

CORIOLIS

BURNING SHAOLIN

BY ROBIN D. LAWS




NOW IS THE TIME...

...when corrupt eunuch officials undermine a once-great ruling Dynasty; when martial artists, white-bearded old masters, and supernatural creatures struggle for control of powerful chi forces; when a band of honorable warriors is called upon to battle a demon sorcerer in a legendary mountain monastery.

Burning Shaolin is the first of Atlas Games' Coriolis adventures. It contains complete game statistics for both the D20 system and the Feng Shui roleplaying game. You can find it at your local game retailer or at our website: www.atlas-games.com.

This special excerpt contains new D20 rules for Faceless Hordes and Wuxia-Style Combat, bringing the furious Kung Fu action of Feng Shui to your D20 adventures.

New D20 Rules: Faceless Hordes

 Call 'em mooks, call 'em thugs, extras, what have you: faceless hordes are large groups of opponents for the heroes to bowl quickly through, in true action movie style ... PCs are meant to slice through faceless hordes like butter, and probably won't get hurt doing so. Although they largely exist to show how buff the PCs are, they can be dangerous to those who fail to keep an eye on them. They can also provide a tactical challenge to the PCs, making it harder for PCs to get to the truly challenging opponents they really want to smite. They can ring themselves around a magician so PCs can't interfere with his spellcasting. Faceless hordes can carry off the princess they're out to rescue, while the primary villains pound on them.

Any type of opponent can make up a faceless horde. You can even have a faceless horde of non-humanoid creatures, from giant toads to floating eyeballs, if that suits your fancy. If you want to make them members of other creature classes, you can give them additional abilities: a faceless horde of zombies might share the usual perks and drawbacks of the undead, for example.

Usually, though, a faceless horde is composed of humans or their close kin. What faceless hordes have in common is a bizarrely unswerving loyalty to their bosses. They'll wade in, one after another, to fight the heroes, even though dozens of their comrades have already been easily squelched and now lie bleeding or groaning in the dirt.

Roll once for the faceless horde's Initiative. Roll separately for each member's attacks.

CR 1/6; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d8, hp special, Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather); Atk melee special (1d6, short sword) or missile special (1d6, short bow); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL any (usually E); SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10

Special Attacks and Qualities: Faceless hordes follow these modifications to the D20 combat rules:

4 hp Only: Every member of a faceless horde goes down after suffering 4 hit points of damage, no matter what. On the other hand, they ignore all damage under 4 points. They're either up or down. This allows the GM to keep track only of the number of currently active horde members, instead of monitoring individual hit points for each.

Special Attack Rules: Members of a faceless horde only hit on a natural 19 or 20. Even so, their victims may avoid damage by making an Armor check — that is, a roll modified by their total bonus to their Armor

Class — against a DC of 25. Characters may not be eligible for this save when helpless, or if they just stand there and allow the hordes to attack them, without fighting back. Attacking a non-horde enemy does not disqualify them from making these saves.

Lucky Shot: Whenever a horde member rolls the maximum possible result on a damage die (for example, a result of 6 when rolling a d6), he gets to roll the die again and add the new result to the original total. If the extra die roll is also a lucky shot, he adds it to his total and rolls again, and so on.

Feat Vulnerability : Characters with certain combat feats gain extra benefits against faceless hordes.


- **Deflect Arrows:** Your DC for deflecting arrows fired from a faceless horde is reduced to 15. You can use this after trying the standard Armor check that all characters get against a faceless horde.
- **Dodge:** You can designate an entire horde as the opponent you're Dodging, gaining a +2 bonus to your Armor checks when hit by any of them.
- **Cleave:** Against faceless hordes, you can act as if you also have the Great Cleave feat, even when you don't.
- **Great Cleave:** When you fell one opponent in a faceless horde, you may get to move on to another, even when he is not in the immediate vicinity. Make a Reflex check against a DC of 20; if you succeed, you can move on to any enemy within 15 feet of you. Once you've started to bounce from location to location, you must make a successful Reflex check (DC 20) for each for each new horde member you wish to engage.
- **Power Attack:** Against faceless hordes, you can act as if you also have the Cleave feat, even when you don't.
- **Whirlwind Attack:** You gain an additional 25 XP for each faceless horde member you fell with this feat.

Extra Attack Vulnerability : When attacking only members of a faceless horde, ignore the general rules for extra attacks. Instead, you get one extra attack for every 4 points of Attack bonus, and all attacks are made at your standard Attack bonus.

Ragnulf's Attack bonus is +9. 4 goes into 9 twice. Ragnulf gets 2 attacks versus the faceless horde, both at +9.



New D20 Rules: Wuxia Style Combat

 The following optional rules and style notes allow you to simulate the inventive stunts of Hong Kong martial arts and fantasy movies. We recommend that you use them in Burning Shaolin.

STUNTS

Characters gain additional XP when their players describe the method of their attacks in an entertaining way. For example:

“I leap up into the air, slicing at his neck as I jump over him.”

“I kick a cloud of dust into the air, then slash at his exposed neck as he staggers back to clear his eyes.”

The XP bonus equals the character’s level x 10.

The bonus applies only if the stunt description is being used for the first time in the current fight. This includes uses by other players, or even by you, the GM.

The GM is also encouraged to describe the actions of PC opponents in this way. (Each fight scene in this adventure provides examples of things that might happen during the fight.) The idea here is to inspire your players to do the same, by demonstrating how it’s done. Try not to hog all of the good or obvious stunt ideas yourself, though.

PLAYER-CREATED PROPS

Players are not only allowed but encouraged to invent minor features of the set where the fight scene occurs.

“The floor is tiled, so I use my toe to dislodge a tile, and then kick it towards Kan Kuei’s nasty, scaly head.”

“There’s a big coil of heavy-duty rope in the back of the shop. I whirl it around to deflect the incoming arrows.”

The GM is allowed to declare that certain props are not present, and should use this discretion when the player is being utterly unreasonable. You should rule out Uzi sub-machineguns and rods of smiting, but not the sorts of props you’ve seen used in movies like Drunken Master or Fong Sai Yuk.

EXTRA MOBILITY

As if suspended on wires, wuxia characters jump, leap and tumble across the scene of a fight, remaining always in motion. Standing in one place and waving a sword is only for characters without benefit of Hong Kong fight choreographers. During combat only, any character’s maximum distance for forward or upward leaps is doubled. In wuxia fights, you can make a full attack and still take a full move. This rule does not make the light crossbow any faster to use.

GRAVITY, SCHMAVITY

In a wuxia fight, almost any structure is capable of supporting your weight, if you run along it fast enough. Characters can run or leap from treetop to treetop, for example. Any entertaining move should never be ruled out by the requirements of mere physics.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

Characters rarely finish a fight armed with the same weapons they started out with. But, curiously, the found weapons prove at least as effective as the ones they replace.

Any failed hit that comes within 2 points of the target’s armor class disarms him (assuming he uses a weapon at all; creatures with natural weaponry are exempt from this rule). When you’re disarmed, your weapon travels 20 – 80 feet (2d4 x 10) in a random direction.

This is more of a cosmetic disadvantage than anything else. Any found or improvised weapon does the same damage as the weapon you lost. This is true whether the new, improvised weapon is a length of rope, a branch, or even a large fish.

However, during a round in which you regain your original lost weapon (or that of another character), you gain a +2 attack and damage bonus with it.

If you lost a magical weapon, and fight a creature only hit by such weapons, your improvised item still works against it. Logic? Why, I oughtta ... !



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Robin D. Laws is the designer of Feng Shui and various other games, including the recently-released Rune (Atlas) and Dying Earth (Pelgrane Press). Check out his fiction: The Rough and the Smooth, from Atlas, and the upcoming Promise of Thunder, a Glorantha novel from Issaries, Inc. Robin lives in the city of Toronto, where he is currently obsessed with his new DVD player.

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