

Table of Contents

Introduction	5	Chapter 3: Urban Areas	55
Game Conventions	5	Brightshire	55
Background	6	Brystol	56
Skill Use	6	Caerlon	56
Acknowledgements	7	Gloster	56
		Oxford	57
Chapter 1: The Silurian Heights	9	Tooksbury	57
Black Hills	9	Chapter 4: Scenarios	59
Black River	9	Scenario: “It’s a Long way to the Top (If You Wanna Survey the Ridge)”	59
Brightshire, Brystol, Caerlon, Gloster, Oxford, and Tooksbury	10	Scenario Outline: “Shot Down In Flames and Living to Tell About It”	64
Brystol Bay	10	Scenario: “For Those About to Mine Rock”	64
Farmlands	10	Scenario Outline: “The Baron’s Problem Child”	67
Forest	10	Scenario: “Laying Down the Law”	69
Hills	10	Scenario Outline: “The Long Road Home”	71
Ridgeway	11	Appendix J: Encounter Tables	73
River	11	Appendix JJ: Weather	75
Sabrina’s Run	11	Appendix JJJ: Nonplayer Characters	77
Wye Valley Woods	11	Sample NPC Parties	77
Chapter 2: Encounters	13	Band of Friendly Strangers	77
Abandoned Mine	13	Brotherhood of the Eye	79
Alchemical Humbug	15	Sample Warriors	81
Devil’s Eye	17	Sample Experts and Commoners	82
Elderly Orc	18	Appendix JV: Prestige Classes	83
Forest Fire	19	Gnoll Crocuta	83
 Sidebar: Fire-Fighting	19	 Sidebar: Fear Domain	85
Forest Shrine	20	Humbug	86
Greedy Bandits	22	Mercenary Commander	89
Green Dragon	24	Appendix V: Skills	91
Griffon Aerie	26	 Sidebar: Craft and Profession Skills	93
Grounded Pirates	26	 Sidebar: Prospecting and Smelting	96
Hedge Wizard	28	 Sidebar: Smell and Taste	98
Injured Zombies	31	Appendix VI: Feats	99
Irritable Hyenadon	31	Appendix VII: Defects	105
Lost Child	32	Appendix VIII: New Monsters	109
Marauding Gnolls	32	Half-Troll	109
Mercenary Patrol	34	Hyena, Dire	109
Mother Bear	36	Multi-Mind	111
Old Quarry and Ore Lode	37	Appendix IX: Books	113
Pirate Lord	38	Appendix X: Maps	116
Star of Ill-Omen	39	Appendix XI: Open Game License	127
Stone Circles	40	Skirmisher Product List	128
Troll Bridge	40		
Troll Twin Gap	40		
 Map: The Tunnels Beneath the Ruined Keep at Troll Twin Gap	53		
Vengeful Druid	47		
Wainlode	48		
Wounded Treant	51		
Damsel in Distress	52		



Introduction

T*ests of Skill* is a sourcebook designed to entertain and challenge players through scenarios and encounters that can be overcome optimally through role-playing, skill use, and diplomacy, rather than combat. While traditional hack-and-slash techniques can be used to complete portions of the scenarios, most groups will find that tact, thought, and appropriate use of skills, feats, and abilities are generally much more useful and effective.

This book has its immediate genesis in Skirmisher Publishing's first OGL book, *Experts*, and grew out of what was originally intended to be a list of 100 paragraph-length adventure hooks. That project ended up being somewhat larger than originally expected as it was, and the skill-based mini-adventures were bumped to another project and eventually grew into the encounters and scenarios that appear in this book.

In a broader sense, this book has its roots in the first roleplaying game session between two of the co-authors in the summer of 1982, when one randomly rolled a "secondary skill" for the other's 1st-level Thief and determined he was a "mason." But what did that mean in game terms? The 1st Edition game did not have any rules that defined what a "secondary skill" could do or mechanisms for resolving skill usage. This seemed to be a gap that needed filling.

And it was filled to a large extent in the 2nd Edition of the game with the introduction of "Nonweapon Proficiencies." These had a strange resolution system, however, always felt like something that had been tacked on to the existing game, and never really led to the possibility of truly skill-based scenarios.

It was not until the 3rd Edition of the game that a true skill resolution system emerged, along with the possibility of adventures in which skill usage could be as important as combat as a form of problem solving—and adventures like this could become a practical possibility.

Game Conventions

The scenarios and encounters contained in the following pages are geared toward a traditional adventuring party of four characters of level 3 to 5. Each encounter and event is assigned an encounter level (EL) to assist in awarding experience. Some of these encounters may at first appear overwhelming. By using skill, subterfuge, and diplomacy, however, instead of swords and fireballs, a party may turn an apparently impossible situation to its advantage. In fact, a single skilled player might complete the missions with a single suitable character—and with little resort to weapon or evocation.

A number of new skills, feats, prestige classes, and other material are referenced throughout this book, and such ele-

ments are marked with an asterisk (*) and appear in the appropriate appendices.

Different Difficulty Classes for a number of related skills are provided for those tasks essential to completing the various scenarios. For example, Profession (Miner)* DC 12, Craft (Stonemason)* DC 14, Knowledge (Architecture and Engineering)* DC 20, and Survival DC 20 may all be used to mine white marble out of a rock vein. Thus, an adventuring party that attempts to quarry marble when accompanied by a prospector who has four ranks of Profession (Miner)* will be much more efficient than a group that has only a Ranger with eight ranks of Survival. Either group, however, will eventually be able to extract the ore.

Because the authors of this book believe that the use of Challenge Ratings to determine experience awards results in role-playing sessions that encourage often-unnecessary combat to the exclusion of diplomacy, CRs have been omitted throughout. If you feel the need to use CRs in your game, they are easily referred to or calculated using the appropriate official game books. However, we would encourage DMs to use a combination of story awards and role-playing awards—at least as far as these scenarios or encounters are concerned—and believe that most players will enjoy a more fulfilling game experience as a result.

Background

This book provides a generic, versatile wild-land region that a referee can drop easily into most campaign settings; as the regional map shows, the only requirement is the existence of wooded hills and a river. Bristol Bay is optional and need not come into play; if it is inconvenient to incorporate, merely assume that Sabrina's Run extends indefinitely, ignore the Bore, and assume the shipwrecked pirates are river raiders. Alternately, in that the bulk of the scenarios are made up of modular non-location specific encounters, you may find it convenient to just drop the encounters, locations, and scenarios into your own setting as you see fit.

For those who are interested, the region depicted approximates the area where the Severn River flows into Bristol Channel in modern England; many liberties were taken (the Bore, for



Chapter 1: The Silurian Heights

The Silurian Heights are a borderland named after an important Barbarian tribe that was displaced when settlers from the empire to the east established themselves two centuries ago. The Black Hills remain a disputed region, frequented by both Baron Silvercup's soldiers and the Earl of Caerlon's semi-barbaric raiders.

Baron Silvercup comes from a family of wealthy aristocracy and is the lord of the lands east of the Black Hills. His castle, court, and center-of-power lie within the walled city of Bristol. He is something of a decadent epicure, leaving much responsibility in the hands of corrupt and inefficient bureaucrats and nobles. He is also a secret worshipper of the outlawed cult of Dionysus.

"King Brock"—also known as the Earl of Caerlon—controls the region west of the Black Hills from the palisaded city of Caerlon. He is a first-generation noble, appointed by the emperor. Although an uneducated brute, he is a formidable

military leader and, largely through the intimidating force of his personality, holds the tribes in check (and thus maintains the favor of the emperor).

Typical terrain in the area consists of rolling hills covered by lush grasses, weeds, and the occasional apple tree. Shepherds and their sheep are sometimes seen roaming the hills, as well as the occasional wild goat, deer, or pig. Small streams filled with icy water and rounded boulders can be found between many of the hills, generally flowing toward Sabrina's Run. An occasional limestone outcropping, chalky overhang, or cave may provide shade and shelter.

Black Hills

This somber, lonely string of rocky outcrops set in a barren, clayey soil comprises the southern foothills of the Black Mountain chain. They rise from a modest average height of 100 feet where they overlook Bristol Bay to a respectable 1,200 feet toward the northern edge of the map, and are about 500 feet high at Troll Twin Gap. Visible rocks are primarily weathered quartz-rich granite, beds of eroded white limestone, and black slate. Vegetation consists mainly of sparse bushes, thin grasses, and unsavory weeds. Wild goats, sheep, and the occasional boar are the primary inhabitants.

Encounters: Roll 1d20 four times daily (dawn, noon, dusk, midnight).

1-14 **No encounter.**

15-16 **Roll on General Encounter Table (Hills), Appendix I.**

17 **Makrob, the Half-Troll of Troll Twin Gap** (see Chapter 2: Troll Twin Gap for full stats). Encounter distance is 3d20 x 10 feet; Hide -1, Move Silently -1, Spot +3, Listen +3. His attitude starts as "Unfriendly." Makrob is out foraging for food, will make this clear to the party, and will probably attack if not offered adequate fodder (e.g., a week's rations, a horse, a Halfling) in short order. If offered food, add 5 to attitude rolls; if not, subtract 5. If within five-miles of the Troll Twin Gap, he will also demand a 5 gp/head toll.

18 **Barbarian raiders.** The party encounters 2d4 Warrior 1 light cavalryman led by a Warrior 3 light cavalryman (see Appendix III). Encounter distance is 3d20 x 20 feet; the mounted raiders have a group modifier of -4 for Hide

and Move Silently checks, and group modifiers of +2 to Spot and -2 to Listen checks. Their attitude starts as "Unfriendly." Offering loot improves their attitude rolls by 1 for every 5 gold pieces (or its equivalent) offered.

19 **Provincial patrol.** The party encounters 2d6 Warrior 1 light infantrymen led by a Warrior 3 light infantryman (see Appendix III for full stats). Encounter distance is 3d20 x 10 feet; the patrol has a group modifier of -6 for Hide and Move Silently checks, and group modifiers of +4 to Spot and +0 to Listen checks. Their attitude starts as "Indifferent." They will inquire into the group's activities, and if their attitude is not improved, demand a "toll" of 1d10 gp (or equivalent loot) per person.

20 **The Competition.** The party encounters the Band of Friendly Strangers: Rune, Vulkel, Kenvar, Nevella, and Valden (see Appendix III for full stats). They are on foot. Encounter distance is 3d20 x 10 feet; the band has a group modifier of +1 for Hide and Move Silently, and group Spot and Listen modifiers of +6 and +2. This predominately-good adventuring band was recently hired by King Brock, the barbarian lord of Caerlon, to re-survey the boundaries of the borderlands and strengthen his claim to a recently uncovered lode of mithril. If this is implausible, they are investigating the Stone Circles (see Chapter 2). Their attitude starts as "Indifferent." They may help or hinder the party, depending on its reaction.

Black River

This narrow channel, named after its source in the Black Hills, is filled with quick, foamy water (use rough water DC 15 for any



Appendix V: Skills

Following are a number of new skills, most of which are included here because they are referenced elsewhere in this book. Some of them, particularly the various Crafts and Professions, include detailed rules for resolving the sorts of situations that might play a role in a skill-based game.

Craft (Carpentry) (Int)

This skill covers the working and carving of wood for the creation of all sorts of items, as well as the tasks needed to manage a business and earn a living. Areas of expertise include logging, using wood to build objects or structures, and finishing and preserving wood in a long-lasting or decorative manner (e.g., using stains, waxes, or decorative trim-work). Specialties include Joining, the fashioning of cabinets and furniture, and Woodturning, the working of wood with a lathe.

Check: A character with this skill knows how to use all the tools and techniques related to Carpentry, how to supervise both trained and untrained assistants, and how to respond to common mishaps and problems. Make a Craft (Carpentry) check against a DC that reflects the complexity of the task to be accomplished.

The basic function of Craft (Carpentry) is to allow its user to perform tasks related to physically working with wood. The DC depends on the difficulty of the task to be performed and the materials at hand. A combination of the DC, the Carpentry check result, and the price of construction determine the length of time required to complete the task. The price of the finished item also determines the cost of raw materials.

A Carpenter can construct a one or two-level building of up to (1,000 multiplied by Carpentry rank) square feet or a non-loadbearing wall (e.g., a log palisade) without assistance. Larger or more complicated structures, however, are more easily completed using plans drawn up by someone proficient in Profession (Engineer-Architect) (described in the Skirmisher publication *Experts*). DC for successful creation of such plans is equal to the DC for building the structure in question.

Failure to utilize an Engineer-Architect's plans when required increases the DC by 5, increases the cost by 25%, and results in the loss of half of the raw materials when a progress check (see below) is failed. Additionally, a Carpenter who does not utilize the plans of an Engineer-Architect must make an accuracy check, with a DC equal to that of the final progress check, at the conclusion of construction. This accuracy check takes no time; it is concurrent with the final progress check. If it fails, the construction suffers from a significant flaw, as dictated by the circumstances and determined by the DM.

Carpenters may repair a structure of any size that is at least 25% intact without the assistance of an Engineer-Architect. Carpenters may use a single set of plans drawn up by Engineer-Architects for multiple construction sites; in this case the only penalties are that the DC is increased by 2 and the cost is increased by 10%. The loss of raw materials penalty and the accuracy checks are eliminated.

Ship construction requires the assistance of someone with Craft (Shipbuilding) (described in the Skirmisher publication *Experts* and available online for free at www.skirmisher.com), in the same manner that building construction requires the help of an Engineer-Architect.

A Carpenter requires appropriate tools (typically a minimum of an axe, saw, plane, awl, hammer, chisel, file, wooden levels, guides, pegs, rope, and chalk) to give the best chance of success. If the Carpenter is forced to make do with improvised tools, the check is made with a -2 circumstance penalty. If using masterwork Carpenter's tools the check is made with a +2 circumstance bonus.

To determine the time and money it takes to complete a task:

1. Find the item's price in the PH (Chapter 7: Equipment) or the DMG, or have the dungeon master set the price for an unlisted task. Put the price in gold pieces if a building is constructed. Otherwise, convert the price in silver pieces.
2. Find the DC listed or have the DM set one.
3. Pay one-third the item's price in raw materials.
4. Make a skill check representing one week's work.

If the skill check succeeds, multiply the check's result by the DC. If the result multiplied by the DC equals the price of the item in sp, the item has been completed. If the result multiplied by the DC is double, triple, etc., the price of the item in silver pieces, then it has been completed in one-half, one-third, etc., of the time. If the result multiplied by the DC doesn't equal the price, then it represents progress made during the week. Record the result and make a check for the next week (i.e., progress is cumulative). Each week, progress is made until the total reaches the price of the item in silver pieces (or gold pieces if a structure is being built).

If a check is failed, no progress is made for that week. Additionally, if the check is failed by 5 or more, half of the raw materials are ruined and need to be replaced for subsequent attempts.

Several Carpenters may work on a project under the supervision of a master Carpenter. A master Carpenter is capable of supervising one subordinate Carpenter for each rank he has in Craft (Carpentry). Total the levels of Carpentry skill for all the Carpenters involved and make a single skill check for that week; the skill ranks of Carpenters in excess of the master Carpenter's supervisory capability are wasted, losing the least skilled ranks first. For example, Mistress Hood (with 8 ranks of Carpentry skill) has two journeymen of skill rank 5, one apprentice of skill rank 3, and 10 apprentices of skill rank 2 working on a decorative desk for the Baron. When Hood makes her roll, she adds to it $8 + (2 \times 5) + (1 \times 4) + (5 \times 3) = 37$. Five of the skill rank 2 apprentices' abilities are wasted as they did not receive adequate supervision. A Carpenter can also supervise four unskilled laborers for each rank he has in Craft (Carpentry).

Progress by the Day: A character can make checks daily instead of weekly, in which case progress (result multiplied by DC) is in copper pieces instead of silver pieces.

Creating Masterwork Items: A character can construct a master-

