

Crumbling Epoch

By Andrew Shields (4.23.13)

The Idea. This game is based on “Searchers of the Unknown.”¹ The root idea is, “What if the characters in D&D did not need more information than a monster’s stat block?” I enjoyed reading various interpretations, but I felt they clung too closely to their source material to please my sensibilities. So I did as any half-mad game designing genius would do—I made my own version.

Character Classes.

- **Blooded.** Part demon (replacing elves)
- **Fighter** (simplified, and the simplest—the default)
- **Gray Men.** Visitors from the stars (replacing dwarves)
- **Lightbringer** (mortals with a touch of divine blood)
- **Lumpen Ones.** Weird lumpy vermin (replacing halflings)
- **Martial Artist** (not necessarily a monk)
- **Thirster** (weak-blooded vampire)
- **Wizard** (with a whole new magic system)

You should be able to take Crumbling Epoch characters and rules and run B/X D&D scenarios with them. The monsters, magic, and treasure will be different than this version would expect—that’s part of the fun.

Rules. The basic rules and a simple character sheet fit on one page. Combined with the specific rules for each class, that is all the player needs. The DM will want some good B/X or compatible scenarios to run.

Setting. The root concept of the game’s setting for “Crumbling Epoch” embraces the post-apocalyptic vibe of D&D. In this version, D&D setting assumptions were true millennia ago. Technology and civilizations have risen, fallen, and vanished into dust since then. Multiple extinction-level events have transformed the world. Still, in some ancient corners only loosely connected to reality, or some areas sealed off somehow during all these ages, the old energies and creatures survive somehow.

In these ancient areas, there are highly endangered species that thrived way back when. (Elves, dwarves, halflings, etc. have been gone for thousands of years.) There are different kinds of magic than humanity uses now. Different enchantments on objects drive scholars to distraction trying to tease out their secrets. Also, some of the brave new corners of the world are extraordinarily dangerous, and require exploration.

The gods have abandoned this world, it has grown cold and dead-ish, magic was rebuilt to work in the new situation several thousand years ago and is now ancient in its own tradition. Into this chilly, abandoned world we see brave warriors mustering up the pluck to go into dangerous places after the lure of wonder and wealth.

Special thanks to Jack Shear for permission to use the Blooded, Gray Men, and Lumpen Ones from Devilmount² and repurpose them for Crumbling Epoch.

¹ Here is the collection. <http://www.retroroleplaying.com/content/searchers-unknown-rpg-collection>

² <http://talesofthegrotesqueanddungeonesque.blogspot.com/2013/03/devilmount-arise.html>

Crumbling Epoch Rules

Armor <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 50%;">Type</th> <th style="width: 50%;">AC</th> </tr> <tr> <td>No armor</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Leather</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chainmail</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Plate mail</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shield</td> <td>-1</td> </tr> </table>	Type	AC	No armor	9	Leather	7	Chainmail	5	Plate mail	3	Shield	-1	Weapons <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>Unarmed</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Light</td> <td>1d4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medium</td> <td>1d6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Heavy</td> <td>2d6, keep higher.</td> </tr> </table> Paired weapons: +4 to hit (penalty), +1 damage category.	Unarmed	1	Light	1d4	Medium	1d6	Heavy	2d6, keep higher.	Start with a skill. Choose or randomize. Gear. Start with 2 weapons. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can take 1 weapon and a shield. • A ranged weapon starts with 20 shots. 5d10 silver. Leather armor. Speak Common, class language, + [1d3 -1] languages.
Type	AC																					
No armor	9																					
Leather	7																					
Chainmail	5																					
Plate mail	3																					
Shield	-1																					
Unarmed	1																					
Light	1d4																					
Medium	1d6																					
Heavy	2d6, keep higher.																					

Conditions:	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Per Turn	15'	30'	60'	90'	120'	150'	180'
Running, per round	15'	30'	60'	90'	120'	150'	180'
Combat, per round	5'	10'	20'	30'	40'	50'	60'

Movement Slowing Conditions: Caution, Darkness, Encumbered (multiples), Mapping, Metal Armor, Stealth.

Base Move	10'	20'	30'	60'	90'	120'	150'	180'
Difficult Terrain (-1/3)	6'	14'	20'	40'	60'	80'	100'	120'
Very Difficult Terrain (-2/3)	3'	7'	10'	20'	30'	40'	50'	60'

***Wary movement:** Slow by 1/3 to automatically detect most corridor and room traps, and secret doors. Takes 10 minutes to search 20 square feet. Just walking by, those with the “detect” skill get a roll.*

STEALTH AND MOVEMENT To sneak, hide, climb, and swim: roll 1d20, success if under [AC + Level]. For easier tasks, roll 1d10 or 1d12 instead. Saving Throw, Skills. Roll 1d20 under [Level +4]. Surprise. Characters surprised on 1 in 6 lose an action. If not stealthy and using caution, 2 in 6. Foes surprised on 2 in 6, or 1 in 6 if characters are stealthy.	EXPERIENCE The party shares out 100 experience (XP) per hit die defeated. Characters get 1 XP per gold coin equivalent spent. Level up at [Level x 1,000] XP. Max 10 th level. ENCUMBRANCE 1,000 coins (or equivalent) is 1 slowing condition. A character can carry up to 3,000 coins, or 2,000 and wear metal armor.
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COMBAT Initiative 1d10 + AC. Best goes first. Use all your attacks at once, if you have more than 1. PCs win ties. Move Before or after combat, move that many feet. Or yards, but then others in melee get a free attack. Attack 1d20. Roll under [Target AC + Your Bonus]. Damage Roll as weapon type. (Roll of 1 to hit, full damage.) Healing Take 10 minutes to bandage wounds and rest, heal 1 hit point per level, 3 times a day. If knocked down to 0 hit points, survive by rolling under level on 1d10, then heal after a full day of rest.	SKILLS Start with 1 skill. Upon leveling, you can take a skill instead of more hit points. Players can make up other skills with DM approval. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain +2 on the roll to use a skill (instead of Level +4, skilled use is Level +6). • “Trained only” skills can only be done by an expert. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pick Locks (Trained only, Level +4) 2. Read Magic (Trained only, Level +4) 3. Paired Weapons (from +4 to hit to +2 to hit) 4. Stealth 5. Running (+3 move) 6. Climbing and Swimming 7. Set/Remove Traps 8. Detect 9. Identify Monster 10. Formal Education Characters can learn languages if they have at least 3 months exposure to it. Appropriate languages: Common, Greenblood, Giantish, Fey, Draconic, Tradespeak, Cant
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Blooded Abilities

Short for “demon-blooded,” these hybrids bear infernal lineage and their own languid cruelty.

Extra Starting Gear: Chain mail or a scroll with 2 spell levels of magic written on it.

Hit Points: 6. Get 6 per level (or a skill). **Combat Bonus:** Your level. **Languages:** Common, Arcanis, Diabolis.

Additional Notes: Starting skill is “Read Magic.” You know 1 spell, 0 level. *Cannot be healed by divine magic.*

- **Infravision.** You can see heat or cold signatures up to 60 feet away. You can sense the outlines of open spaces like rooms and hallways, even if the walls and the ambient temperature are the same.
- **Magic Resistant.** Saving throws against magic or negative energy gain a -4 advantage. Cannot be paralyzed.

Casting Magic

The blooded can cast a spell if the blooded has twice as many levels as the spell level. (2nd level for 1st level spell, 4th level for 2nd level spell, 6th for 3rd, etc.)

- *Cost.* Each spell level cast is fueled by 1 hit point from the caster. (0 level spells do no damage.)
- *Interruption.* If a spellcaster takes damage equal to level or more while casting, the spell is ruined (but costs no hit points.)
- *Order.* A spell activates at the end of the round. Multiple spell casters go in initiative order.
- *Armor.* If they cast while wearing armor, they take 1 hit point per lower AC. Must have both hands free to cast.

Spellbook

A character can learn a spell if the character has 2 levels per level of the spell (no rounding). Casting from a book takes 2 rounds and x2 hit points, doesn't hurt the book.

Learning Magic

The blooded can learn a zero level spell for free with a week of study, and can know one per level for free.

- A character can have 1 spell level per character level permanently memorized. (Can trade out.)
- Each spell level takes 1 week of study to learn. (A second level spell takes two weeks of study to master.) This study cannot be spread out.

Components. You do not need components to cast spells.

The character magic system is different from the monster magic system, and that's okay. (Different spells, progressions, costs, names, and effects.)

Fighter Abilities

Fighters are trained warriors, skilled using any armor and weapon.

Extra Starting Gear: You can start with chainmail and an extra weapon.

Hit Points: Start with 6. Get 6 per level (or a skill). **Combat Bonus:** Your level. **Languages:** Common.

- **Number of Attacks.** One attack at 1st level. Two attacks at 5th level. Three at 9th level. (Every 4)
- **Extra Attack.** If you kill a monster, you can make another attack (one per round per attack.)

Gray Man Abilities

Gray Men are short, bulbous-headed, spindly aliens. They are strong and tough, endowed with odd sensory acuity. They were a slave race once, and they reproduce in a mysterious process like cloning. All are male.

Extra Starting Gear: You can start with chainmail and an extra weapon.

Hit Points: Start with 6. Get 6 per level (or a skill). **Combat Bonus:** Your level. **Languages:** Common, Gris.

Additional Notes: You cannot use two-handed weapons. *No starting skill.*

- **Hardy.** For saving throws, you must roll under your [Level +6].
- **Infravision.** You can see heat or cold signatures up to 60 feet away. You can sense the outlines of open spaces like rooms and hallways, even if the walls and the ambient temperature are the same.
- **Sense Construction Anomalies.** Detect slanting passages, traps, shifting walls, and new construction with a skill test [under level +4 on d20] when looking, otherwise with a skill test under [level].

Lightbringer Abilities

Thousands of years ago, the gods sealed off the world's cosmic flow in the wake of their departure. They left angelic beings to guard the world. Over time, those angelic beings got involved with humanity, then more and more gave up immortality to be human(ish) or to interbreed with humanity. The cosmic strain is faint in the sea of human flesh, but some individuals can channel it; they are the lightbringers.

Extra Starting Gear: Attuned weapon (light, medium, or heavy).

Hit Points: Start with 6. Get 6 per level (or a skill). **Combat Bonus:** Your level. **Languages:** Common, Angelicus.

- **Healing.** Lightbringers can heal 1 hit point per level as a divine power, once a day per level. The day resets at dawn. They can use this ability on themselves, or others they touch.
- **Light.** Lightbringers can glow, providing light to 1 yard diameter per level, at will.
- **Smite.** A lightbringer's attuned weapon can do full damage if the lightbringer gives up 1 hit point after rolling a successful hit. This works on undead, summoned creatures, outsiders, and spellcasters. If rolling a 1 to hit, full damage x2.

Lumpen-One Abilities

Stubby, nude, misshapen grotesqueries, these sludgy grumps resent their world-mates and specialize in underground skirmishing. They do not wear clothes (but may be persuaded to wear armor.)

Extra Starting Gear: None.

Hit Points: Start with 4. Get 4 per level (or a skill). **Combat Bonus:** Your level. **Languages:** Common, Skulge.

Additional Notes: You cannot use two-handed weapons. *No starting skill.*

- **Dodgy.** Against enemies bigger than human-size, get a -2 Armor Class advantage.
- **Hardy.** For saving throws, roll under [Level +6].
- **Sneaky.** Against earthen backgrounds, you can stow your gear and hold still. To sneak or hide, you must roll under [level +8] on a die of the DM's choosing. The Stealth skill grants an additional +2 if taken.
- **Shooty.** Get +1 to hit or +1 damage when using ranged attacks.

Martial Artist Abilities

Some warriors focus on speed over equipment, developing skill to do more damage and evade more blows. These warriors are highly prized in the often tight and encumbered confines where adventurers do their work.

Extra Starting Gear: None.

Hit Points: Start with 6. Get 6 per level (or a skill). **Combat Bonus:** Your level. **Languages:** Common, Devrosian.

Additional Notes: Martial artists can take a normal skill, or a martial arts technique at first level (and other levels.)

- **Speed-Focused Damage.** Martial artists add 1 step up for dice type for damage for all but heavy weapons.
 - Unarmed: 1d4, Light: 1d6, Medium: 2d6 keep the higher, same for heavy weapons.
- **Evasive.** On even levels, martial artists gain a -1 Armor Class advantage that does not penalize their initiative and movement. This reduction is only effective when they are not wearing metal armor. It works with shields.

Martial Arts Techniques

These special skills are only available to martial artists. One can be taken at generation, and one can be taken instead of gaining more hit points upon leveling. Martial artists also have access to all basic skills.

- **Paired Mastery.** Reduces paired weapon penalty by 2. (From 4 to 2, or with Paired Weapons skill, to 0.)
- **Devastating Strike.** Attack as a full round action, going last in the round (initiative with others that go last.) If you do not take more hit points of damage than your level in the round, your hit does full damage (x2 if it rolls a critical.)
- **Slippery.** Instead of attacking, you dodge all round. Improve your Armor Class by 1 per level instead of 1 per 2 levels, if you are not wearing armor.
- **Movement Mastery.** Roll 2d20 to climb, swim, or leap out of the way. Keep the better roll. Only use this skill when you would normally roll 1d20 to move.
- **Resolve.** Once per day, take a full round to focus and regain 1 hit point per level.

Thirster Abilities

Thousands of years ago, vampires revealed their presence to the human population, and began to integrate with them. Many wars and centuries later, the vampiric strain has been shallowed out to an acceptable level. Now called “thirsters,” these creatures live alongside humanity as citizens on the margins. They are attracted to adventuring, as their usefulness often outweighs prejudice against them in situations of darkness and danger.

Extra Starting Gear: You start with a jar of 6 hit points of human blood in a prepared solution.

Hit Points: Start with 6. Get 6 per level (or a skill). **Combat Bonus:** Your level. **Languages:** Common, Fangshieh.

<p>Basic Traits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thirsters are not undead, but instead they are unliving. They cannot be turned, holy water has no effect, etc. <p>Trouble With Sunlight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thirsters take 1 damage from sunlight.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Every 10 minutes in direct sunlight.○ Every hour if covered, or shaded (or clouds).○ Every 2 hours if covered under shade. <p>Sharp Senses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thirsters have sharp senses; they are +2 to stealth and detect, in addition to a starting skill. Taking the “Stealth” and “Detect” skills stacks with this bonus. This bonus does not function in sunlight.• Thirsters can see clearly in dim light, and can see up to 30 feet in absolute darkness. <p>Unliving Special Healing and Blood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take 1 point of damage every dawn, from hunger.• Cannot be healed by divine magic.• Cannot heal naturally.• Thirster blood is a curative. Every 2 points a human drinks heals the human 1 hit point.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ As a potion, up to 6 points a round.	<p>Drinking Blood</p> <p>The energy of the blood matters more than quantity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Every 2 hit points of living blood they consume grants them 1 hit point of healing.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Full round action. Heal at round’s end.○ Drink 1 point per round per level.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Can only drink from helpless or willing targets, or containers.▪ Must be “living” (or dead less than 10 minutes) unless specially treated.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A fresh corpse can offer 1 hit point per hit die of useable blood.• Distasteful questionable blood: 4 points grant 1 point of healing.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thirsters can prepare blood with a mixture of herbs and minor incantations, up to 6 points per hour, cost 1 gp per hit point of blood. Lasts up to 1 month.• Thirsters can seal the incision, leaving only a bruise, when they finish feeding.• Blood of wizards and spellcasting creatures grants a thirster 1 hit point <i>per level</i> per hit point drunk, it is more powerful.
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Wizard Abilities

When the winds of magic burned out millennia ago, scholars and survivors began the process of rebuilding their prowess. They found new magic, new ways to bend the world's energies to their will. They are respected, and feared. Curiosity, power lust, and desires for esoteric components and knowledge drive them to adventure.

Extra Starting Gear: Spellbook with 5 spell levels in it. (0 level counts as ½ of 1 level.)

Hit Points: 4. 4 per level (or a skill). **Combat Bonus:** 1 per 2 full levels. **Languages:** Common, Arcanis.

Additional Notes: Starting skill must be "Read Magic." You know 1 spell, 0 level.

Wizards cannot be healed by divine magic.

Casting Magic

A wizard can cast a spell if the wizard has twice as many levels as the spell level. (2nd level for 1st level spell, 4th level for 2nd level spell, 6th for 3rd, etc.)

- *Cost.* Each spell level cast is fueled by 1 hit point from the caster. (0 level spells do no damage.)
- *Interruption.* If a spellcaster takes damage equal to level or more while casting, the spell is ruined (but costs no hit points.)
- *Order.* A spell activates at the end of the round. Multiple spell casters go in initiative order.
- *Armor.* If they cast while wearing armor, they take 1 hit point per lower AC. Must have both hands free to cast.

Spellbook

The spellbook has 5 levels of spells in it. A character can learn a spell if the character has 2 levels per level of the spell (no rounding). Casting from a book takes 2 rounds and x2 hit points, doesn't hurt the book.

Learning Magic

A wizard can learn a zero level spell for free with a week of study, and can know one per level for free.

- A character can know 1 spell level per character level permanently memorized. (Can trade out.)
- Each spell level takes 1 week of study to learn. (A second level spell takes two weeks of study to master.) This study cannot be spread out.

Components

Casting without them costs double hit points. Special components reduce hit point cost. (0 level, no components.)

Wands

An enchanted wand replaces the need for components for all spells, unless noted otherwise.

The Tests

When a wizard reaches 3rd level, the wizard is eligible to take the Tests at the Towers of Sorcery. Roll equal to or under character level on 1d6, or inflict 5d4 damage. If the wizard survives, the wizard is inducted, and can learn the "Enchant Staff" spell.

The character magic system is different from the monster magic system, and that's okay. (Different spells, progressions, costs, names, and effects.)

SPELLS

(More can be found through adventuring)

Zero

- **Detect Magic.** You sense magic within 10 feet per level.
- **Invisible Grasp.** Call things to hand, or repel them from your hand; affects up to 5 lbs. up to 10 feet away. Targeting a weapon, the holder is disarmed unless rolling level/HD or less on 1d4.
- **Light.** Up to 1 yard diameter per level, 1 hour per level. Must be cast on an enchanted item.
- **Meditation.** Allows 10 minutes of utter concentration on healing and regenerating per level even in the midst of distracting or uncomfortable circumstances. No daily limit.
- **Rainproof.** Ignore rain. Lasts 1 hour per level.
- **Strike.** Pay 1 hit point after rolling to hit; strike as a magic weapon, affecting incorporeal etc.
- **Wizard Mark.** You put an arcane symbol on an object, and decide who can see it. The mark lasts until it is removed.

One

- **Attack.** Automatically hit someone within 20 feet per level, inflicting [level x2] hit points.
- **Defenses.** Improves your AC by 2 with magic wards for 1 hour per level.
- **Knockout.** Render unconscious creatures equal to your level in hit dice who are within 10 feet per level, for 10 minutes or until woken. No save. Lowest or closest hit dice up, no partials.
- **Identify Magic.** Spend 1 hour examining an enchanted object, then roll equal to or under your level on 1d10. If you succeed, you learn one magic property of an enchanted object. You will know when you have learned all there is to learn about it. This reveals activation words and the creator also, each as a magic property.
- **Open.** Spend 1 minute casting, then touch a lock. Roll under your level or less on a d10, and the lock opens.
- **Witchlight.** Free floating light illuminating 1 yard diameter per level. MV 15, lasts 1 hour per level, can be assigned to others or a location.

Two

- **Enchant Staff.** 1 week to enchant a staff. It holds 1 hit point per wizard level to use for spellcasting. It can cast the Light spell. Can cast spells while holding the staff. A 1d6 weapon. (Exclusive to those who pass the Tests.)
- **Explosion.** You make a ball the size of your palm that explodes, doing 1d4 damage per your level in a perfect sphere 10 feet across. When you throw it, roll a die size indicated by the DM to see how many targets are caught in it, at -2. If you get a -1 result, you dropped the ball at your feet and it exploded.
- **Sacrifice.** Spend a whole round chanting, and at the end of the round stab a sentient who is helpless. Gain 2 hit points per hit die of the dying sentient, absorbing the life force (up to your maximum).
- **Stealth.** Become invisible to creatures with HD under your level if you make no sudden moves (attacks, running, shouting, magic.) Equal to or higher than your level must roll under their HD on 1d10 to see you. Lasts 1 hour per level.
- **Weightless.** Touched object becomes weightless. Spell lasts up to 1 hour, affects up to 50 lbs per level. Cancel at will.

Three

- **Disguise.** You create a flawless disguise for yourself or someone you touch, including voice masking, costume, and basic mannerisms. It lasts for 10 minutes per your level. Someone looking for an enchanted disguise can see through it by rolling 1d20 under their level. (A wizard sees through it rolling 1d10, without being intentional.)
- **Flight.** The round after you cast the spell, you can move 3 dimensionally at (MV x50 feet) per round for 1 minute per caster level. You cannot carry any more than you can carry walking.
- **Slay.** Cast instantly when you strike your target. It must roll its HD or less on 1d10 or die; if it succeeds, it takes 1 hit point of damage per your level.