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# Apocalypse Oracle

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*A minimal, all-in-one toolkit to play your favorite tabletop RPGs without a GM.*

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## How to Play

1. Create a character using your chosen game system. Any game will work.
2. Roll for a **RANDOM EVENT** or **PLOT HOOK**, then **SET THE SCENE**.
3. Start asking the **ORACLE** questions. Interpret the answers in context.
4. Play the game to overcome the challenges of the scene.
5. Use **GM MOVES** to move the action.
6. **SET THE SCENE** for the next thing you want your character to do.

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## Set the Scene

Describe where your character is and what they are trying to accomplish, then roll a **SCENE COMPLICATION**.

### Scene Complications (d6):

1. **Conflict** – hostile forces oppose you
2. **Obstacle** – something blocks the way
3. **Complication** – wouldn't it suck if...
4. **Behavior** – an NPC acts suddenly
5. **Mystery** – all is not as it seems
6. **None** – things actually go as planned

Roll 1d6 to see if something unexpected happens. On a 5+, it is an **ALTERED SCENE**.

### Altered Scene (d6):

1. A major detail of the scene is enhanced or somehow worse.
2. The environment is different.
3. Unexpected NPCs are present.
4. Add a **SCENE COMPLICATION**.
5. Add a **RANDOM EVENT**.
6. Add a **PACING MOVE**.

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## GM Moves

Whenever you need to advance the action or describe consequences, roll on the tables below and describe the results as the GM normally would.

### Karma Die (d6):

Roll 1d6 for the **KARMA DIE** at the start of each scene. When a character fails an action and there are consequences, roll a **SOFT MOVE** and reduce the die by 1. If the **KARMA DIE** is already 1, use a **HARD MOVE** instead and then reroll it.

Use a **PACING MOVE** when there is a lull in the action, or you think “what now?” Rolling a **PACING MOVE** does not change the **KARMA DIE**.

### Pacing Moves (d6):

1. Foreshadow Trouble
2. Reveal a New Detail
3. An NPC Takes Action
4. Advance a Threat
5. Advance a Plot
6. Add a **RANDOM EVENT** to the scene

### Soft Moves (d6):

1. Foreshadow Trouble
2. Put Someone in a Spot
3. Offer a Choice
4. Advance a Threat
5. Reveal an Unwelcome Truth
6. Impose a Cost

### Hard Moves (d6):

1. Cause Harm
2. Cause Harm
3. Break Something
4. Use Up Resources
5. The Move Backfires
6. A Threat Succeeds

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## Oracle (Yes/No Question)

When you need to ask a simple question, choose the likelihood that it is “yes” and roll two dice.

Ex: “Is the door to the building guarded?”

### Answer (d6):

**Likely:** Yes on 3+  
**Even:** Yes on 4+  
**Unlikely:** Yes on 5+

### Qualifier (d6):

...but... on 1  
...and... on 6

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## Random Event

When you need to create a random event, draw for the **EVENT FOCUS** then add an **ACTION QUESTION**. Combine the results into an event that makes sense.

### Event Focus (card):

2 – Ally Action	9 – Discovery
3 – Enemy Action	T – Bystanders
4 – Current Plot	J – New Enemy
5 – Side Plot	Q – New Ally
6 – Environment	K – New Hazard
7 – Object	A – Weird Event
8 – Remote Event	

Clubs – active, aggressive, negative  
Diamonds – transformative, expected  
Spades – mysterious, unexpected  
Hearts – passive, docile, positive

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## NPC and Enemy Moves

When an NPC or Enemy needs to act, roll below to see what they do.

### Action (d6):

1. Obvious, passive
2. Obvious, active
3. Employ a strength or special ability
4. Seek an advantage
5. Act on a personality trait
6. Unexpected or insightful

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## Oracle (Action Question)

When you need to know what something does, draw a card from a deck.

Ex: “What are the guards doing?”

### Answer (card):

2 – Seek	9 – Fail
3 – Oppose	T – Take
4 – Communicate	J – Abandon
5 – Move	Q – Assist
6 – Harm	K – Change
7 – Create	A – Deceive
8 – Plan	

Clubs – physical, strong, constructed  
Diamonds – mental, plotting, technical  
Spades – magical, intuitive, strange  
Hearts – personal, social, emotional

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## Oracle (Description Question)

When you need know what something is or how it looks, draw a card from a deck.

Ex: “What sort of vehicle do they have?”

### Answer (card):

2 – Small	9 – Unsavory
3 – Large	T – Specialized
4 – Old	J – Unexpected
5 – New	Q – Exotic
6 – Mundane	K – Dignified
7 – Simple	A – Unique
8 – Complex	

Clubs – looks, design  
Diamonds – quality, operation  
Spades – purpose, function  
Hearts – meaning, significance

## Dungeon Crawler

Use this when exploring a dangerous location like a typical dungeon. Roll once for each table below and combine the results into an area that makes sense.

The first area always has 3 exits, one of which is a dungeon exit.

\* If you are seeking a goal, (a specific **LOCATION**, **ENCOUNTER**, or **OBJECT**), ask the **ORACLE** if this is the element you seek.

### Location (d6):

1. A typical, unremarkable area
2. A typical, unremarkable area
3. A living area or meeting place
4. A working or utility area
5. An area with a special feature
6. A location for a specialized purpose\*

### Encounter (d6):

1. None
2. None
3. Hostile enemies
4. Hostile enemies
5. An obstacle blocks the way
6. A unique NPC or adversary\*

### Object (d6):

1. Nothing, or mundane objects
2. Nothing, or mundane objects
3. An interesting item or clue
4. A useful tool, key, or device
5. Something valuable, treasure
6. A rare or special item\*

### Total Exits (d6):

1. Dead end (1 exit)
2. Dead end (1 exit)
3. 2 exits
4. 2 exits
5. 3 exits (connects to existing area)
6. 3 exits

## Hex Crawler

Use this to generate maps of a larger area. Whenever the characters enter a hex, generate the **TERRAIN** and **CONTENTS** of all surrounding hexes, then roll an **EVENT** for the current hex.

Define the three terrain types for this region (common, uncommon, and rare).

### Terrain (d6):

1. Same as current terrain
2. Same as current terrain
3. Common terrain
4. Common terrain
5. Uncommon terrain
6. Rare

### Contents (d6):

1. Typical
2. Typical
3. Typical
4. Typical
5. Typical
6. Roll a **FEATURE**

### Features (d6):

1. Notable structure
2. Dangerous hazard
3. A settlement
4. Strange natural feature
5. New region (set new terrain types)
6. **DUNGEON CRAWLER** entrance

### Event (d6):

1. None
2. None
3. None
4. Hostile enemies
5. An NPC or group
6. **RANDOM EVENT**, then **SET THE SCENE**

## NPC Generator

Use this to generate NPCs that may be encountered while playing. Roll once for each table below and combine the results into a new NPC that makes sense.

### Social Position (d6):

1. Lives outside society
2. Working class
3. Merchant class
4. Upper class
5. Rank within a faction
6. Specialist or unique role

### Notable Feature (d6):

1. Unremarkable
2. Unremarkable
3. Obvious physical trait
4. Quirk or mannerism
5. Unusual equipment
6. Unexpected age or origin

### Attitude (d6):

1. Withdrawn
2. Cautious
3. Neutral
4. Neutral
5. Sociable
6. Helpful

### Conversation Focus (card):

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 2 – Current Need | 9 – Rumors        |
| 3 – Allies       | T – A Plot Arc    |
| 4 – Community    | J – Recent Events |
| 5 – History      | Q – Equipment     |
| 6 – Future Plans | K – A Faction     |
| 7 – Enemies      | A – The PC(s)     |
| 8 – Knowledge    |                   |

Clubs – descriptive, obvious

Diamonds – knowing, logical

Spades – mysterious, speculative

Hearts – scheming, inquisitive

## Plot Hook Generator

Use this to generate plot hooks, quests, or missions for the PCs to follow. Roll once for each table below and combine the results into a hook that makes sense.

### Objective (d6):

1. Eliminate a threat
2. Learn the truth
3. Recover something valuable
4. Escort or deliver to safety
5. Restore something broken
6. Save an ally in peril

### Plot Focus (card):

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 2 – Ancient  | 9 – Mysterious  |
| 3 – Advanced | T – Natural     |
| 4 – Creepy   | J – Powerful    |
| 5 – Dirty    | Q – Extravagant |
| 6 – Exotic   | K – Epic        |
| 7 – Military | A – Weird       |
| 8 – Simple   |                 |

Clubs – enemies, complications

Diamonds – functionality, nature

Spades – history, origin

Hearts – people, meaning

### Adversaries (d6):

1. A powerful organization
2. Outlaws
3. Guardians
4. Local inhabitants
5. Enemy horde or army
6. A new or recurring villain

### Rewards (d6):

1. Money or valuables
2. Money or valuables
3. Knowledge and secrets
4. Support of an ally
5. Advance a plot arc
6. A unique item of power

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## More Information

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Apocalypse Oracle was designed to be incredibly concise and minimalistic, but still have all the essential tools required to run a game without a GM. The first two pages of this document are all that are required to play. I understand some people might want to know a bit more, though, so here are some notes. There's also a brief Example of Play at the end.

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## Intended Audience

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This is really meant for people who are already familiar with RPGs and playing them solo. Most of the tools assume you have already encountered similar concepts in other products. If you're completely new to solo or GM-less gaming, check out some of the products in the Acknowledgements to get started.

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## Design Philosophy

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There are a great many excellent tools out there to run a solo RPG game. I always found, however, that many of them were overly complicated. You shouldn't have to read 6 pages of rules and make 10 dice rolls just to determine what the guards in a room are doing.

Also, many tools only provide part of what you need to actually play. Some only answer questions, while others only provide narrative structure or generate random elements. A complete oracle should do all these things.

Apocalypse Oracle was designed to provide every tool needed to run a solo game using any system while using as few words as humanly possible.

One page to control game flow and answer questions. One page to generate random exploration content. That's it.

Finally, every table was designed to work with either a d6 or a deck of cards. Nothing else should be required to play.

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## Powered by the Apocalypse

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Though the GM Moves section is highly inspired by PbtA games, the system will work with virtually any tabletop RPG. The reason the PbtA framework was chosen is that it gamifies the role of the GM with discrete moves that can fit in a table.

How you use the GM Moves will depend on the game system you are playing. If you're playing a PbtA game, it will be obvious when to use Soft Moves and Hard Moves because PbtA is built around the concept of partial success. The Karma Die was added to escalate GM Moves in systems that don't.

If you need more information on how to use the GM moves, check out any PbtA game such as *Dungeon World*, *Uncharted Worlds*, or many others.

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## Soft Moves

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In general, Soft Moves represent setbacks or partial successes. Maybe the roll failed, but the character still gets part of what they wanted or all of it with a cost. Soft Moves keep the action moving during failures and can be used in virtually any RPG system instead of just saying "no that failed".

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## Hard Moves

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Hard Moves represent tough consequences, damage, and loss. They

should only be used after several Soft Moves have raised the stakes. When using a Hard Move, don't hold back. The character should feel the sting.

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## Non-PbtA Games

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When playing a Non-PbtA game, it is important to remember that not every roll needs to result in a GM Move.

Sometimes the Spot check just fails because there was nothing there. GM Moves should be used when a roll fails and there are consequences for failure. Checking the room for secret doors? Probably not. Climbing a cliff in the rain to escape group of cultists? Definitely.

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## The Power of Interpretation

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Some solo RPG tools contain dozens of tables with hundreds of entries each. The problem with these is that they are either thematically tuned to a certain genre of game, or they are so specific the results just don't make sense.

When using the Apocalypse Oracle, remember that the answers are meant to inspire an idea that makes sense in the context of your game. The answer should have *meaning*, not just be a random detail. The result may be surprising, but it should always be logical.

If after a few seconds of thought you can't make the result fit in your game, just generate a new result. Don't do this more than once or twice though or it can quickly spiral out of control.

Give all results meaning. Embrace the unexpected. Reject the nonsensical.

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## Using a Deck of Cards

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Many people who try this system wonder why a deck of cards was chosen for randomization. The answer is simply that a playing card carries more information than a die roll and the suits work very well for applying a "domain" to the results.

I've seen this used to great success in systems like *World vs Hero* and decided to apply it to a generic solo engine. Instead of having a huge table with every adjective you can pull from the dictionary, you have a smaller table with more general words and a domain that they can apply to. This results in more interpretation and less guesswork about how "divinely slippery" could possibly apply to your current situation.

When using a deck, leave the Jokers in and shuffle the deck whenever you draw one. If for some reason you don't have a deck of cards, you can use a d12 and a d4 to generate results instead.

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## Acknowledgements

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Apocalypse Oracle was created by taking the things I liked from other solo tools, stripping them down to the bare bones, and then adding in a bit of the process I use for my own games. It would not be possible without inspiration from the following:

- Mythic (Tana Pigeon)
- World vs Hero (John Fiore)
- Conjecture, UNE (Zach Best)
- MUNE
- Dungeon World (Koebel, LaTorra)
- The Black Hack (David Black)
- Maze Rats (Ben Milton)
- The Lone Wolf solo RPG community

## Example of Play

Apocalypse Oracle can be used with any RPG system to play a game without a GM. For this example, I will be playing **The Black Hack 2E** with a single PC.

Using the Black Hack game book, I create a new character using the standard rules. I end up with "Tenpiece", a Dwarven Thief living as an outcast in human lands.

I don't know anything about the setting except that it is a dark and gritty fantasy world where adventurers must be cunning to survive. I'll start by asking the Oracle a few questions to get started.

### Setup Questions

Am I in a settlement of some sort? (Likely)  
Answer: [2, 2] No

Tenpiece is out in the wilds. He must have gotten himself into trouble, then? (Likely)  
Answer: [3, 3] Yes

Figures. Let's get this adventure started.  
**Random Event**  
Focus: [JC] New Enemy, hostile  
Action: [QD] Assist, plotting

Sounds like a former ally turned on him. What's the initial location like?  
Description: [2S] Small, design

## Scene 1 - Here We Go Again

Bound and gagged, Tenpiece hangs upside down from the ceiling of a secluded shack deep in the woods while his former adventuring companions rifle through his possessions. Who knew

wizards were so touchy about their spell components. That silver dust would have fetched a good price if he hadn't been caught lifting it. How is he going to weasel his way out this time?

### Set the Scene

Complication: [1] Hostile forces  
Altered Scene: [5, 6] Pacing Move  
Pacing Move: [4] Advance a Threat  
Karma Die: [3]

Tenpiece rotates slowly on the rope as he sees the wizard pull out the pilfered bag of silver dust with fire in her eyes. A dagger flashes in her hand as she turns toward the captive dwarf.

"I knew he was a thief! I'll send your head to the Tower of Dust for this!" She stalks toward Tenpiece with the dagger raised. What do you do?

Tenpiece squirms at the end of the rope as he frantically attempts to undie his bonds using a small pin he keeps up his sleeve. If he can just get a hand free...

### Escape Bonds

DEX (advantage): [12] Failure

### GM Move: Soft

[2] Put Someone in a Spot  
Karma Die: 2

The sorceress grabs the dwarf by the beard and pulls his head upward, holding the dagger an inch from his exposed throat.

"I bet there's a reward if we bring this rat to the constables," she says, grinning. "But I say we kill him ourselves."

Looks like she could kill you in an instant with that dagger. What do you do?

Okay, so she's crazy. What about the other guy? Is he on board with this?  
Normal  
Answer: [2, 6] No, and...

No, and in fact he looks like he might want to intervene.

Tenpiece looks pleadingly at the other man. Surly he can see that it was just a bit of silver dust. Nothing to get so worked up over, right? Tenpiece mumbles through his gag at the man.

### Generate NPC

Social: [3] Merchant class  
Features: [4] Quirk or mannerism  
Quirk Description: [9C] Unsavory, looks  
Attitude: [6] Helpful  
Focus: [4C] Community, obvious

The other man is Hektor, a former mercenary guard turned adventurer. He's always chewing on a wad of some sort of leaf and spitting everywhere.

Hektor steps up behind the fuming wizard and grabs her hand, slowly pulling the dagger away from Tenpiece's throat.

"Snow, he may be a rat, but we can't just kill him. They'd come looking for us. Someone would. People like him have... connections."

### NPC Action: Snow

[4] Seek an Advantage

The sorceress does not relent, still struggling to free her arm from the large

man's grasp. It's hopeless, though, so she eventually lets the blade drop but never takes her eyes off the dwarf.

"Fine," she says in a huff. "You can keep your miserable hide, but I demand something in return. Your full share of the haul from the Vault when we fine it."

### Snow Casts Charm

Resist with WIS: [2] Success

Hektor pulls the gag out of the dwarf's mouth and Tenpiece immediately grins.

"Love, you can keep your silver, but I'm keeping my gold."

Snow scowls at both men before turning and storming out of the shack.

### What now?

GM Pacing Move: [2] Reveal a New Detail

Cool morning sunlight streams in from the open door, revealing shrouded expanse of the Misty Woods beyond. Snow likely went to untie the horses and will be leaving soon. What do you do?

Tenpiece lands in a heap as Hektor unceremoniously cuts the rope with his axe blade. "Guess we better go after her," Tenpiece says, dusting himself off. "She'd be lost without us, you know."

Hektor only scowls and spits to the side.

Wait, didn't she say something about a Vault? What's that about?

### Plot Hook Generator

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