

Fear of the Dark

Rules for Night Fighting in Mordheim

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In the Night

Most people take it for granted that battles are fought during daylight hours, and so get a clear view of the battlefield, thereby giving them plenty of unrealistic reconnaissance in order to move troops into certain positions and launch pre-emptive strikes. In reality, there were, of course, battles fought in daylight and for very good reasons, troops could see what they were fighting and their comrades-in-arms could also see them fighting, thereby allowing them to heap up large amounts of glory and honour in the eyes of their peers. But night attacks were not altogether uncommon and in the Warhammer World this is even more the case when there are so many races that are naturally nocturnal. The Chaos Dwarfs live in dark caverns and lava pits, the Dark Elves relate to the night as their element, Vampires and most active at night as are Necromancers and Skaven have perfect night vision. Even Dwarfs, working in deep mines, feel quite at home in the dark. The elements of surprise, *Fear* and *Terror* are enhanced many times in the dark and so, armies such as Skaven, Undead and Dark Elves would choose generally to arrange night attacks when their enemies are at their most vulnerable (especially Humans and Elves).

This article suggest additional, optional rules for battles by night, a few scenarios with objectives, Night Stalkers who haunt the battlefields after dark, and for the criminally insane, away of simulating night on the actual battlefield tabletop.

The Old World after Dark

The night holds many terrors for the inhabitants of the Old World. In the provinces of the Empire, mothers tell stories to their children of the fiends who stalk their human prey after dark, of Vampires and Ghouls who roam cemeteries and cross-roads preying upon travellers. The High Elves recite tales of Night Trolls and restless spirits while the Orcs speak of 'Woodz Wachez'. Almost every race is unsettled during the hours of darkness. Travellers stop at inns for the night, whilst those who must continue on their journey usually do so in large numbers, carrying talismans of purity and light and avoiding those places where nocturnal creatures wait to drag their screaming prey into their lairs. But there are those who greet the night with celebration; the Dark Elves, the Skaven and the forces of Undead to name but a few. Battles often occurred by night, during the wars against the Skaven, the Bretonnians had to withstand countless night raids and so created weapons and armour which glowed with radiance, while during the wars of the Vampire Counts, the battles were fought mainly at night, this time for attack chosen by the Vampire Lords, who were strongest during the hours of darkness.

These are the rules that I've used to simulate night battles:

The Rules of the Dark

- 1) *Terror*: Because it is difficult to see, the range for the effects of *Terror* is reduced to 4", but because of the sounds associated with *Terror* causing creatures (e.g. the flapping of a Dragon's wings or the hiss of a malevolent Wraith) and the natural eeriness of being in the dark, there is a modifier of -2 Ld for *Terror* tests. Although this quite obviously makes anything which causes *Terror* pretty nasty indeed! I felt that monsters, such as Manticores, should be even more frightening charging out of the gloom or silhouetted in a murky half-light.
- 2) All missile weapons firing at standard range are at -1 to hit, and at long range -2 to hit.
- 3) All psychology tests - *Panic*, *Fear*, etc. - are taken with a -1 modifier to Ld. This represents the increased unease of combatants in the dark (note *Terror* is at -2 Ld).
- 4) Fighters with all types of bows have the option of using *Flaming arrows*. However some restrictions do apply. The model moves at -1 to its movement since braziers have to be carried in order to light the arrows. Each model using flaming arrows costs an additional point. All attacks from flaming arrows count as flammable attacks and will cause double wounds on flammable creatures. Any arrow that hits a Skaven Warpfire thrower will cause it to blow up on the roll of a 4+ on a D6, even if no wounds have been caused, as the fuel tank is ruptured and ignites.
- 5) Creatures immune to psychology will be unaffected by darkness modifiers for Ld tests and will not flee faster. They simply shrug off the eerie effects of the darkness.
- 6) The range of *Line of Sight spells* is a maximum of 20". Wizards attune their eyes by magic to the dark and so can see more clearly when spellcasting than other troops. Wizards can still see beyond 20" but the accuracy of their spells would be in question and so they do not risk casting spells too far in fear of hitting their own troops or setting fire to a few trees, thus giving themselves away.
- 7) All cavalry charges may add +1 to combat resolution, representing the visual and psychological impact of a cavalry charge from out of the gloom.
- 8) Some troops are nocturnal creatures and have excellent *night vision* and so are not affected to these rules. Skaven, Night Goblins, Trolls, Vampires and Dark Elves can all see in the dark naturally. Dwarf miners and Chaos Dwarfs have adapted their eyes to darkness and acquired a form of night vision and undead has supernatural sight. Some monster have night vision, including Manticores, Griffons, Hippogriffs and Swarms. Daemons can see in the dark as if it was day! These races/creatures are able to ignore the effects of the dark which are concerned with psychology, spells and missile fire. It is suggested, when fighting a race that is not hampered by the dark, that an allowance of 100 GC be made to the player disadvantaged, to maintain the balance (unless, of course, it is a specific scenario).

Battles by Moonlight

The Scenarios presented in the Mordheim Rule Book can be used with the above modifications, but here is a short list of some others which relate more to battles at night.

1) THE VIP

One warband has been given the commission to escort an important Dignitary to a certain destination. A Reikland warband may be escorting a Priest of Sigmar to an important shrine, the Skaven may be escorting a disabled Grey Seer to a Wyrdstone mine. However, because the enemy is close behind and shadowing them, the warband must continue to travel without rest, by night, even through dangerous territory to reach their destination. Before arriving there, they find that their way is blocked by a large part of the pursuing warband. Battle begins at nightfall and to the defending warband it is paramount that the VIP survives.

Objective: The VIP should be represented in an appropriate way. He must be taken to the opposite side of the battlefield. He may only be represented on foot and cannot ride a mount of any kind. The VIP must pass through to the other side of the battlefield and survive in order for the objective to be completed. The enemy must obviously prevent this from happening. The VIP may be any type of character apart from the warband leader.

Deployment: As usual, but the side escorting the VIP sets up last, as opposition is already deployed blocking the escape route the VIP's warband was following.

Game length: 5 turns to complete.

Victory: Unless the VIP is killed or escorted safely to the other table edge, then use the standard Victory points system otherwise, it's quite obvious!

2) SNEAK ATTACK

One warband with an affinity to darkness has decided to attack the enemy while it slumbers. Of course, the sentries will spot their mass deployment and the planned attack but it will be too late. The attacker deploys after the defender and the attacker takes the first turn.

Deployment: As usual.

Scenery: Will be the same as usual - but the defender may place D6 makeshift huts or tents within his deployment zone to represent his camp, after all Scenery has been placed.

Game length: 5 turns.

Victory points: Use the standard system.

3) DAWN RAID

One warband decides to march on an enemy settlement during the night. The opposing warband is residing within a abandoned church and has not posted any guard. The attacking warband arrives somewhat exhausted after a long march but charges in immediately. The defenders hear the warband approaching and are able to prepare themselves.

Deployment: 12" from flanks, 24' from defender's deployment zone. The attacker deploys first and takes the first turn.

Scenery: The scenery is determined in the usual way.

Game length: 5 turns. However, because the attackers spent most of the night travelling, the attack comes near dawn and so only the first 3 turns of each side are fought under night-time conditions. The last 2 turns are fought under standard conditions.

Victory points: These are as usual, plus there is + 1 victory point for each attacking unit within the boundaries of the village at the end of the last turn.

Stalkers in the Darkness

The Old World is haunted by many strange and fabulous beasts. Many are bound by sorcery to fight in battles, many are allied to a just and noble cause and others to the forces of Chaos. There are those, however, who owe no allegiance to any master and who simply exist to plague the living. Joyless beings devoid of remorse and full of hatred, such denizens stalk the moonlit moors, the darkened, dusty roads and the foreboding forests throughout the Old World. Little is known of such creatures, many are shadows of the past when the world was still young and in its primal state.

However, they have remained enshrined in the legends and fairy tales of the Old World and when battles are fought in the dead of night these creatures are lured to the smell and the sounds of the wounded and the dying.

If you wish to include Night Stalkers in your night battles, roll a D3 at the start of the battle to determine the number that are attracted to the battlefield.

Then roll a D6 to determine which Night Stalkers are present:

1-2 Night Troll

3-4 Nightmare
5 Black Hag
6 Grendel

Randomly select a piece of scenery for each Night Stalker to start within 2" of.

Every movement phase, the Night Stalkers will move 2D6" in a random direction (in a similar fashion to Chaos Spawn, using the scatter dice). The exception is the Nightmare which moves 3D6". Upon contact with any model (with the exception of each other), each Night Stalker has special rules about the consequences...

A Night Stalker may end up moving through an entire unit, in which case every model it touches is affected! The Night Stalkers are so sudden, not to mention terrifying, that they cannot be attacked by any means and simply blend back into the darkness, so they cannot be targeted by missiles or spells.

Night Troll

These terrifying creatures are similar in appearance to their kin the Stone Trolls but of a much darker complexion, Clad in tattered rags and adorned in the bones of their victims, these Trolls seek the flesh of the living on which to feed. They are attributed in myth to utter a deep guttural sound, akin to mocking laughter before they tear their Prey to pieces. Should any man-sized model be unfortunate enough to stumble across a Night Troll it seizes its victim with large brutish clawed hands, bellows a laugh and rends its hapless prey to pieces. The model must roll under its Strength in order to break free or else be torn limb from limb and suffer D6 wounds with no save! Only the strongest and most durable opponents will survive but if they do they will have to take a *panic* test. The Troll, after attacking the victim, will not stop but will continue to move and eat until or unless the victim can break free.

I used a Troll model on a standard base, painted dark brown and grey (alternatively you could use a Chaos Spawn template).

Nightmare

The first sounds that are heard are the thundering of hooves and then out of the gloom a ghostly steed emerges, spitting fire from its nostrils, eyes blazing with incandescent light and snorting a terrible, haunting cry. Charging recklessly at anything in its path, the steed vanishes into the darkness as suddenly as it appeared. Anyone charged by the steed suffers a S5 hit which counts as a chill attack (see Wraiths), the effects of which last until the end of the next turn. Units hit by the Nightmare must take a panic test. I used the model of a black steed and painted it with glowing red eyes (or you could use the template).

Black Hag

Known by many names, the Black Hag has an unquenchable hunger for flesh. Straggly hair as black as pitch contrasts with pale skin and the flayed hides of her victims that hang about her in the parody of human clothing, the Hag stalks her victims and attacks

with a piercing, shrill cry. Units attacked by the Hag must take an immediate panic test. Should anyone be unfortunate to run into the Hag, she will attempt to wrench the head off of her victim. The model in question must roll under Toughness, failure results in instant death regardless of wounds. No armour saves are allowed. The Undead Banshee makes a fairly good Black Hag.. painted with black hair, of course (or use the template).

Grendel

The Norse speak of this creature with dread for it has been the plague of the Northern wastes for centuries. Shaped like a hideous Ogre but with long, grappling arms and razor sharp talons and teeth, Grendel, like the other Night Stalkers, comes out to feed in the lonely dead of night. Stalking its enemy like a determined predator, its victims are unaware of its presence until the moonlight catches on its teeth and talons and by then it is too late. Any unit suffering casualties from Grendel is broken automatically and flees (unless it is either immune to Break Tests or Psychology it can rally in the next turn in the usual way. Any model hit by Grendel must roll a D6 for each wound it has. On a 4+, a wound is caused. No armour saves are allowed. The old Chaos Ogre is an ideal model to use as Grendel (or the template).

Simulating Darkness

Warning: I have not tried any of these methods out, because they're far too silly!

For those of you out there who go for realism, here are some suggestions for creating a nighttime atmosphere:

- 1)** Play in the evening - you will feel as if it is night and you can even dim the lighting.
- 2)** If you have a spare set of white Christmas tree lights, you can spread them over the board, placing each bulb within a piece of scenery (a rest, a bridge. etc.) and then by dimming the lights get an 'illuminated' effect on the board.
- 3)** If you want to simulate pitch darkness, keep a screen in the middle of the battlefield until one unit reaches the screen and then remove it, piece by piece, as units reach it at different parts of the battlefield.
- 4)** Have units moving their full movement in a random direction. Collisions with other units count as charging.
- 5)** Light the board up from the edges with weaker bulbs. Attach portable lights to the sides to light up dimly the best of the four quarters of the board.