AFTER THE LORDS OF MEMORY

A SHORT FANTASY ADVENTURE RPG BY MICHAEL PRESCOTT

IN THIS RPG

Players take on the role of brave villagers who venture out of their communities to explore a dangerous wilderness.

- Adventurers start out as **ordinary people**, not wizards or warriors
- Being **maimed or killed** is likely
- Tasks are resolved by counting successes in a **d6 dice pool**
- Abilities **advance by using them**

MAKING CHARACTERS

- Roll ratings for the six stats
- Roll a random background
- Add equipment

Roll d3+1 for each stat and record this as its **rating**. The six stats in ALM are:

- **Vigor**: strength, agility, fitness
- **Grit**: fitness, hardiness, composure
- **Wits**: insights, alertness, learning
- **Sway**: persuasion, charm, influence
- **Panic**: adrenaline, animal terror
- **Troth**: teamwork, trust, familiarity

ADD EQUIPMENT

You're broke, but add up to 3 burdens of *provisions* or *traveling gear*.

TESTING STATS AND SKILLS

When adventurers do something risky, the GM chooses the **crucial skill** and a **difficulty level**.

Perform/3

Crucial Skill   **Difficulty**
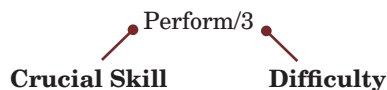
ROLLING

To resolve the test, roll a pool of d6 dice:

- 1d for each point of skill rating
- +1d for a clear advantage
- +1d by spending *favor* (max 3)

Diff	Description
/1	Easy, but with a possible pitfall
/2	Requires careful attention
/3	Tricky, even for the competent
/4	Very difficult
/5	Extremely difficult
/6+	Nearly impossible

Each die that comes up **4+ is a success**. If there are as many successes as the difficulty, the test is passed, otherwise it is failed. The margin of success or failure might matter.

For **opposed tests**, both sides roll, most successes wins. For **unskilled tests**, use the skill's base stat, but /+1.

GROUP ACTIONS

Setting up ahead of time for someone else gives them an advantage, +1d.

To **jump in and help**, test Troth/2. Pass lowers difficulty, /-1. Failure means you're in the way, /+1.

If **everyone must pass** to avoid failure (e.g. leaping a crevasse, sneaking), test a random PC with help from whoever leads the action.

TESTS OF KNOWLEDGE

If an adventurer might know something useful, test a relevant skill. (e.g. Arms for weapons, fighting, etc.) For communities, test *bond*.

Failure means the information is not known, out of date, misleading, wrong, or known by someone the adventurer has heard of.

PANIC

Panic is a special stat, used when a player declares their adventurer is panicking. Mark a tick on Panic, and **add the rating as bonus dice** to any test to flee, struggle free, scream commands (e.g. "help!", "look out!"), or spot danger. Panic is never added to tests of precision, nuance, or concentration.

The GM decides the **price of panic**: something lost, someone hurt, going too far, blacking out.

Characters with 6 Panic may not adventure, but must retire to a community and aid the party from there.

TROTH

Longtime companions understand each other so well they can anticipate each other.

- Communicating secrets while being observed, Troth/2
- Sense a PC is in danger, Troth/3
- Intuitively coordinate, even over great distances, Troth/4

Failure means the secret is out, the timing is off, or something else listened in.

ADVANCEMENT

When the test dice are **all successes or all failures**, mark a tick for the skill or stat being tested. (Spend a point of *favor* to ignore one die that breaks the pattern.) Every 6 ticks, a stat advances (+1 rating). Skills, Troth and Panic need 3.

Ticks can only be gained from tests of significance made while adventuring!

LEARNING NEW SKILLS

If a PC sees a skill used successfully, they can learn it by spending 1 *favor*. The rating is the skill's base stat, minus 2 (minimum 1).

Adventurers may have at most ten skills. To make room for more, renounce your old ways at a *shrine* and remove one.

d20	Role	Skills	Equipment
1-2	Farmer	Labor 3, Farming 3	Hand axe
3	Shepherd	Husbandry 3, Tending 3	Stout crook, iron shears
4	Fisher	Boating 3, Navigation 2	A small skiff
5-6	Hunter	Bow 2, Hunting 2, Stalking 3	Bow, quiver with 12 arrows
7-8	Forager	Foraging 3, Stalking 2, Navigation 2	Trowel, dowsing wand
9	Sooth	Tending 3, Commune 2, Rituals 1	Shrine, d3 prosaic rituals
10	Factor	Scribe 3, -1 Troth	Portable writing set
11	Elder	Farming 3, Perform 3, Troth +1	Strongbox at home
12-13	Warden	Survival 3, Navigation 2	Heirloom knife; sword / staff
14	Outcast	Threats 3, Survival 3, Burglary 2	Secret place in the forest
15	Tinker	Threats 2, Craft (smith) 3, Navig. 2	Ironmonger's tools
16	Groom	Husbandry 3, Riding 2	Stiff brush, a blanket
17	Reeve	Riding 3, Arms 2, -1 Troth	Riding horse
18	Minstrel	Perform 3, Labor 2	Simple musical instrument
19	Crafter	Craft (choose) 3	Saw, hammer, or chisels
20	Hermit	Seeing 2, Survival 3, -1 Troth	Crow, d3 prosaic rituals

Skills

Arms (Vigor): Skill in the use of the body, hand weapons, armor & shield.

Assurances (Sway): Influencing with diplomacy, sincerity, or mutual aid.

Battle (Grit): Formations, fighting in ranks, orderly maneuvers.

Burglary (Wits): Finding ways in, noticing traps, searching an area.

Bow (Vigor): Killing at range with tensioned or thrown weapons.

Caving (Vigor): Free climbing stony walls /3 or along ropes /1.

Command (Sway): Compelling with authority. Bark a five-word order, Command/0. PCs equal to the successes may follow it, all on your turn.

Commune (Sway): Learning the will of unseen Powers, usually at shrines.

Craft (Wits): Making, repairing things. Separate skills for: Brewing, Building, Carpentry, Cobbling, Cooking, Fletching, Dyeing, Masonry, Smithing, Weaving

Farming (Wits): Caring for crops; clues about communities, weather.

Foraging (Wits): Finding food, water, or particular herbs.

Hunting (Wits): Tracking game, trapping with snares.

Husbandry (Sway): Caring for animals. Read attitude, /2. Convey wishes, /3 (within intelligence limits).

Labor (Vigor): Back-breaking and feats of strength without injury.

Navigation (Wits): Finding one's way through the wilderlands.

Perform (Sway): Captivating and communicating with crowds.

Riding (Sway): Guiding a mount without injury to beast or rider.

Rituals (Wits): Performing ritual magic from tomes, scrolls, or carvings.

Scribe: Reading, writing, copying documents; navigating troves of lore. Reading old Seree, /2; Martoi or Dradkin, /3; Thirudic runes, /4.

Stalking (Vigor): Creeping silently and unseen. Test vs. enemy Wits.

Survival (Wits): Finding shelter, lighting fires. A good site (Survival/2) contributes extra successes as extra health recovered by those not on watch.

Tending (Wits): Stabilizing critical injuries, treating sickenss with herbs.

Threats (Sway): Motivating with lies, unwelcome truths, intimidation.

Tumbling (Vigor): Leaping, acrobatics. Tumbling/0 reduces fall damage by the number of successes.

Burdens

PCs may bear up to 12 burdens, numberd 1-12. The first 6 burdens are readily at hand (e.g. armor worn, weapons wielded, light sources in use, items at the top of sacks); up to 6 more are packed away.

Burdens 7 through 12 can be dropped by simply stating, "I drop my packs."

Most items are 1 burden. Awkward, heavy, or two-handed items (longbows, battlefield weapons, mail hauberks, tower shields) are 2 burdens.

Burdens can also be mental, such as the effort of sustaining a magical effect, or a *travel duty*.

Burdens set the **difficulty of physical tests** like caving, stalking, labor, and resisting fatigue.

- 0-3 burdens: /1
- 4-6 burdens: /2
- 7-9 burdens, /3
- 11-12 burdens, /4

Conditions

Conditions are short labels used to keep track of lasting PC injuries or serious impediments, e.g. Soaked, Scaled, Bee Stings. Add them as appropriate. They last until it makes sense to remove them.

Conditions should suck. Any time the GM 'flares' a condition by making it painfully, inconveniently relevant, award the player 1 favor. Flares:

- +1 difficulty to a test
- a serious complication
- a distraction at a crucial moment
- the condition worsens (replace it)

Favor

The unseen world bestows favor on adventurers. Everyone earns one point of favor when the party agrees on a goal for the session. At the end of the session, all PCs earn 1 favor for each of:

- Meeting their goal
- Having helped a community
- Burying a fellow PC
- Donating a silver pouch or equivalent to a community

Spending Favor

Points of favor can be spent on:

- +1d to a test (max 3 per test)
- 1 for 1 to ignore dice that don't fit the pattern for earning a tick
- Learning a new skill

Gear

To speed up equipping, ALM has three types of abstract gear. When used, a burden of gear turns into a more specific item, as necessary.

Provisions

A day's ration of cheese, bread, dried meat or fruit; grain for a horse or mule, honey, rum, ale, handful of salt, tea herbs. 3 burdens cost a *few coins*.

Traveling Gear

Blanket, cord, knife, fishing hook & line, flint & steel, needle & thread, oil lamp, torch pitch, oil pot, spare sack, waterskin, whistle. 3 burdens cost a *few coins*.

Expedition Gear

Any travel gear item, or: arrow heads, chalk, a hand tool, iron spike, lantern, oil, rope, pulley, shovel, oiled tarp. Each burden costs a *few coins*.

Illustrations by Juan Ochoa, John Love, and Michael Prescott

TRILEMMA ADVENTURES

RUSHED EVENTS

TURN ORDER

When events move too quickly for easy coordination, PCs act in clockwise turn order. On each PC's turn:

1. The GM says what they perceive
2. The GM asks what they do
3. The PC chooses their action
4. Resolve their action (often a test, perhaps opposed by enemy action)

Any enemy action described by the GM is simultaneous with the acting PC. PC turns, however, are sequential, and happen one after another.

JOINING

After step 3, other PCs can **join** and perform the same action by spending 1 Health (or becoming Exhausted).

INTERRUPTING

Other PCs can **interrupt** and go first by spending 1 Health (or becoming Exhausted). Afterwards, regular turn order resumes.

COMMANDS

PCs can command their allies by shouting an order of five words or less. Test Command/0. For every success, one other PC may act on those orders on the same turn.

CLOSE COMBAT

A bout of melee is usually an opposed Arms test. The winner of the test, inflicts 1 damage, +1 per extra success. They gain *advantage* for the next bout. (Their opponent stumbles, their weapon knocked aside, etc.) Ties cause one point of damage to both sides.

ADVANTAGE

If one combatant has a clearly better position and/or more appropriate weapon, they start with the advantage. This grants +1d and doubles any damage caused. At the start of a bout, longer weapons usually have advantage (pikes over axes, swords over daggers). In tight spaces, daggers are advantageous.

BATTLE FORMATIONS

Fighters in close formation who have the Battle skill automatically start with advantage against combatants who are not. They may also attack from the second rank if they have spears or pikes. They may also obey commands at no cost.

RANGED ATTACKS

Stationary, nearby targets: Bows/1. Long range: /+1. Moving targets, /+1. Evading targets oppose with Vigor.

HEALTH AND INJURY

Health points protect against critical damage. Full health is the Grit rating.

EXAMPLE DAMAGE

- A nasty knock: d3
- A deadly strike: d6
- Falling: 1d6 to 2d6
- A cave-in, a titan's blow: 2d6
- A day without food: 1 (Critical: Exhausted condition)

CRITICAL INJURIES

Any damage that would reduce Health below 0 causes a critical injury. The **severity** is equal the excess damage. Critical injuries are special *conditions*.

Sev.	Condition (Healing)
1	Bloodied (day)
2	Injured (week)
3	Maimed (month)
4	Incapacitated (season)
5+	Dying (death in d6 hours)

UNTREATED INJURIES

Untreated injuries worsen over time. Cuts bleed, wounds fester, broken bones grind. If the GM flares them, they become one level worse unless the PC passes Grit/Excess. Treatment is Tending/Excess.

HEALING

A meal with a night's rest restores 1 health. Injury conditions take longer to heal during *downtime*, as shown in the table.

ARMOR

If a PC is armored and takes damage, use d6 and consult their burdens. If it is a piece of armor, it is ruined but absorbs the blow.

CAMPAIGNING

Setting out on an Adventure

As long as it makes sense, the party can start out from any *community* with which it has Bond 1 or higher. This includes communities with a retired adventurer.

Money

Riches are represented abstractly by burdens of silver coin, each grade worth approximately 6 times as much as the one before:

- a few coins (1 burden)
- a pouch of coins (1 burden)
- a sack of coins (2 burdens)
- a chest of coins (6 burdens)

Spending a few coins from a pouch will reduce its grade on a d6 roll of 1: the pouch becomes just a few coins. Same with any purchase one level down (a sack's worth from a chest). Single purchases two or more levels down have no effect, but if PCs go on a buying spree, the GM should combine them.

Precious gold coins rate one grade higher than silver, so a pouch of gold is worth a sack of silver. Gems rate two grades higher than silver.

Communities

Communities are precious havens against the dangers of the wild. The strength of the party's ties to each community is measured with a Bond rating. The party starts out with Bond 2 with its home community.

Bond 0: strangers
Bond 1: familiar faces
Bond 2: members
Bond 3: honored members

Friendly Faces

If one or more retired PCs has been stationed at a community, this improves the effective Bond by +1. Bonds can be improved during *downtime*.

Retainers & Specialists

To find a useful retainer (porter, lantern bearer), wise counsel or other skilled specialist in a community, test Bond/1.

- +1d for each pouch of silver offered as up front payment
- Useful skill or knowledge /+1
- Plus crew or special gear (e.g. boat, cart, 1-3 pack ponies) /+1
- Rare skill or secret knowledge /+2
- Willing to adventure /+1

Retainers will have 3d in one or two relevant skills and a Troth rating equal to the party's Bond.

Downtime

If adventurers stay in a community for a season, most of their time is spent on day-to-day work of living. In what time they can spare, each adventurer may take a downtime action.

All Bloodied and Injured conditions heal soon after arriving.

Practice

Spend favor equal to a stat or skill's current rating to mark advancement.

Instruct

A dedicated instructor with higher skill than the practicing student lowers the cost of a mark to 1 favor.

Take Ease

Spending time in revelry, in prayer or reflection. Erase any ticks on Panic.

Commune

Spend the season in service and communing at the village's *shrine* (if there is one).

Heal

Remove up to three Maimed conditions, or one Incapacitated condition.

Cement a Bond

Confirm a relationship with a community already established through play. Expenses are usually required on celebrations, gifts, feasts, dues, or possibly tarriffs. Make an appropriate test to represent a key moment in the forming of the bond.

Bond 1: Spend a season laboring. Perform/2
Bond 2: Vow to defend the community, spend a sack of silver. Assurances/3
Bond 3: Swear fealty, marry, spend a chest of silver. Command/3

Patrol

Learn a rumor about the area around the community, the threats it faces, or something hidden in the surrounds.

Train Animal

Training a clever, friendly animal to act on command: Husbandry/2. /+1 each for animals that are: aggressive (great cats), stubborn (mules), alien (giant insects) or stupid (turkeys). Success teaches the animal one talent (assuming its phyisiology is appropriate):

Riding, Performing, Laboring, Fetching, Hunting, Attacking, Guarding, Scouting, Tracking, Battle Tolerance

RITUALS

Magical rituals entreat, evoke, or compel aid from unseen powers: ancestral spirits, fallen gods, great spirits or demons of the earth, or hidden spell engines.

FINDING NEW RITUALS

Rituals can be found in ancient scrolls, books, or engraved in shrines or sacred places. Transcribing a ritual into a book or scroll is a Scribe/2 test.

RITUAL-SPECIFIC SKILLS

Each ritual has an associated skill. Porsaic rituals use mundane skills (e.g. Survival or Perform), but greater rituals each have their own, unique skills. These skills must be first learned by observation and spending favor (like all skills).

RITUAL SKILL

Rituals can also be performed using the Rituals skill. This requires written instructions, light to read them, and at least an hour. Success allows anyone present (including the ritualist) to learn the ritual's more specific skill.

SUSTAINED EFFECTS

Some rituals have effects that can be sustained by an act of will: record these as burdens (any slot will do).

POTENT RITUALS

The more powerful rituals have four things that prosaic rituals don't:
- *higher forms* to discover, with stronger or alternate effects
- failure causes a *backlash* that worsens with each failed casting
- *secret demands* that must be satisfied to avoid backlash
- a unique **ritual skill** (instead of a mundane skill) with the same name as the ritual

BACKLASH

Potent rituals each produce terrible consequences if the secret demand for the effect isn't satisfied. The backlash type is always the same, but each failure is worse than the last time.

SECRET DEMANDS

Potent rituals have secret demands of those who would perform them: unwritten requirements, or essential aspects of their original cultural context that have been forgotten.

Each form of a potent ritual has its own secret demand.

Knowing the demand is one thing, satisfying it may still be very difficult and require research, wise counsel, or further adventures.

DETERMINING DEMANDS

Use the random secret demand table for inspiration. The more powerful the ritual, and the higher the form, the more stringent the requirement. For the first form of a hedge wizardry ritual, 'Tool' might mean crow feathers. For a great sorcerous ritual, it might mean a chariot made from six talents of gold.

MAGICAL INSIGHT

Many ritualists have lived and died—without discovering any higher forms of rituals they have learned. Magical insight comes when three things are true:
1. the **ritual-specific skill** is used (not Rituals)
2. **favor** is spent on the test
3. the ritual skill **advances**

If so, the ritualist has a brief, powerful vision that reveals:
- On failure, a secret demand
- On success, a higher form

If there are no secret demands or higher forms to reveal, nothing happens.

d10	Secret Demand
1	Cultural: bear specific symbols, vestments, or markings
2	Living Bond: membership in a specific community, holding an office, rulership
3	Tool: a token, heirloom, or priceless relic must be carried
4	Sacrifice: something precious consumed, destroyed, spoiled, burned, or buried
5	Acolytes: supporting the ritual through prayer or meditation
6	Place of power: Within a type of terrain (e.g. forest), or a specific place (a holy shrine)
7	Time of power: A time of day, a season, a holy day, an astrological convergence
8	Conduit: Anywhere along a specific road, sacred river, ancient path, or ley line
9	Unseen bond: allegiance to an ancestral host, sleeping demigod, or demon earth spirit
10	Deprivation: type of food / lies / wealth / speech / shoes / arms

ADDING RITUALS TO THE GAME

When adding a ritual to the game, decide on the effect, the difficulty, and whether it has higher forms. Roll on the backlash type table to see how it worsens.

d10	Backlash Type
1	Overpower: too much / uncontrolled target / explosive area effect / enduring geyser / cataclysmic
2	Divine contact: omen / vision / brief possession / quest / incarnation
3	Stowaways: voices / poltergeist / imp / horror / d3 demons
4	Defiance: /+1 to next casting, /+1 difficulty forever, ritual never works again
5	Ostium terrere: omen / glimpse of ritual's source / momentary breach / enduring portal
6	Bound spirit: altered target / bargaining and threats / brief escape / escape (ritual now useless)
7	Retribution: foreboding weather / animals interfere / reputation / hunted by a cult / guardian hunters
8	Depletion: cosmetic sputter / delayed start / fizzles / one last use
9	Transformation: signs / symptoms / deformity / whole body changed / NPC
10	Taxing: 1 damage (exhaustion) / 2 damage / d6 damage / 2d6 damage (heart attack)

Prosaic Rituals

These ancient evocations are passed from elder to elder, or to adventurers when the need arises. As worn as an old axe handle, these simple rituals have no escalating side effects, and no higher forms to learn.

Cache

Hides a camp or store of goods from prying eyes, enhancng natural cover.
Skill: Survival/2

Finding

Release a bird or flying creature and it flies off in the direction of a person or place you seek.
Skill: Husbandry/2

Landmark

Everyone present at this ritual will forever remember this place and the nearby paths that lead to it.
Skill: Perform/1

Rites for the Lost

Commemorate someone dead or lost. Mourners each gain favor equal to the subject's Troth.
Skill: Perform/2

Sighting (sustained)

Spot a landmark; caster senses the exact bearing while they sustain the effect.
Skill: Bows/1

Warden's Stew

Prepare food; all who eat it gain +2d to coax each other to share secrets.
Skill: Tending/2

Hedge Wizardry

Some prosaic rituals have been lost to the village elders; some through accident, some deliberately, fearing their purpose or their origin. In the wilderlands, however, there are still a few mad old fools that remember them.

Accord Stone

Consecrate a standing stone to exhort the spirits of any who die nearby to remain and slowly form an ancestral host to watch over any nearby people.
Skill: Craft (masonry)/2.
Escalation: retribution (demons who would devour the dead)
Higher form: Craft (masonry)/4 calls ancient spirits to immediately form a strong ancestral host to watch over the living

Desecrate

Sever the bond between Power and shrine.
Skill: Desecrate/2
Escalation: Retribution
Higher form: Reconsecreate the shrine to another Power

Seeing (sustained)

Peer into the grey world, revealing spirits of the dead, emanations, enchantments, curses, and illusions.
Skill: Seeing/2
Escalation: divine contact
Higher form: physically interact
Higher form: enter the gray world, becoming ghostly/invisible in this one

Hour of Need

Calls someone or something diposed to help you, arriving in d6 hours.
Skill: Commune/2, 1 hour.
Escalation: stowaways
Higher form: The ally appears immediately.
Higher form: Retroactive: a retired adventurer of your choosing heard it some time ago, set out, and arrives any minute now.

Longknife

By means of certain motions with a knife, the ritualist causes cuts on visible targets at a great distance.
Skill: Longknife/2
Escalation: taxing
Higher form: Longknife/4, target anyone you saw in the last hour

Meddler's Broth (sustained)

Deface a village accord, confuse ancestral spirits into sustaining only the ritualist. Healing rate x10 near the stone.
Skill: Meddling/2
Escalation: Ostium Terrere (the village is drawn down into the underworld)
Higher form: The effect includes up to two others the ritualist is touching.
Higher form: Healing accelerates to 6 health/hour, and the critical injury period shrinks to a day.

Meddler's Flock (Sustained)

Deface a village accord, impersonating an elder in a time of need: call forth d6+1 undead to perform labor or harm enemies.
Skill: Meddling/2
Escalation: retribution (undead)
Higher form: Meddling/3, 2d10 emerge, led by a armored warrior.
Higher form: Meddling/4, d100 emerge. For every 10, there is an armored warrior. If there are 50 or more, they are led by a elder that knows d3+1 hedge wizardry rituals.

Thief's Candle (Sustained)

Enchants a candle, torch or lantern so that only the bearer can see its light.
Skill: Survival/1
Escalation: bound spirit
Higher form: Allies also benefit
Higher form: Allies can see the light through up to 300 paces of stone

Nightfisher's Web (Sustained)

Scratch a labyrinth into the dirt, calling and catching a wandering spirit or demon within 2d6 days. Hopefully you're awake when it creeps.
Skill: Nightfishing/2
Escalation: Transformation
Higher form: Nightfishing/3, move the demon by pulling an ethereal chain.
Higher form: Nightfishing/3, fling the demon into the gray world
Higher form: Nightfishing/4, imprison the demon in an object, any who hold/wear it may speak with it.

Rictus

Paralyze an enemy with muscle spasms.
Skill: Rictus/2
Higher form: Rictus/3, d6 enemies present
Higher form: Rictus/4, turn a victim to stone