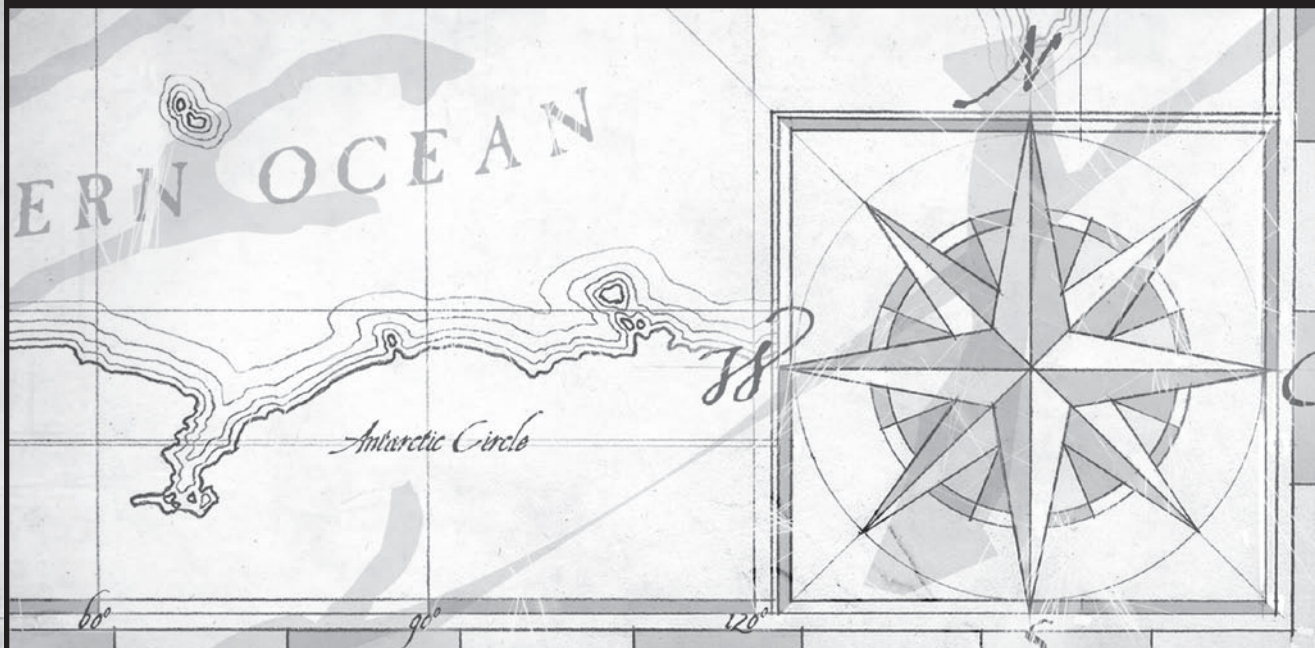


⊕ EXAMPLE OF PLAY



Alex's character is a big game hunter named Mick Hardigan. He's an expert marksman who has hunted dangerous animals all over the world. Hardigan takes pride in his accomplishments and has a vast collection of trophies from his hunting expeditions. He believes no one in the world is a better hunter, and he's out to prove it. Unfortunately, he's run out of challenges, and is starting to get bored. Where is he going to find prey worthy of his skills?

That's when he caught wind of an expedition looking for an experienced guide and big game hunter. The chap leading the expedition was most insistent on seeing evidence of the hunter's skills. Of course, Hardigan was more than happy to show off his trophies. Each time the chap saw one, he would ask if Hardigan had ever killed anything bigger. Wherever this expedition was heading, Hardigan knew he had to go with them.

When the expedition leader finally let on that their destination was the Hollow Earth, Hardigan was more than a little bit skeptical. After seeing the evidence, Hardigan had to allow for the possibility that such a place might exist; if it did, then so did the dinosaurs—and for that possibility alone, he'd take the chance.

As it turned out, the chap was right about everything: The Hollow Earth, the dinosaurs—everything. The only problem is that Hardigan has been relegated to guiding the expedition through this bizarre place. The sun never moves, making it nearly impossible to navigate, and he's had to rely on visual markers instead.

Most of the time, he's not sure if they're walking in circles or not.

Worst of all, the expedition leader has made them avoid big game, trying to keep the expedition out of harm's way. It's been more than Hardigan can bear, so when the expedition made camp tonight, he waited until the rest of the party fell asleep, then slipped away to go hunting.

Hardigan moved through the jungle carefully, looking for game. He'd spotted the tracks of several herbivores—of the sort he'd already killed for food. They were no challenge. No challenge at all.

And then he finds it. A huge track, nearly four feet long and six inches deep, sunk into the soft jungle soil. It's the footprint of a giant three-toed biped; a Tyrannosaurus Rex, he's sure of it. This is the challenge Hardigan has been looking for. Hunting and killing a T. Rex would be the ultimate challenge of his hunting skills! He cannot let this opportunity pass him by.

The Gamemaster warns Alex that a T. Rex is a very powerful creature and likely more than one character can handle. Alex reminds him that his character has the Overconfident Flaw and, as a big game hunter, he can't pass up the opportunity to take on the King of the Dinosaurs! The Gamemaster agrees that going after a T. Rex by himself qualifies as roleplaying Hardigan's Flaw—he will undoubtedly be in over his head—and awards a Style point. This gives Hardigan a total of six

Style points and with that much in the bank, Alex is feeling pretty optimistic about his character's ability to take down the T. Rex.

Tracking down the T. Rex requires an extended Survival roll. The Gamemaster tells Alex that each roll represents fifteen minutes of tracking, and he will need to accumulate ten successes to find the dinosaur because the trail has gone cold. Fortunately, the T. Rex is easy to follow because of its large, distinctive tracks. The Gamemaster sets the difficulty rating for the Survival roll at 1. Each success rolled in excess of the difficulty counts toward the ten successes needed to find the creature.

Hardigan's Survival rating is 5, and he has a Skill Specialization in Tracking, giving him a dice pool of six. Taking the Average of his dice pool nets Alex three successes: more than enough to track the creature without having to make any dice rolls. Without pausing the story, the Gamemaster tells Alex that Hardigan has no trouble following the trail. He catches up to the Tyrannosaurus in a clearing a little over an hour later.

The T. Rex is huge: well over 25 feet tall, with a scaly hide and an enormous mouth full of dagger-like teeth. Deciding to be nice, the Gamemaster tells Alex that the Tyrannosaurus hasn't spotted Hardigan; it's busy devouring a small kill, so Hardigan can still choose to leave in safety.

Alex replies that Hardigan's whole life has been building to this moment, and he's not about to back out now. Instead, he's going to try to sneak into position where he can get a clean shot at the T. Rex.

Sneaking into position requires an opposed Stealth vs. Perception roll. Alex will make a Stealth roll for Hardigan, and the Gamemaster will make a Perception roll for the T. Rex. The character with the most successes wins. If both characters have the same number of successes, the T. Rex will win because it is considered the defender.

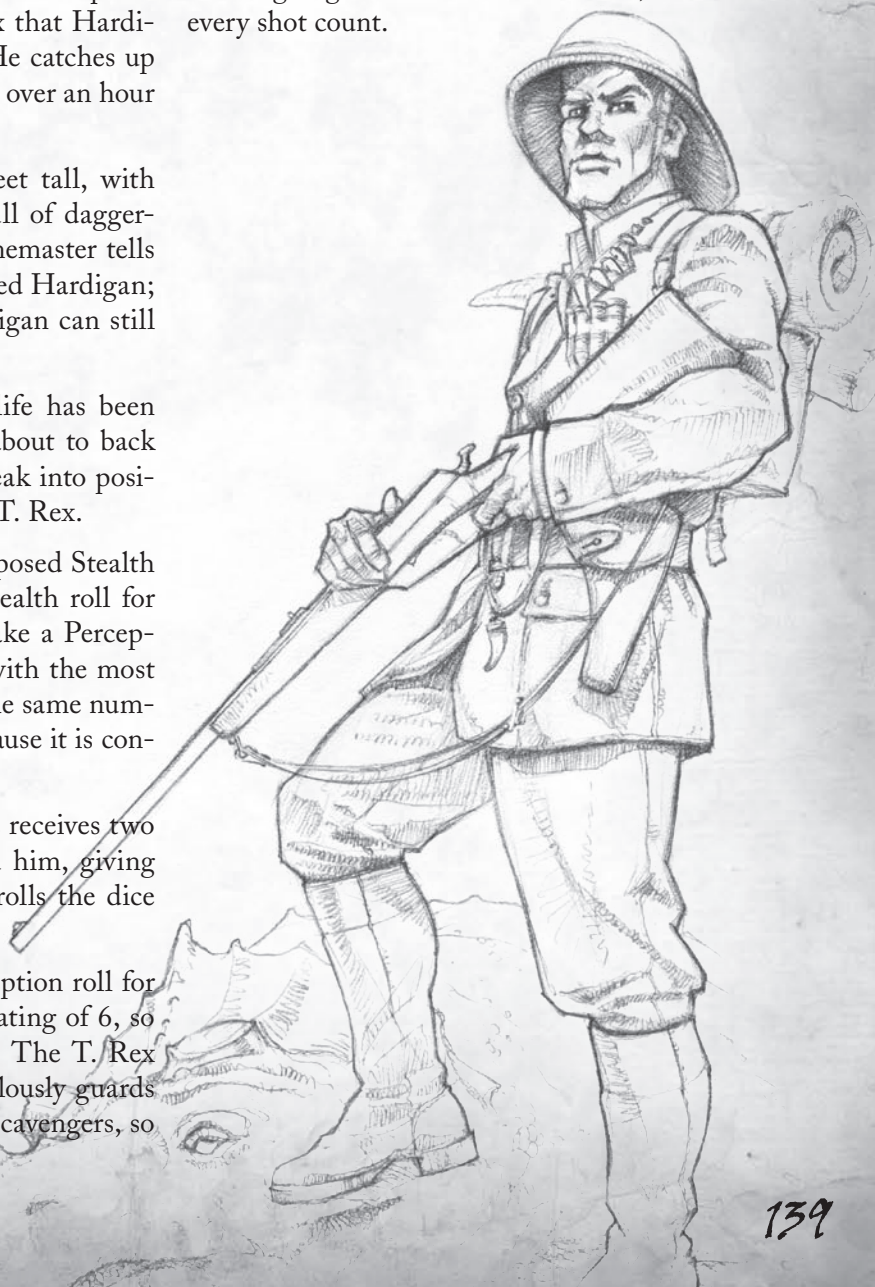
Hardigan's Stealth rating is 6, plus he receives two bonus dice for all the tree cover around him, giving him a modified dice pool of eight. He rolls the dice and gets three successes.

Next, the Gamemaster makes a Perception roll for the Tyrannosaurus. It has a Perception rating of 6, so he rolls six dice and gets four successes. The T. Rex spots Hardigan! The giant carnivore jealously guards its kills and is always on the lookout for scavengers, so it turns to attack the hunter.

The Gamemaster signals the beginning of combat, and time switches into combat turns. The first step in combat is to roll Initiative for each character. The character with the most successes takes the first action, followed by the character with the next highest total, and so on. If two or more characters end up with the same number of successes, the character with the highest base Initiative rating goes first.

Alex rolls Hardigan's Initiative rating of 6 and gets three successes. The Gamemaster rolls the T. Rex's Initiative rating of 4 and gets two successes. With the highest Initiative, Hardigan gets to take the first action.

Alex's character is in deep trouble. He was hoping to surprise the T. Rex with his first shot and kill it before it had a chance to react. Unfortunately, the T. Rex spotted Hardigan before he could attack and now, if he is going to survive this encounter, he has to make every shot count.





Hardigan is going to have to hit the T. Rex where it hurts. Making a called shot to hit a vulnerable area penalizes the attacker's dice pool, but Hardigan has the Accuracy Talent, which reduces this penalty. Alex wants to reduce this penalty as much as possible, so he decides to boost Hardigan's Accuracy Talent. He spends all six of his Style points to boost Hardigan's Accuracy Talent to its maximum level, which allows him to ignore up to a -8 called shot penalty for the duration of the combat. If he can do enough damage to the Tyrannosaurus before it gets to him, he just might get out of this alive.

Boosting Hardigan's Accuracy Talent is a reflexive action, so Alex still gets to attack this turn. He decides that Hardigan is going to stand his ground and try to kill the T. Rex, or at least hurt it enough to dissuade it from attacking him. He'd love to be able to shoot the T. Rex more than once, but his modified Winchester rifle has a rate of fire of one shot per turn.

Instead, he declares that Hardigan is making a called shot to hit a vital area. This means he suffers a penalty to his dice pool equal to the target's Defense rating, but any successes rolled automatically do damage. The T. Rex's Defense is 8 (modified for size), which means that Alex suffers a -8 penalty on his attack roll. Because of his boosted Talent, however, Alex gets to ignore this penalty and attack the T. Rex with his full dice pool.

Alex's modified dice pool to attack the T. Rex is 14. Hardigan's Firearms rating is 9, plus he has a Skill Specialization in Rifles and he gets four bonus dice for his modified Winchester rifle. The Tyrannosaurus is 50 feet away, so there are no range penalties on the attack roll. Alex gets to ignore the called shot penalty, so he has a final dice pool of 14 to shoot the T. Rex.

Alex would love to buy some bonus dice, but he spent all of his Style points boosting Hardigan's Accuracy Talent and there are no other characters around to help him. So, Alex makes his attack roll and hopes for the best. If he can manage to stun the T. Rex, it will lose its next attack and buy him some more time.

Alex rolls the dice and gets a whopping eight successes! The Gamemaster does not make a Defense roll for the T. Rex because of the called shot, so the dinosaur takes the full eight points of lethal damage, reducing its Health from 16 to 8. The shot hits the dinosaur in a soft spot near its heart. It's a devastating blow but, unfortunately, the T. Rex's Stun rating is eight, which means that it's not enough damage to stun the creature.

Now it's the T. Rex's turn. The enraged reptile charges Hardigan. The T. Rex has a Move of 12, which means that it can move 60 feet per combat turn with a normal move. This is more than enough to move it into melee range with Hardigan and still be able to attack. The T. Rex charges across the clearing, roaring, the ground trembling beneath its feet. It opens its huge maw, filled with gleaming teeth, and snaps at Hardigan.

The Tyrannosaurus attempts to bite Hardigan. Its Brawl rating is 14, plus it gets four bonus dice for its bite attack. Because of its size, however, the T. Rex suffers a penalty to attack targets smaller than itself. The T. Rex's Size rating is 4 and Hardigan's Size rating is 0, so the huge predator suffers four penalty dice on its attack roll, giving it a final dice pool of 14 to bite Hardigan.

The Gamemaster rolls the dice and gets seven successes. Alex rolls Hardigan's Defense rating of six and only gets two successes. Hardigan takes five points of lethal damage. Once again, Alex wishes he still had some Style points left, so that he could reduce the damage; alas, he does not, and his character takes the full damage. The T. Rex chomps down on Hardigan's upper torso, picking him up off the ground and shaking him like a rag doll.

Alex marks off five lethal wounds on his character sheet, reducing Hardigan's Health from 5 to 0. He's not dying, but that's not the worst of it. He's taken more damage than double his Stun rating, which means that even though he's not dying, he's been knocked out. He will remain unconscious and defenseless for one minute per point of damage inflicted in excess of his doubled Stun rating. His Stun rating is 2 and he took five points of damage, so unless the T. Rex eats him before then, Hardigan will regain consciousness in one minute.

Will the T. Rex consume its unconscious victim? Has Hardigan's foolhardiness cost him his life? Alex is dying to know the answer to these questions, but the Gamemaster decides to keep him in suspense and leave it as a cliffhanger. The Gamemaster switches the focus back to the rest of the characters who wake some time later to find Hardigan missing. How long have they been asleep? Will they be able to help him—assuming they can even find him? The Hollow Earth is always a dangerous place, but it's even more perilous without a guide...