Dead... and Back

by Chainsaw Aardvark

"We'll be safe here for a few minutes. At least long enough to catch our breath."

For a long while, we said nothing, the only sound our breathing, and then even that seemed to subside. It was as quiet as death, except for the fact that death itself was moaning and crawling around out there, somewhere beyond the door we were hiding behind. I tried for some conversation, my voice weak against the silence. "So what did you do before all this?"

"Painted houses."

"Just houses?"

"Yeah."

"Was business good?"

"It was getting better, now its getting worse."

"Supernatural infestation tends to do that." I replied with a weak smile.

"I just wish I knew what type of zombies they were?"

"There's different types? What is this- Caskin' Robins- 31 flavors of undead?

"No, no, its just a matter of where did they come from, and why are we so scared?"

"Were scared because a few hundred corpses are roaming the city trying to become acquainted with our vital organs – and as for me, I not quite done using them.'

'Is that really it? They're slow, dumb – flammable. We can out think them, out run them and easily destroy them. If you watch their stiff jointed gait for a while, they're almost comical.'

Zombies are something deeper than just trying to kill us. They are man's pathos, our shadow. A necromantic curse that robs someone of their individuality and free thought shows just how much we value our minds, the only thing truly unique about us. Or perhaps they're a reflection of us grasping something in sciences best left untouched, and showing how truly susceptible we are to folly. An unknown disease shows how a species that can touch the heavens with rockets is still not untouchable'

We've got brains, something they can only crave.'

Every endeavor of man is based on his brain – memory really, and the lessons we have picked up over life, and through books, the centuries. Zombies are entropy, the anti-brain. They're inevitable. Empires fall, places change.'

Ultimately they are relentless. Demons can be exorcised with prayer and a little holy water, vampires are held at bay with a cross, the sphinx destroys itself if you guess it's riddle. Given a lull in the fighting, soldiers of opposing armies would gladly swap cigarettes, and when the battle is on, a 60 ton tank can be stopped with a well placed beer bottle full of gasoline. Zombies, can not be stopped, a nightmare we can not awaken from and thus the downfall of all dreamers."

"Wow. Thats really deep. I mean college dissertation material."

"Unless of course they really are just nothing more than walking corpses. Then they can just be stopped with a shotgun to the head."

"Could you take your hat off for a moment. I want to see if any chunks are missing from your cranium."

Part Zero:
What You Need to Know

First things first, this is a role playing game. The high minded amongst us will call it an exercise in collective storytelling involving a social contract between a group of players and a central director where conflict may be determined by the multifaceted polyhedrons.

A less technical definition is to compare it to the make believe of younger years. However, this has a few rules in place so you don't argue with your brother about if cowboys could acquire atomic bombs.

Then again most of use just see it as a chance to get together with friends, eat pretzels, and rehash Monty Python sketches.

Materials

You will need 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 sided dice. (referred to as d4, d6, d8, d10, and d12 throughout this work) Since this game uses dice pools – rolling groups of identical dice at the same time – at least 5 or six of each type is recommended.

Pencils, snacks, friends, and at least two or three hours of free time are also required.

You have my permission to print out a copy of these rules for reference and the page of character sheets at the end. Please do not claim this work as your own or attempt to make money from it.

Table of Contents

Glossary

Animus: Measurement of movement and ability to survive injury

Attribute: A rating of the character's prowess in different aspects.

Damage Rating (DR): Classification of a weapons ability to inflict harm.

Deadening: A character's capacity to push themselves to the limit.

Game Master: A specialized player – part referee and part storyteller who controls the setting and NPCs.

Lucidity: A measure of sanity and the ability to go over the top.

NPC: Non Player Character

PC: Player Character

Statistic: a character's secondary Abilities derived from the attributes.

Sufficient Damage Index (SDI): An estimate of how tough a creature is to harm.

Part One:
Creating a Human Character

Defining a Person

Humans are defined with five main Statistics, each of which is rated from one to five:

Aim
General combat ability

Strength
Brute force of muscles

Quick
Reaction time and awareness

Tech
Understanding of systems and precision

Wits
Mental acuity and leadership

Furthermore, there are the secondary attributes derived from the primaries:

Animus: Quick + Strength
Speed of movement

Deadening: Strength + Wits
Fatigue

Lucidity: Quick + Wits
Psychological Stability

Pack: Tech + Wits
Useful carrying load

Uprise: Strength + Tech
Maximum load

Every Human starts off with a rating of three in each Statistic. Points may be redistributed as the player sees fit lowering one score to raise another.

Skills

Characters begin with either 4 general skills, or 2 general skills and one specialized skill.

General skills provide a bonus make a task easier. Specialized skills give a character new abilities. Knowledge of biology that lets someone dissect or study a zombie is a general skill. However, the knowledge and ability to create zombies is specialized. What is or isn't allowable is generally up to the GM, but beginning characters should have only one specialized skill if any.

Some Specialized skills:

Ammo Conservation: Enlarge Ammo die one step
Martial Arts: Bare Hand attacks have a DR of 2
Controlled Burst: Attack 5 targets rather than 3
Tactics: Can combine fire with another survivor
Awareness: Initiative rolls as 3-6 success
Blasting: Knowledge of the use of explosives
Reanimation: Knowledge of creating & stopping undead
Heavy Weapons: Ability to use the big stuff
Pilot: Controlling vehicles other than cars
Clout: Enhanced access to top secret information

General Skills can be just about anything. Game Masters should restrict skills related to firing weapons or making biochemicals – but just about anything else is fair game. Medicine, climbing, urban survival, animal care, auto maintenance – the list is almost endless, so just use common sense.

Secondary Abilities and Usage

Each of the derived attributes has a specific purpose, whereas the general statics are your overall abilities.

Pack

The number of items one can conveniently hold and use at one time. Each point represents one "slot" to hold an item about the size of a textbook, or about 2-3 kilograms of weight. Larger items may take up more space — rifles and the like take two, and larger weapons three or four. A reload for a weapon takes one slot. [For example: A rifle, two reloads and a flashlight count as 5 slots]

Uprise

The measure of how much additional equipment the character can carry. These items can not be accessed in combat or quickly — getting them under duress would require several rounds to dump out backpacks, and probably a wits roll to find the right one. Each point of uprise is about 6 kilograms of weight that can be carried.

Animus

Similar to hit points in other games — its how many points one gets on their speed track, and thus how many hits until they are slowed down. This only affects agility and running — when injured fight or flight kicks in, so there are no skill penalties per say.

Furthermore, Animus is how many meters you can move in a combat round. You can jump half this distance.

Lucidity

One's mental wellbeing. Points of lucidity can be spent for extra actions in combat — taking insane risks.

Deadening

Fatigue and ability to carry on. These points can be spent to improve rolls, and to make last minute dodges to survive attacks.

Speed Tracks

Rather than having Hit points like many other games, characters have the speed track. Each time they are injured, they slow down.

A character begins with one circle in walk and crawl. Animus points are then distributed, the first into jog, the next into run. Any additional points are then put on the track starting in a new column and working up. Repeat if necessary.

Example: A character with Quick two, Strength three has five animus. This results in a track with three circles in crawl, and two in each of the other categories.

Humans also begin with an SDI of 1 which is explained in the section on combat.

The Spark of Life:

Now you have a bunch of numbers that define the physical and mental abilities of a person. But what about their thoughts and feelings? Ten questions you can answer:

What did I do before the dead rose?

Where do I come from?

How did my first supernatural encounter go?

Why do I continue – any goals or family?

Who is worth risking my life for?

How am I dealing with this?

What do I think of my fellow survivors?

Where to now?

Why should law and society still matter?

Who should lead or follow in this situation?

Example Character Creation

The GM decides to run a game aboard a cruise ship that has been infected with a strange virus after a tropical storm. As such I need to make someone who would be on vacation in the Bahamas.

After some initial consideration, I decide on making a computer programmer who won the vacation playing a CT in a video game tournament.

I start with a three across the board, and decide that he is good with machines, but doesn't get much exercise, and trade a point from Strength into Tech. Given his excellence at first person shooters, I take a point from Wits and put it into Aim.

Point Allocation done, now its time to find the derived abilities. Six points of pack means I can access about 12 kg of stuff during combat. Uprise six is about 36 kg of stuff in my backpack. Thats a total of roughly 105 pounds total for the metric impaired.

Hmm, skills. Well, he's only a commando on the internet, doesn't have secret government clearance, and only dreams about owning his a boat, so none of the specialized skills apply. He would obviously know programing and electrical repair. That killer instinct came from somewhere, so lets blame boy scouts and give him the first aid skill. Finally, since this is taking place on a boat, lets give him swimming.

Five points of animus filled in bottom to top. He didn't bring any chain mail on vacation so he has an SDI of one, and he hasn't earned any AP yet.

The name Kevin just seems to jump out as appropriate.

Sample Blank Sheet

NAME			
AIM		ANIMUS	
STREGNTH		DEADENING	
QUICK		LUCIDITY	
TECH		PACK	
WITS		UPRISE	
S1		Run	
S2		Jog	
S3		Walk O	
(S4)		Crawl O	
SDI		AP	

Filled Out Sheet

NAME Kevin O'Mally			
AIM	4	ANIMUS	5
STREGNTH	2	DEADENING	4
QUICK	3	LUCIDITY	5
TECH	4	PACK	6
WITS	2	UPRISE	6
S1 Programing		Run O	
S2 Electrical Rep.		Jog O O	
S3 First Aid		Walk O O	
(S4) Swimming		Crawl O O	
SDI	1	AP	0

Part Two:
Taking Action

Outside of combat, the only die needed is a d6. A player will roll a number of dice equal to their attribute, and the number that come up with a 5 or 6 are successes.

If the character has a general skill related to the task at hand, a 4, 5, or 6 is needed.

Should the character find themselves is very unfortunate circumstances – such as overly fatigued or more insane than usual – then only a roll of six will count. The presence of a skill will allow an extra die to be rolled in this situation, but will not affect what numbers give a success.

Simple tasks require only one success, more difficult ones two, and a long shot takes three. Scoring one more success than needed indicates a very good result, and two (plus) extra indicates a job so well done unexpected windfalls result.

What Does What

Each attribute is the sum total of ones knowledge and ability in a single area. Quick might be use for dodging obstacles, while Strength is for pushing them out of the way. Wits is used to quickly search an area or to make an impression on NPCs.

Tech is short for technique, and is for whenever precision is needed – working with medicine, explosives, or complex machines.

Numbers for the GM

With an attribute of 3 the chances of success are:

	1	2	3
Normal	23:27		1:27
Skilled			
Spooked	42%		1:216

(My math skills are rather lacking, these numbers may be way off – please let me know if you have the correct values for a die pool)

Setting Difficulty

Difficulty is usually increased by requiring mores successes. Simplicity or advantage is conferred by adding more dice to the pool. However, there is a third level of difficulty.

Some tasks may subtract successes. Once the roll is determined, the penalty is taken. If none of the dice come up 5 or 6 (3-6 if a general skill is involved) then then a major failure occurs. The character's gun breaks, or they twist their ankle, or accidentally breach the viral containment lab. While the actual effects are up to the GM, this is worse than simply not succeeding.

Proper Equipment

Attempting to act without the right tools makes the task a step harder. Attempting a task that requires special tools with only a basic kit takes away one success as well as increasing the difficulty by one.

More than adequate tools or time allows a bonus die. Two dice are granted if the character gets special equipment – its a big advantage to have night vision goggles when everyone else is in the dark.

Opposed & Extended Actions

When two people are competing, then each rolls and whoever has more success wins the contest.

For extended actions, give them a set number of rolls they need to preform sequentially. Ie. Succeed on 3 difficulty 2 rolls to repair the car.

Working together

Each person helping can add one die to the pool. These count as normal. However if two or more characters have the same skill, then there is enough direction that all the dice count as skilled.

However, the GM may rule that there is a reason multiple people can't work together. More importantly – in the havoc of combat, no one can work together. Nor can they combine their fire on one very tough enemy – each attacks individually.

The tactics skill confers the knowledge to set up ambushes and coordinate enough in combat that fire can be combined – at least until the enemy gets close and the humans break ranks.

Healing

Healing is not possible in combat. At best, really powerful drugs would grant an extra point or two of deadening. However, a morphine addiction will adversely affect your continued survival.

Outside of combat, one point of injury is recovered per two days, though one point can be recovered in one day with a successful tech roll by someone acting as a doctor.

Surgery is possible, but is at -1 success, in addition to any GM set difficulties.

Moving About

A person's movement speed is based on their quick attribute and how intact their speed track is. A person with a full run speed track can move 8+(speed) meters in one turn. Each lost level on the speed track lowers this by two.

Creatures have a set speed – if yours drops below theirs, you don't have the option of running away, unless you spend deadening points. One DP raises your speed by two.

Vehicles

Odd as it sounds, mechanical items have the same attributes as living things. Strength is its towing capacity, quick its reaction and grip on the road, wits accounts for any sort of sensor system. Aim would be on board targeting computers in those rare cases.

Speed is listed in kph rather than meters per combat round, and the speed track represents 1/3 of its movement. At "crawl" - the lowest level of the track, the thing is underivable, but still good far parts or fixing if you're an expert. Any further damage renders it unusable scrap. Most cars have 10-15 points on their speed tracks when brand new.

Vehicles also happen to have ODP – over drive points, which function just like deadening for humans, although each use of an ODP inflicts a point of damage.

A normal vehicle has an SDI of 2 or three, and a DR of 2 +1 per 40kp (25 mph) of speed. Aiming a speeding car depends on the driver's reflexes (Quick), not Aim.

Part Three:
Psychological Complications

In the end its about people. The beginning, its about dead people – the zombies of course – but by the end, its always those who are alive. Look at any war movie, and you'll see a squad that looks more like the United Nations than a military unit. Watch a horror film, and its the group rather than the lone horror that gets the spotlight.

When the dead rise, many of the little things of life cease to matter. However, some of the things we take for granted – like delivery of food to grocery stores and the continued operation of power plants stop. When food gets low, convenience and comfort nonexistent, humans have this bad tendency to go feral and turn on their neighbors.

Lucidity

No plan survives first contact with the enemy – and no psyche lasts long when the impossible happens. Lucidity measures mental health – a low lucidity score indicates one is becoming unhinged. This can be catatonia, phobias, ranting, risk taking, or any other of a book full of symptoms. It is not funny however. These odd behaviors tend to lower ones ability to act with a group and survive in harsh conditions.

Lucidity points can be spent as the character wishes. Taking insane risks or putting the task above everything else will allow the character two extra dice on a non-combat action.

In combat, such recklessness allows an extra attack! Or, spending a lucidity can increase the weapon's DR by one for that turn, and add an extra point of aim. These effects are not mutually exclusive – though it requires the expenditure of two points.

Deadening

While Lucidity is your mental endurance, Deadening is your physical fatigue. It is an expendable pool as well.

Deadening may be spent to negate damage, on a one to one basis. It can also be used to augment physical abilities – allowing an extra die of Quick or Strength. Speed can be raised by two for a short time as well. These augmentations last for one roll or one combat round depending on the situation.

Also like Lucidity, low fatigue is not a good thing. A person who is tired, cantankerous, and short tempered from exertion is no more fun to be around than one who is ranting, raving, and just this side of sane.

Low Compatibility Problems

When one attribute is low – at three or less, then you are in a notably impaired state, and only 6s count on skill rolls. This means initiative in combat as well – though aim is unaffected as the adrenaline kicks in.

When both Lucidity and Deadening are low, then you are at minus one success.

Low stats also bring about another affect...

Nemesis Rolls

Relentless as they might be, zombies are not the major problem by themselves. The bigger problem is that they bring out the worst in those still alive.

Should your sanity or Deadening get low - a level of only 4 or less - the GM may call for a roll. First roll wits against a difficulty of 5 minus the number of remaining points. (Ex. 3 points remain, you need two successes)

If this roll fails. You begin to turn against your fellow survivors. There's three levels – suspicion, competition, and antagonism.

Suspicion has no mechanical effect – but it is worth playing out.

Competition prevents the character from adding their dice to group activities. They will also argue over distribution of equipment, and often take a him or me approach.

Antagonism will begin to induce penalties when in the presence of their targets. Tasks will be one point harder due to the inability to concentrate and constant looking over their shoulder for betrayal. Provocation (or anything perceived as such) will often bring outright attacks.

Who or what these emotions are vented on is very much situational and up to the game master. To help avoid real life conflicts, it may be best to assign a target based on a die roll – ie, turn against the player 1d8 places to your left.

Regaining your Sanity

Deadening returns with rest – one point per four hours of uninterrupted rest. Drugs can also help it return, though with GM determined consequences.

Lucidity tends to take longer. Usually about a week per point. Creature comforts and a relaxing atmosphere can add another with only a day or two of rest.

AP can be spent to recover these pools as well.

Altruism Points

This is a rating not included in character creation, as one doesn't begin with any AP. Rather, these are rewarded for playing, taking risks and accomplishing goals. AP have two main uses.

First of all, AP may be spent to recover lost points of Lucidity, Deadening, or Animus.

Secondly, AP act as a means to improve other players' characters, but not your own. One must chose between helping others and keeping themselves fit, alive, and sane.

A new general skill costs three points, specialized skills cost twice as much. Raising attributes costs twice the next level. (going from two to three costs six AP)

Role Playing Insanity

The extra attack from spending lucidity is not sighting a zombie, squeezing the trigger, then zeroing in on another. Its more of charging the creatures wailing like a banshee, bashing in the head of one with the rifle butt then shoving the barrel into the other's eye socket and firing off at least half a dozen rounds while screaming "die mother die!"

In other words, people should begin questioning as to whether the character is a liability rather than an asset. For that matter, when the adrenaline wears off, he will be wondering about that as well. Their free will begins to erode, and while they might see their actions are not helpful, they can't necessarily stop either.

Part Four:
Combat

The most important consideration in combat is: if it moves... shoot it. If it doesn't move shoot it some more to make sure.

Or so it would seem.

Actually, there are a few more things to keep in mind to be an effective combatant.

Combat Rounds

A round of combat is about 10 seconds. First everyone involved rolls for initiative. Actions are then declared, with those who have the highest initiative acting first. Each person may take one action and move. Additional attacks can be gained by spending lucidity points, while last second escapes come from the Deadening pool. (See the psychology chapter for more on these)

A single attack roll may represent multiple attempts to strike – perhaps even multiple hits – but only a few will actually affect the target.

Initiative

The order in which combatants take part in a combat round is determined by rolling Wits and Quick, and counting the number of successes and adding them to the character's current Animus (movement speed). The person (or creature) with the most highest total goes first, and then the next highest and so fourth. A person with the awareness ability gets to the increased chance of success on this roll as normal with skills, 3-6 rather than only 5/6.

Low lucidity does not affect initiative, but low fatigue does.

Damage Rating (DR) & Sufficient Damage Index (SDI)

Your aim attribute determines how many dice you roll when attacking. What type of dice you roll is based on comparing the weapon you are using to the targets resistance.

Every weapon from one to six, giving an estimation of how much damage it can do. This is compared to the sufficient damage Index (SDI) to determine how effective the weapon is.

If the two are equal d8s are rolled. A DR greater than the SDI indicates a smaller die is used. Conversely, an SDI greater than the DR means a large die.

Regardless of the type or number of dice rolled, only the dice that come up with the maximum value are considered successful. Other shots may hit, but won't have an affect.

Also of note – if the die is brought below a d4, such as using an Anti-tank rocket on a zombie, the weapon is so over powered, that it instantly destroys the target. The opposite is also true – if the SDI is 3 or more greater than the DR, then the weapon cannot damage the target in any way.

Damage Ratings for Weapons

1	Fists
2	Improvised weapons, knives
3	Handguns, swords
4	Rifles, pole arms
5	Auto cannons
6	Anti-Tank Missiles

Sufficient Damage Index

1	Normal Human
2	Large Animal
3	Resists handguns
4	Resists Rifles
5	Armored Car
6	Reinforced structure
7	Main Battle Tank
8	Pray it doesn't find you...

A healthy human has an SDI of one, though body armor can raise it as high as three. Most zombies are two or three.

Example of DR & SDI

Two zombies surprise Kirk, who has the good fortune of wearing a prototype exo-suit stolen from an overrun laboratory . The first zombie has only its bare fists with a DR of one – and can't scratch Kirk with an SDI of 4. Its partner though, has a bowie knife with a DR of 2. It has an aim of two, and as such rolls 2d12, neither of which come up 12, and thus it inflicts no damage.

Kirk retaliates with a shotgun – DR 4, versus the corpses' SDI 2. with an aim of 4 re rolls 4d4, getting, 1, 2, 4, 4 – and thus definitively eliminates his target.

Necro Points (NP)

Necro-points are how many hits a creature can take before dropping. If it takes hits equal to its NP, then it is somehow crippled and out of the fight for the time being. Damage in excess of NP kill/destroy it permanently.

Most zombies have only one – that is, one hit is sufficient to stop them. But not all of them. And there are... things... that are a lot tougher than that. Some might even have speed tracks like humans. When combined with a high SDI – be afraid.

Attacking Humans

Each success is a point taken off the damage track. Begin with the highest possible level, then when all those points are gone, go on to the next level. Each level lost corresponds to -2 speed, and thus less ability to outrun creatures. Reduced animus also means shorter jumps and less combat movement.

Ammunition

Rather than tracking every single bullet, Ammunition reliant weapons have an ammo die. When the character fires a burst, or the GM calls for a check, this die is rolled, and if it comes up the maximum value or one point less (for example, a 5 or 6 on a d6) the weapon is out of ammunition.

Provided the character has a reload of the right type of bullets in one of their pack slots, they can refill the gun. Doing so, however, is done instead of attacking! They may still move or take a different action.

Surviving

Fortunately, humans can mitigate damage by spending deadening points – negating damage one for one.

Further complications

Burst Fire:

A burst will add three dice to the aim attribute and allow two or three targets to be attacked at once.

Alternatively, the full burst may be concentrated on one target to gain +1 DR, but not the +3 dice. (Its increased chance to hit, or more rounds on target, not both)

Firing a burst requires an immediate ammunition roll at one less than usual. (Rather than a d10 for a 30 round clip, roll d8)

The controlled burst skill allows five targets to be attacked, with the requisite reduced ammunition roll. alternatively, the safe affects as a standard burst can be achieved with a normal ammo roll.

Successes rolled for a multi-target attack are redistributed amongst the targets – it is not the number of hits on each target.

Combat Range:

Life isn't the orderly shooting gallery we wish it was. Absolute ranges don't mean much in desperate situations, so instead we use approximates:

Across the Room: no change
Through the House: +1 difficulty
Down the Block: +1 difficulty, -1 success
Across town: +2 difficulty, -1 success

Extra Attacks:

See Psychology.

Grappling

Roll Strength in an opposed action against the creature. This may also be used to simply push it away or to grab it yourself, which will reduce its SDI due to immobilization – hopefully.

Evasive Action:

A player can raise their SDI by one if they accept a penalty of -1 success. Dodging about may make you harder to hit, but its hard to do anything while running, and there is a risk of falling or dropping something.

Using Heavy Weapon/Explosives without training:

-2 successes. And possibly a big crater where the character once was.

Hoards

A lone zombie isn't too scary. Several hundred might present a problem though. Hoards are similar to any other creature, except for the anti-climatically named Hoard Factor (HF) and how their necro-points are treated.

The Hoard Factor is quite literally a force multiplier. A hoard with a factor of five attacks five targets and attacks each of them five times! They may not be too effective, but luck will turn against you.

Hoards are also more difficult to dispatch. Hits less than or equal to its NP have no affect. Hits greater than the NP lower the HF by one.

Other Actions

Each knock down roll may represent multiple attacks – but only a few or no successes. Only one attack may be preformed, unless the player spends a lucidity point as detailed in chapter three.

Still, combat rounds are 10 seconds long, so its entirely possible to do more than one thing. A character can also use an attribute, and move a number of meters equal to their current animus.

Explosives

Contrary to what is seen in most movies, it is not the fireball that you should be worried about. Rather, its the shock wave traveling at hypersonic speeds that literally crushes internal organs into jelly. The undead don't make particularly good use of their organs, and shrapnel is hit or miss, so explosives are quite a bit less effective than one would hope.

Explosives have a DR of only two or three depending on they type and the presence of shrapnel inducing casing. They are fused and set off with the use of the tech skill.

While not particularly effective, these compounds are powerful and add 4 dice to the roll. Usually the tech attribute is used for the setting of traps and proper tamping of plastic.

Fire and Poison

Rather than having a specific DR, these are a competing roll, with the intensity of the flamer or toxin determining how many dice it gets. These can be resisted with either quick (rolling on the ground) or Strength (endurance)

Traps

Traps are set using the tech skill. Depending on how it is set up, a character will make a roll to avoid it, rather than get passively attacked.

The number of successes on the Tech roll set how many the target need to get to avoid or disarm the trap.

Damage depends on what is in the trap. Simple punji pits (Sharp spikes) would be akin to knives – DR2. Dropping weights would be 1 die per 40kg and 1 DR per 6 meters dropped.

(Example: An American who doesn't use metric rigs a 200 lb weight to drop 50 feet. His tech is 3, and he rolls 2 successes. The target needs to roll a 2 on Quick – provided they notice the trap – and on a failure, suffer an attack with an "aim" of 2 and a, DR 3)

Destroying the Environment

Most household objects, including interior walls have only an SDI of one or two – so its not too much trouble to break them. Exterior walls might be three or four, but only specially reinforced things will be higher.

Buildings and such have fewer DP than one thinks, but like hoards, have a minimum amount of damage that must be inflicted with each hit. A house might have only 8 DP, but a hit of at least 4 is needed before it shows damage.

However, never let mechanics get in the way of taking out that wall if its really necessary.

Combat Example: Initiative and Attack

Alison, Brian, and Charlie are on a run to find some medicine and food. Well, run is a bit extreme, as due to his injuries, Brian can only manage a painful walk – but he wasn't going to be left alone in the apartment in his mental state, not with things running about out there. Like the ones that just turned the corner, and are now heading for them.

Alison was a former paramedic and used to assessing the situation quickly – she goes first. A head explodes a split second after the Magnum revolver screams at the horrors.

Charlie the ex-SWAT goes next. With a wide grin that can only mean something is about to die he locks and loads his MP-5 SMG and then sends a few dozen bullets down range. Flesh and viscera fly, two drop to the ground, but they're still moving. The click of the bolt locking back warns him its time to put in a new magazine.

Brian manages to put a few more holes in one of the zombies, but fails to hit the brain stem.

Initiative and Attack Explained

Alison has an Aim of 3, Quick of 3, and the awareness skill. She rolls 3d6 and gets 3, 5, 6., which is 3 successes to be added to her Quick for a total of 6.

Brian has an Aim of 2, Quick of 4, but due to his high fatigue, only 6s are successful, while his injury means he is at -2 to his initiative. He rolls one six, for an initiative of 3. (4+1-2 = 3)

Charlie has an Aim of 4, Quick of 2, his rolls come up 3 and 6 – one success total 3.

The GM rolls a 6 for the group of zombies, and its a success – but with a Quick of only one, they still go last.

Allison's gun has a DR of 3, while the zombies have an SDI 2. Roll 3d6- a one and two sixes – which is more than the one NP of the zombie, so it is permanently out of the fight.

Charlie burst fires the SMG with an SDI of 2. that means 4 dice for his Aim, and three more for the extra rounds. A total of seven d8s. The player declares he is going to attack 4 zombies, but luck is not with him and only two come up 8. A hit each is allocated to the first two targets, knocking them down.

Brian's player rolls no success.

Part Five:
Raising The Dead

What makes a monster? A total disregard for life? Bloody claws and glistening teeth? Or is it something far worse – the imagination of a game master!

Quantity and Quality

Before you can come up with stats, decide on some parameter for the creature. Are they dangerous because there are a lot of them or because its immune to normal weapons?

Each opponent should have at least one advantage over the players. Your standard zombie has numbers, the fact that it doesn't feel pain, and the possibility that it can spread their infection. Other creatures may just be inhumanly strong and tough, or have heightened senses and enough intelligence to harry and track humans for an extended period of time.

Example Qualities

- Enhanced Tracking (IR vision?)
- Ranged Attacks
- Cunning (wolf like tactics)
- Intelligent (use weapons and doors...)
- Flight
- Limited Weakness (only affected by certain weapons/elements/objects)
- Horrendous Strength
- Mutation
- Regeneration
- Paralyzing venom

Breaking the Rules

By definition, the supernatural doesn't play fair with reality. Keep the players guessing, and find different ways to act.

Great strength is better portrayed by making each 5 or 6 on the die roll count as two or three successes rather than trying to roll a pool of 12. An instant kill attack – like ripping someone in half requires an agility roll to avoid rather than lots of Aim and a high Damage Rating.

Zombie infection is also a matter for consideration. Something is lessoned when a player knows that infection is only a 12.5% chance (8 on a d8) versus not knowing at all since its driven by story, not rolls.

Abomination or Demon?

Abominations are simple. Its up or down, and NP are lost as its wounded.

Demons are more difficult. These creatures have derived attributes and speed tracks – with some sort of notable bonus – and are not so simple to stop. If you really want to be nasty, they can have Necro points treated the same way as hoards – only successes above a certain threshold will begin to erode their speed.

Description

"The corpse slowly limps towards you. It has an SDI of two"

"My shotgun has a DR of 4. I roll 3d4."

Something hisses like that suction thing from the dentist's office. A door to your left explodes into a shower of splinters and a bloated human form leaps across the threshold and claws at your face with inch long nails.

"Oh Sh--! I push it back then bring my duck gun to its face and pull the trigger!"

At the risk of being repetitive, and repetitive again one zombie is not scary or even much of a threat to a player.

Sample Creature Stats

Slow Zombie:

Aim	Tech	Quick	Wits	Str.
2	1	2	1	2
SDI	Move	NP		
2	6	2		
Close Combat	DR 1			

Tough Zombie:

Aim	Tech	Quick	Wits	Str.
2	1	2	1	4
SDI	Move	NP		
3	4	4		
Close Combat	DR 2			
Acid Spit	DR 1	+2 to aim		

Fast Zombie:

Aim	Tech	Quick	Wits	Str.
3	1	3	2	2
SDI	Move	NP		
2	10	2		
Close Combat	DR 1			

Restless One

Aim	Tech	Quick	Wits	Str.
3	2	2	2	3
SDI	Move	NP		
3	6	8		
Cunning enough to track and ambush				
Close Combat	DR 3			
Corrode	DR 5	Only on inanimate objects		

Succubus/Incubus

Aim	Tech	Quick	Wits	Str.
3	2	3	4	3
SDI		Run	O O	
2		Jog	O O	
Move		Walk	O O	
11/22		Crawl	O O O	
Human intelligent, often uses weapons, infrared vision, flight				
Fireball	DR 3	Range 50 feet		
Life Drain	DR 2	+1 health per success		

Part Six:
Running the Dead

Those of you interested in running a game take heed – its not easy.

Bad Situations

Going into the middle of nowhere with several weeks worth of food, starting a farm, and setting up a ring of defenses is probably the smartest action. However, it is not the most interesting, nor always feasible.

A healthy human can out run, out think, and with a weapon – out fight your garden variety zombie. Someone who is ill or injured may not be so effective. Or perhaps there's a reason why they have to face the danger – rescue a fellow survivor, get their insulin, or just to find some food.

Give Them a Goal

Survival is not a goal. Few people will just voluntarily give up. Instead, they need to have a focus.

Not only does this give the players a motivation, but its a hook for the GM. The worst fight is not between good and evil, but between two valid goods. Players who just want to escape opposed to those who wish to stay and help others is an excellent source of dramatic tension.

They are Not Alone

Quite a few games put characters in the role of heroes – you're the only ones who can rescue the princess, or the only adventures to stumble upon and raid this dungeon.

Not so here. Others have survived, and are competing for the same resources. There may be strength in numbers but given the lack of food delivery, is that a sustainable situation?

Another common theme in other games is to avoid "NPC theater" and avoid scenes where the player's have little interaction. However, one can't be afraid when they're dead – so its to the GM's advantage to fold, spindle, and mutilate others to bring a sense of danger to the game.

Shock the System

Even in real life, people can become acclimated to just about anything. People living near the tracks learn to tune out the trains, and soldiers will get so attuned to the combat zone that they can't "turn off" their combat senses when they get home – a mental illness known as "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder".

Players are two steps away from what is really happening – everything is being described to them, and for that matter, these things are happening to playing pieces – RPG characters are just complex tokens when you think about it.

Be visceral. Pace about the room. Get in their faces. Actually giving them raw meat is a little eccentric, and music can either be very poor or very well done – but rarely in between those extremes.

Keep them Guessing

Horror is about confounded rationality. People are good and don't go about dismembering young adults.

Why you shouldn't be arbitrary, change it up every now and then. Any number of creatures can be created, for any reason. Let the laws of cinema come into effect – how do you really define realism when the impossible happens?

Scarcity

When the machine stops society falls apart quickly. Cities are far from self-sufficient, and even things like hydroponics requires input from outside sources – like electricity from the power plants that stop working without supervision. (A lack of fuel, something working loose, or just a trip on the automatic scram. Under tended nuclear reactors might be a bit scary. Or the reason for everything in the first place.)

Use the Environment

Spring cleaning falls to the wayside when pus ridden half rotten corpses come to town. Chances are the streets will be a mess with abandoned or wrecked cars, shops a scene of chaos from the initial loot and hoarding.

Uneven terrain and obstacles makes a straight fight all the more difficult. Confines prevents humans from taking advantage of the ranged weapons they tend to carry.

Other Threats

In a way, zombies and the like are just incidental to survival. As the saying goes "hell is other people." Other survivors want your food and weapons, young children slow down the group, and who or what is causing all of this in the first place?

Its Just a Game

Yes, part of the genre is turning on each other, and almost every zombie movie includes a scene where one friend has to be killed before they turn.

Thats no reason to create animosity out of game. Have fun – its all impossible anyway. Narrative trumps dice rolls every time.

Last Words

Why I Wrote This

"Where there are swords to be swung and the dungeons are dank.

When there's pretzels to be eaten and soda to be drank.

Let us raise our d6s high.

And keep our friends close by.

Those who are about to dice, we salute you."

My poetry sucks. Hence, I write games.

Actually, it was just that the idea of the knock down roll combat occurred to me while I was writing something else, and needed a game to go with it. The human mind is a wonderful and mysterious thing that goes well with hash browns and maple syrup.

Thanks

To the folks at 1km1kt.net for hosting this and providing feedback on my games.

For "Dawn of the Dead", "Aliens", and "Armies of Darkness" which helped inspire this.

To Alonso, Kevin, Ken, and Jeff for the four semester long Orpheus game that changed how I RP and look at horror.

While I have never read through or played Eden Studio's "All Flesh Must Be Eaten" I should acknowledge these games are thematically similar.

Things to Come

Hopefully, this is just the initial draft. I want to include some more mood setting stories – possibly at the beginning of each section along with some artwork.

A rather extensive setting involving power armor, nanotechnology, aliens, vast government conspiracies and undead bioweapons should follow soon.

A new version with an less conventional layout may be in the works. Flavor stories are being written, and if you know where to to get free images, let me know.

Author Information

Chainsaw Aardvark is actually a graduate of Western Illinois University named Jason who holds a degree in English and a minor in creative writing. He was born on a Friday the 13th, which may explain his behavior unless its the massive amounts of coffee and general relativity. His interests include science fiction, game design, first person shooters, recreating an Orion drive, and acquiring an orbital mass driver, in roughly that order. Jason is known to listen to Weird Al, Green Day, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, and Marylin Manson – all at once.

E-mailed at Flanker39@gmail.com

Or critique on the 1km1kt.net message boards. Input is eagerly welcomed.

NAME			
AIM		ANIMUS	
STREGNTH		DEADENING	
QUICK		LUCIDITY	
TECH		PACK	
		UPRISE	
S1		Run	
S2		Jog	
S3		Walk O	
(S4)		Crawl O	
SDI		AP	
Notes & Equipment:			

Permission Granted to copy Character Sheets for personal use

NAME			
AIM		ANIMUS	
STREGNTH		DEADENING	
QUICK		LUCIDITY	
TECH		PACK	
		UPRISE	
S1		Run	
S2		Jog	
S3		Walk O	
(S4)		Crawl O	
SDI		AP	
Notes & Equipment			

Permission Granted to copy Character Sheets for personal use