

Sorcerers & Sellswords

You are a company of adventurers in a land of weird fantasy. (Think *Wizards* or *Thundarr the Barbarian*.) S&S v1.8 was written by Ray Otus (www.jellysaw.com), and is an adaptation of John Harper's *Lasers & Feelings*. This game is licensed under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 international license.

Create an Adventurer

Choose a Skill number from 2-5. A low number means you will be better at Sorcery (weird powers, ancient/alien artifacts, intuition, persuasion, passionate action) and a high number means you will be better at Swords (mundane tools and weapons, logic, diplomacy, calm precise action).

Choose your Style: Dangerous, Dauntless, Feral, Flashy, Furtive, Lofty, Sexy, Shrewd, or Spunky.

Choose your Calling: Alchemist, Alien, Archer, Artificer, Assassin, Barbarian, Beastmaster, Construct, Cutpurse, Elementalist, Knight, Mystic, Necromancer, Pitfighter, Psion, Shapeshifter, or Summoner.

Choose a Goal: Lead the Company, Meet Sexy Humanoids, Crush Bad Guys, Find a Safe Place, Delve Dark Secrets, Establish Your Reputation, or just Keep Being Awesome.

Introduce your character with a cool Name.

As a company of adventurers, pick two Advantages: Well-Provisioned, Connected, Bad Ass Reputation, Clued In, Stylish, or Lucky. **Also pick one Problem:** Hunted, Indebted, Exiled, Foreign, or Doomed.

Go for the Dice

When you do something risky, roll 1d6 to find out how it goes. Roll +1d6 if you are an expert and +1d6 if you are prepared. (The Overlord tells you how many dice to roll, based on your character and the situation.) Compare each die result to your Skill number and count your successes based on whether your action is governed by Sorcery or Swords:

For Sorcery, count the dice OVER your Skill number.
For Swords, count the dice UNDER your Skill number.

0 = It goes wrong. The Overlord says how things get worse.
1 = You barely manage. The Overlord adds a complication, harm, or cost.

2 = You do it well.

3 = A critical success! The Overlord gives you a bonus effect.

Each die you roll ON your Skill number, gives you an Insight.

Ask the Overlord a question for each insight and you will get an honest answer. Some good questions: What are they really feeling? Who is behind this? How could I get them to

____? What should I be on the lookout for? What is the best way to ____? What is really going on here? After hearing the answer, you can change your action if you want to, then roll again. (Yes, you can use this to get out of a bad roll! And, as long as you are rolling on your number, *and the Overlord has information to share*, you can repeat this insight-change action-roll again cycle.)

You can use your turn to help or hinder another's action.

Say how you do it and roll 1d6 to see if you succeed. (Was your "how" Sorcery or Swords?) If you do, add a die to that character's next roll or take one away – except a player never rolls less than one die! Failure can have the opposite effect. (If you fail at helping, you hinder, and vice versa.) Also, the Overlord may disallow helps and hinders if they don't make sense, especially if players try to stack them.

Do Sorcery

True sorcery (supernatural/superhuman stuff) is risky! You can only do true sorcery that is directly related to your Calling or a magical item you possess. You get only one die unless you have used the exact same sorcery in the fiction before (expert) and/or spend a turn "charging up" the sorcery before using it (prepared). You can prepare a sorcery ahead of time and keep it ready indefinitely, as long as nothing would ruin your concentration. You can push for big effects, but keep in mind that any backlash could be equally dramatic!

To the Death!

You die only when it feels right to you. In the meantime, the Overlord can push you and the company to the limit, inflicting complications, harms, or costs when you fail: Dazed, Limping, Bleeding, Starving, Chilled to the Bone, etc. These all matter in the fiction. If you are Bleeding, for instance, you will be easier to track!



Be the Overlord

Ask questions and build on the answers. "Have any of you ever encountered the Infernal Lords before? What happened?" Or, "Your company is Indebted; what do you owe and to whom?" Their answers are true and now part of the story!

Foreshadow threats. Except when responding to a failure (0-successes), always show signs of something bad that is about to happen *before* it affects the characters. Then ask the characters what they do. Example: "When you pick up the strange artifact there is a squirming sensation in your brain and the hairs on your neck stand up. What do you do?"

Call for a roll when things are ripe with possibility. Always play to find out what happens; don't pre-plan outcomes. Be a fan of the characters when they succeed; use their failures to push action forward and make their lives interesting. The situation always changes after a roll, for good or ill.

Roll for Adventure

Roll 4d6 at the start of each session, assigning a die to each table. Use the results to inspire an adventure. Re-roll and/or change the table entries over time when results repeat.

Begin

1. At the door of the dungeon
2. Among ancient ruins
3. In a sprawling city
4. On the shore of a great sea
5. Deep in a steamy jungle
6. In the icy wastes

The Problem

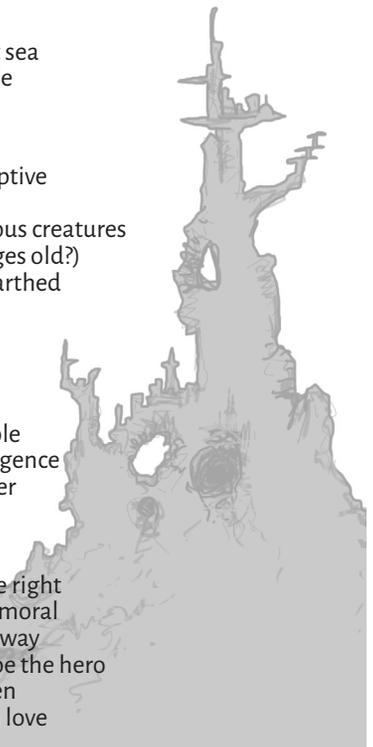
1. Someone was taken captive
2. A people are enslaved
3. An invasion of monstrous creatures
4. War! (Just started or ages old?)
5. A powerful relic is unearthed
6. A string of murders

The Threat

1. Cultists of an elder god
2. The Bone Queen/King
3. The [Beastname]-people
4. An ancient alien intelligence
5. A charismatic enchanter
6. A death machine

The Twist

1. No one is entirely in the right
2. The best solution is immoral
3. Innocents stand in the way
4. The villain may really be the hero
5. The real threat is hidden
6. A secret and forbidden love



S&S Lexicon

This lexicon is intended to clarify and/or suggest narrative possibilities only. It is not prescriptive or even necessary for play. Players may interpret the styles/callings differently.

Game Terms

Expert—Being an expert follows from your Calling and Style. A barbarian is an expert at wilderness survival. A sexy barbarian would be good at seduction. It means you are skilled at something, have studied/practiced it.

Prepared—When you spend a turn describing how you are holding or setting up for an action, you are prepared.

Risky—An action is risky if failure could mean losing face, taking harm, missing an important opportunity, etc. True sorcery, is always risky.

True Sorcery—Anything supernatural/superhuman that your character can do. It must be directly related to your Calling. Some classes are more explicitly sorcerous, but any calling has the potential to harness such powers. For instance, an assassin might bend shadows to hide in or a barbarian might paint on special fear-causing runes before a battle.

Backlash—Happens when true sorcery goes awry. The Overlord may do things like change the target of the spell (ricochet), “mark” the caster with a minor but weird physical mutation (possibly reversible with time or magical healing), blow stuff up (including treasure or innocent bystanders), or even warp reality for a scene (e.g. ghosts become visible or all sounds are muffled as if underwater).

Styles

Dangerous—Your body language screams that you are lethal or toxic. Others avoid you or try to keep you happy.

Dauntless—Quit? Turn back? Wait and see? Pfah!

Feral—You are far more comfortable in the untamed wild than behind city walls. Your temper is short and explosive.

Flashy—There are two ways to do anything: the normal way and the cool way. Why would you ever choose normal?

Furtive—Your goals are easier to accomplish when no one is watching. You can often go unnoticed and use distractions.

Lofty—You have a regal bearing. You naturally make others feel a bit inferior, which *sometimes* works to your advantage.

Sexy—You are charismatic and move well. You know how to inflame the desire of others and use it to your advantage.

Shrewd—You are wicked smart, but play things close to the vest. You use observation and logic to gain advantage.

Spunky—You are spirited. You'll try anything once and want to try everything at least once!

Callings

Alchemist—You have learned formulas and processes for making potions, powders, salves, and other useful concoctions. You usually have useful substances on you - glues, oils, poisons, etc. Given time, you can make (or fake) about any substance. You are good at identifying, finding, and harvesting useful herbs, minerals, and other raw materials.

Alien—You are of a race rarely seen in civilized lands. Few can read your expressions or know how to react to you, though some are curious. You use exotic weapons. Describe your race to the Overlord, including what marks you (visibly) as an outsider, why your people are so rare, and for what they are best known.

Archer—You are a master of weapons that are thrown or which fire projectiles: bows, blowguns, spears, throwing knives, etc. You have excellent eyesight and you are well versed in the “trick shot,” doing things with thrown/firing weapons that others call impossible.

Artificer—You have an uncanny ability and vision for constructing mechanical things: arms & armor, machines, clockwork devices, etc.. You always have the right tools for the job and are an excellent scrounger.

Assassin—You specialize in the dark art of killing with surgical precision. Whether it is walking up to someone in broad daylight and stabbing them in the eye or cutting their throat in a dark alley, you know how to get close to a target and slip away without being caught. You are gifted at disguise.

Barbarian—Civilization and all of its trappings amuse, confuse, or anger you. To hell with manners and the thousand lies of “civilized” folk. You are extremely strong, resistant to sickness/poison, and can endure strenuous activity for long periods. You are also a master at surviving in the wild.

Beastmaster—You have always been able to call animals, make them understand you, and get them to do your bidding in exchange for food, healing, or shelter. You are rarely seen without some kind of beast near you and you have learned a number of tricks from studying animals.

Construct—You were fashioned from raw materials and don't really understand flesh-and-blood creatures. You are focused and unconflicted, following the purpose for which you were created. You do not need sustenance, can function in environments toxic to humans, and are hard to hurt. You can do precise and repetitive things quickly and well.

Cutpurse—You have mastered the art of stealthily acquiring objects without the knowledge or permission of their owners. This includes finding and removing, disabling, or circumventing the safeguards people place on their possessions. You have lots of “street-level” contacts.

Elementalist—You can command the forces of fire, earth, air, and water. (Choose one as a focus.) You can sense, gather,

control, enlarge, and/or empower nearby sources, but must have some something to work with. You have no control over your favored element's opposite (fire vs. water, earth vs. air).

Knight—You are a master of arms in service to some individual or cause. (Which is?) You understand tactics, can read opponents' weaknesses, and can use about any kind of weapon or armor. You are especially good at fighting uncoordinated, untrained, or naive opponents. You ride well too.

Mystic—You know how to use your body as a weapon. You are also in tune with the spirit world and can perform feats that others think are impossible, such as running up a wall, balancing on fragile or weak platforms, and leaping surprising distances. You can turn brute strength against itself.

Necromancer—You understand the powers of life and death. As a master of the forbidden arts, you can animate and command the corpses/skeletons of creatures that were once living. You can also sense and speak with ghosts. The living, especially young people, are uneasy around you.

Pitfighter—You are an animal in battle. You will fight to the death whenever it is necessary, with complete disdain for any distractions, pain, of social norms, with or without weapons. You are equally gifted at fighting man or beast and know a thousand tricks to fool, intimidate, or outsmart opponents.

Psion—Your mind has been awakened. You can utilize areas of it that others do not even dream exist. You can also reach out to the minds of others to cause harm or plant suggestions. Others will not meet your gaze for long.

Shapeshifter—You have blood from an ancient race and can shift your body into different forms. Subtle changes come easy for you. With enough time and concentration, you can change the density of your body to make it harder or more pliant, grow a little larger or smaller, retract or grow limbs, even adapt to different environments (such as growing gills).

Summoner—You familiarized yourself with dimensions beyond the “prime plane.” You can call forth creatures from the other planes and bind them to your will. With great effort and risk, you can utilize these planes to travel, disappearing from the prime and reappearing elsewhere in it.

Advancement?

S&S is not particularly designed for long-term play or advancement, but if you want characters to evolve in a manner other than their narrative arcs, consider allowing a secondary calling (never get the “expert” die for it) after several sessions, or allowing players to record a stunt after each session (spell, trick, specific skill use) that they used in the game and for which they are now considered always prepared.

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Name:

Skill Number:

Style & Calling:

Goal:

Roll > for Sorcery
Roll < for Sword
Roll = for Insight

Company Advantages/Problem:

Notes:

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