on ad-hoc assemblies, mobs under their control. Cities don't have civil prisons, but they do have forced labor camps, and the powerful sometimes keep private dungeons for their enemies.

Many human beings live their lives in settled polities smaller than cities: self-organized, independent villages and towns. Sometimes these owe tribute and political affiliation to powerful cities nearby. Sometimes they confederate with one another instead, sending their town elders or representatives to meet together to negotiate policies on matters of shared concern, or going to war with each other when peaceful negotiation is too much trouble.

And many human beings live their lives on the move, in villages that follow the seasonal routes of migrating animals and life cycles of important plants.

"Barbarian" is what a city-dweller calls anyone less settled than they. It's unnecessary and rude, but what do you expect.

## 4. Wizards:

A wizard is a person who, by diligent study and a brash willingness to cheat fate and nature, learns to perceive and manipulate the plasmic energy that suffuses the world.

As wizards grow in power, they inevitably exchange elements of their human nature for plasmic versions of the same. Their willingness to cheat nature, sooner or later, extends to the natural processes of their own lives.

A powerful wizard is alienated from human life, and is able to regard it — and all life! — as a resource, not as a value.

## Your Name:

& Your Pronouns:

## Your Qualities

	Tally	Final Tally		Tally	Final Tally
Quick		<input type="text"/>	Ruthless		<input type="text"/>
Strong		<input type="text"/>	Tempered		<input type="text"/>

## Exerting Yourself

### Exert Your Instincts:

**To grasp and react to a dangerous situation.**  
= Your Highest Tally + 2

### Exert Yourself with Openness:

**To approach and win someone over.**  
= Your Tempered + 1

### Exert Yourself Physically:

**Against the mass and momentum of a physical thing.**  
= Your Quick + your Strong, min 3

### Exert Yourself with Purpose:

**To study and learn about a particular wizard or wizardry.**  
= Your Tempered + 1

### Exert Yourself with a Show of Readiness:

**To dissuade your enemies.**  
= Your Quick + your Ruthless, min 3

### Exert Yourself Subtly:

**To pass through your environment or take action unnoticed.**  
= Your Quick + your Tempered

### Exert Yourself Violently:

**Against an enemy.**  
= Your Ruthless + your Strong, min 3

### Submit to Circumstance:

**Instead of exerting yourself.**  
= Your Strong + your Tempered

## Your Tools

- **Your arms & armor:** a short sharp sword, a hatchet, a shield, and a helmet.
  - Exert yourself with openness:** Before you roll, ask your volunteers whether your bearing arms and armor makes your counterpart think that you're their enemy or a threat.
  - Exert yourself with a show of readiness:** When you communicate your readiness to violence, you can mention your arms & armor.
  - Exert yourself Violently:** When you "do [x]," [x] can include striking with your weapons and fending off blows with your armor.
- **Your knowledge of wizardry,** which allows you to **exert yourself with purpose.**
- **A stone and bone talisman** of blue jasper and a fox bone, which you had from your parents, which helped hide you from the wizard when you were a child.
  - Exert your instincts, exert yourself with purpose, or exert yourself subtly:** On a miss, tell your volunteers about this talisman, and ask them to take it into account while they're judging whether you've alerted the wizard's safeguards.
- **A copper needle** as long as your arm, etched with stringent slogans of inflection. When you exert yourself...
  - Exert yourself violently:** if you impale a plasmid with it, it must submit to you, begging you for mercy and release.
- **A grimoire** which includes a treatise on the Maxims of Ruelish of Fane. If you study the First, Third, or Fourth Maxims, you become a wizard, and must end the game. If you study only the Second Maxim, however, then when you subsequently exert yourself...
  - Exert yourself with purpose:** You may use 1 of your hits to ask your volunteers, "will the Second Maxim of Ruelish of Fane disrupt this wizardry?" If they answer that it will, then you may apply it, and so disrupt it. Ask your volunteers what happens.
- **The Recitation of Kaibenta of the Bower,** a powerful demi-spell of annulment. When you exert yourself...
  - Exert yourself with a show of readiness** against a wizard's thralls, if you recite Kaibenta's Recitation before you roll, it fleetingly disrupts the wizard's enthrallment. Tell your volunteers that they're subject to your exertion, even though they're wizard's thralls.
- **A javelin enmarked with an invocation of fire.** When you exert yourself...
  - Exert yourself violently,** you may include in [x] that you throw this javelin, and whom it strikes, an abysmal gout of flame erupts, engulfing them to deadly effect. The javelin's unharmed by the flame, and you can recover it afterward, if you're able.

## Your Improvements

- **Honed:** add 1 to your strong tally.
- **Unhesitating:** add 1 to your quick tally.
- **Hardened:** add 1 to your ruthless tally.

For each of these three improvements, update your exertions' ratings as well. If you re-tally your qualities between sessions, keep these improvements separate, and apply them again after you've finished your tallies.