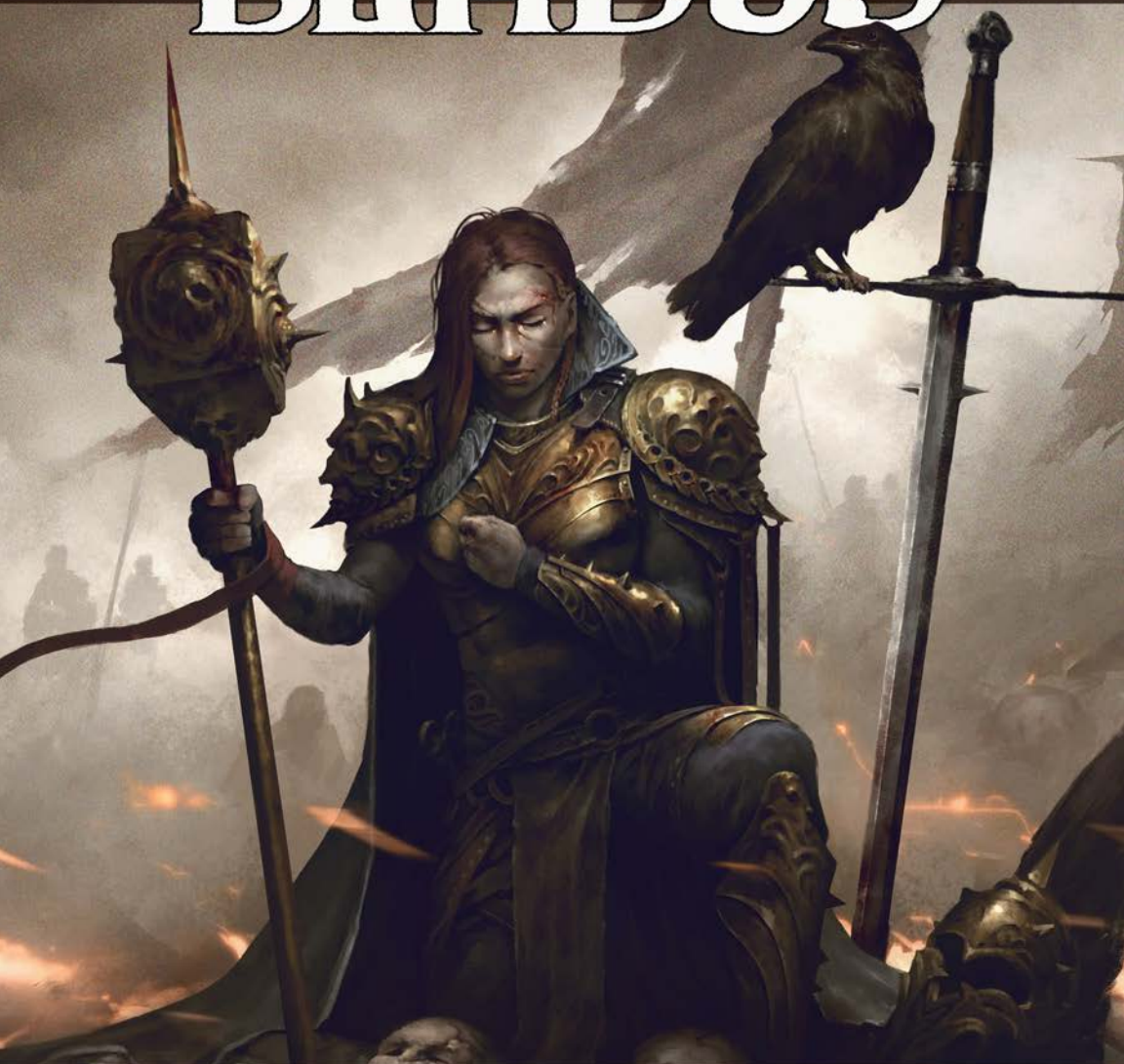


# BAND OF BLADES



**MILITARY FANTASY • FORGED IN THE DARK**  
BY STRAS ACIMOVIC AND JOHN LeBOEUF-LITTLE

# THE ROAD TO SKYDAGGER KEEP

The Legion is in retreat following a failed battle against the armies of the undead. You are a member of the Legion, your bonds to one another forged in the dark by bone and blood.

But time is running out as more fall to the indomitable forces of the Cinder King. As Legionnaires, you must make it to Skydagger Keep before you're cut off or overtaken by the undead. Paying horrifying costs, you'll employ offensives, maneuvers, unwise bargains, and desperate gambits as the ever-ticking clock nears its final hour.

Do you have what it takes to outwit, outrun, and outlast the endless hordes of the undead, or will your band of blades break beneath the Cinder King's iron fist? Play to find out in *Band of Blades*, a stand-alone, *Forged in the Dark* RPG of dark military fantasy.

*Band of Blades* contains all the rules you need to play. In this book you'll find:

- A clear game structure for playing out missions filled with moment-to-moment danger and tracking the overall fate of the Legion.
- Rookie, Soldier, and five different Specialist playbooks, with Legionnaires created as they are needed when the casualties of war set in.
- Legion roles for all of the players: the Commander sets mission priorities, the Marshal directs the troupes, the Quartermaster manages precious resources, the Spymaster gathers intel in the field, and the Lorekeeper preserves the histories of the Legion.
- Three playable Chosen—humans imbued with the powers of the gods, each with their own unique gifts.
- Army advancement throughout the campaign, including gaining new materiel and the promotion of the Legion's troops.
- Four distinct heritages of brave and flawed people seeking to survive another night of the Cinder King's horrors.

*Join us on the road to Skydagger Keep. Our numbers are few, our supplies are low, and every operation is a deadly risk—but if any chance exists to make a difference in the outcome of the war, it is this cohort, the only remaining hope, this bloody band of blades!*



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# BAND OF BLADES

MILITARY FANTASY FORGED IN THE DARK



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A Forged in the Dark Game  
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Based on **Blades in the Dark** by John Harper  
*Visit the website for character sheets and other game materials*  
**[www.offguardgames.com/bandofblades](http://www.offguardgames.com/bandofblades)**

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# CHAPTER 1

# THE BASICS

## THE GAME

*The Battle of Ettenmark Fields was a slaughter. I was on the south flank, holding against Blighter's troops. We were swarmed by Rotters. My arms were numb from protecting the shooting line with my spear, when a thing two stories tall charged us. We lit it up. Green fire streamed from those Black Shot wounds, but it just roared and sped up. I saw the gunnery unit panic, so I leapt at it desperately. I vaguely remember flying past our front line.*

*One of our scouts found me during the retreat. My leg was badly broken. I begged him to help me, or end me and burn my corpse. I can't become one of those things. He carried me almost two leagues slung over his neck. I spent the trip stifling screams when my leg shifted, to not give away our position.*

*There isn't much Legion left. We only survived the two days crossing the Tigeria because we had a Chosen with us. The Commander says we are cut off from rejoining the armies of the east, and will instead march across Aldemark and cross through an old northern pass written of in the Annals.*

*So now I bounce atop sacks of potatoes in a cart, somehow still alive when so many of us never made it, wondering why I was spared.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

**Band of Blades** is a game powered by **Blades in the Dark** about the surviving remnants of the Legion, a once-storied band of mercenaries, now trying to survive and stop the Cinder King from destroying the remaining bastion of humanity. There are military tactics, bold missions, battles against undead, horrific magics, and soldiers fighting for, dying for, and caring for each other.

We play to find out if the Legion survives the undead hunting them and their Chosen—a human imbued with the divine spark of a god—and if they can manage to make a difference in the war.

## THE SETTING

When humanity is in true peril and affairs of the supernatural plague the world, the gods create one or more Chosen. These powerful champions are imbued with aspects of the deity in question. They ride forth to vanquish mythic beasts, mend rifts in the world, and seal away curses. When the Cinder King rose in the West, an unheard-of nine Chosen arose. When they faced the Cinder King, five were Broken and turned to fight at his side. A desperate army was assembled by the remaining Chosen and led to fight a final decisive battle on the plains of Ettenmark.

Humanity lost. They did not expect the horrors the Broken brought to bear.

Now in retreat, a famous band of mercenaries seeks to stem the tide of the Cinder King, hoping to buy time for the Eastern Kingdoms to mount some wild hope, some wild plan, to keep humanity alive.

## TONE

**Band of Blades** is a dark military fantasy.

Dark fantasy contains strong horror elements, and this game has strong horror themes. The enemies the players face are horrific undead, with a casual disregard for the living. The enemies are strong, deadly, and want to kill the characters, who have no magic spell to save the day. It's a game where mortality and the frailty of the human condition play big parts.

This is a fantasy world, but one without dragons, elves, or dwarves. There are no prophecies that predict the outcome of this war, no wizards to craft some mighty spell to defeat the Cinder King. This is a world where the only solutions are the blood, sweat, and tears of people fighting for their existence. It is an old world, with forgotten ruins, creatures of legend, and a history that remains primarily shrouded in mystery. The world doesn't care if our protagonists live or die—indeed, the odds are stacked against them. The enemy has arcane horrors, and you have cunning, courage, and strength of arms.

Military fantasy is akin to war stories of World War I or II. War is hell. It is not heroes leading valiant charges. Soldiers sleep in the mud, march long distances, and deal with both starvation and a relentless enemy that could end them at any time.

The technology level of the world is late European Renaissance. Black powder is available and most countries have muskets and simple muzzle-loaded pistols. Combustion engines don't exist and steam engines are huge and very rare—animals still perform the bulk of society's labor. The Nation of Or has made significant advances in alchemy and mechanics, but most of their findings are kept within the nation. There are no factories or large-scale production techniques. Post is still delivered by riders.

## HORROR

Horror is a big part of **Band of Blades**, but the topic of horror is broad. The themes in this book can be graphic and may not be suitable for all tables. Take the time to discuss with your table before the start of game what specific imagery or themes should be off-limits, and what themes folks are interested in exploring. Some people have no problem with any level of horror as long as certain lines aren't crossed—for example violence done to animals or children. Respect everyone's boundaries so you can all have fun together.

It's okay to focus on or cut away from certain depictions and tune the game to your own sensibilities. One way to do this is to discuss horror films with your table and find out what your group's touchstones are.

Not everyone can list offhand what their limits or boundaries may be. Imagery, specific graphic descriptions, and even broad topics in horror can easily make players uncomfortable—and players may be disturbed by things they didn't expect to happen, or that they didn't realize would bother them. You should make sure to use a safety tool at the table. We prefer Brie Sheldon's Script Change mechanic (available at <http://www.briecs.com/p/script-change-rpg-tool.html>) for its easy to understand cinematic language. Your group may also use an X-card (<http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>), or any other technique your table is familiar and comfortable with.

A good practice is to check in with your players periodically to make sure everyone is still on the same page and having fun.

## THE PLAYERS

Players will adopt several roles throughout the game, including that of specific Legionnaires and Legion commanders. One player will adopt the role of the game master (GM), whose job is to portray the armies of the undead. There is very little character fidelity, which means that on one mission a player may be playing one character, while on another mission, a different player might pick up that same character.

The players take responsibility as co-authors of the game and make judgment calls about the mechanics, dice, and consequences of actions. They work together to bring the Legion to life.

## THE CHARACTERS AND ROLES

Each Legion player will adopt two different modes of play. One is a **Role** within the Legion. You will only be responsible for the duties of one Role. Each Legion Role is associated with a character, and you play the character associated with your Role when necessary. The other is that of a Legionnaire on a mission. Players may play several different Legionnaires over the course of a campaign. Characters are created before your first mission phase, and Roles will be created after your first mission, before your first campaign phase.

These Roles are responsible for the strategic planning for the army and chiefly appear in the **campaign phase**. They aren't often played moment to moment in the fiction, but are responsible for long-term moves and strategic play.

Below is the list of these Legion Roles in play. Of these, the three on the left are mandatory, and must always appear in every game. The ones on the right are optional, and one should be selected if you have more than three Legion players.

### LEGION ROLES

- ◆ **COMMANDER:** Selects the missions and routes.
- ◆ **MARSHAL:** Sets the personnel assignments for missions.
- ◆ **QUARTERMASTER:** Handles the materiel for the Legion.
- ◆ **LOREKEEPER:** Keeps the Annals of the Legion.
- ◆ **SPYMASTER:** Manages a stable of spies.

If one of these optional Roles isn't chosen, they can still exist in the fiction, but have no mechanical benefit to the campaign.

Aside from these characters, each player will play a few **Specialists** and specific **squad members** throughout the course of the game. These will chiefly occupy the **mission phase**.

### SPECIALISTS

- ◆ **HEAVY:** A guardian and powerful melee fighter.
- ◆ **MEDIC:** A combat physician.
- ◆ **OFFICER:** A leader and tactician.
- ◆ **SCOUT:** A stealthy advance unit.
- ◆ **SNIPER:** A deadly distance soldier.

### SQUAD MEMBERS

- ◆ **ROOKIE:** An untested recruit.
- ◆ **SOLDIER:** A hardened veteran.



## THE CHOSEN AND BROKEN

After discussion with the other players, the GM will select the Chosen and Broken for your particular campaign. These powerful forces are the avatars of the divine forces clashing in the world. The Chosen and Broken selected will strongly influence the tones and themes present in the game. These are listed below.

### CHOSEN

In addition to the Roles, Specialists, and materiel, the Legion travels with a Chosen—each of which is integral to the survival of the Legion. The Chosen are the divinely infused humans that accepted the rite of Choosing, swearing their bodies to the service of a deity. They are literal avatars of gods, and the Chosen traveling with the Legion is one of the reasons you have a chance of escaping the undead horde and seeing the Eastern Kingdoms again.

- ◆ **SHREYA:** A powerful warrior Chosen by the Bartan healer goddess. Focused on military actions and strategy.
- ◆ **THE HORNED ONE:** A mysterious shapeshifter Chosen by the Panyar forest god. Focused on mysterious powers and clever ruses.
- ◆ **ZORA:** A fierce, ancient Zemyati Chosen who constantly tests her followers. Focused on mighty battles and direct assault of the undead.

### BROKEN

The Broken were once Chosen, but have been corrupted by the Cinder King, twisting their purpose and aligning them with his cause. Each of them embodies a theme of horror, such as the ravages of war, or the body horror of misapplied alchemy. Each campaign has two of these monsters and their armies of undead plague the Legion in their escape.

- ◆ **BLIGHTER:** A warper of flesh and corrupt alchemist. Involves themes of body horror and toxic science.
- ◆ **BREAKER:** A storm witch and hex carver. Involves themes of tension, uncertainty, and psychological horror.
- ◆ **RENDER:** A monstrous hulk and smith of armored troops. Involves themes of the depersonalization of war and totalitarianism.

For more on each of these, see Chapter 4 starting on page 157. The Chosen not selected are fighting the war elsewhere—retreating and eventually holding the line against the Cinder King in the South and East. The unselected Broken march with the bulk of the undead at the side of the Cinder King, or pursue other conquests at his behest.

## THE GAME MASTER ROLE

One player takes on the Role of the GM. They are responsible for establishing a dynamic world around the characters, especially the citizenry of Aldermark and the undead threat of the Broken and their minions. They play all the non-player characters (NPCs) in the world by giving each one a concrete desire and preferred method of action.

The GM helps organize the conversation of the game so it's pointed toward the interesting elements of play. They aren't in charge of the story and don't have to plan every event ahead of time. They present interesting opportunities to the players, then follow the chain of actions and consequences wherever they lead. Because of the specialized nature of the Role, we call it out specifically, though it shares narrative control with other Roles.

## PLAYING A SESSION

A session of **Band of Blades** is like a chapter of a book. There are one or two main events, plus some side-story elements, which all fit into an overall story. A session of play can last anywhere from two to six hours, depending on the group.

A session comprises two phases. In the **mission phase**, the table chooses two missions to accomplish. One becomes the **primary mission**, while the other is the **secondary**. You then make an **engagement roll** to jump into the action of the primary mission. The player characters (PCs) take actions, suffer consequences, and finish the operation (regardless of whether they succeed or fail). The secondary mission is resolved entirely with an **engagement roll**. Note though that for the first session of the campaign there's no secondary mission, and you'll dive right into the action.

Afterwards, you switch to the **campaign phase**. The Legion uses **campaign actions** to recover, pursue side projects, and advance towards Skydagger Keep. The Commander then chooses mission priorities, and the GM uses those to create more missions, so play can repeat with the next mission phase.

A single session is one set of missions and the following campaign actions, plus some free play. As you become more familiar with the game, you can pack more sessions into a single evening, but you should strive to complete whole sessions at a time, ending after completing the campaign actions and before the next mission phase.

A campaign is a dozen sessions or so, as your Legion makes its way to Skydagger Keep for one last epic standoff before the long winter. Once you reach and defend the Keep, your campaign is done and you determine your score. It's possible your Legion won't make it to Skydagger, because of running out of time, people, or losing your Chosen. This is a game you can lose.

## IT'S YOUR GAME

This game is about the harried retreat of the Legion across Aldermark in a dark fantasy world. Before you get too far into actually playing the game, you should have a talk with your table about what sort of themes you'd like to see in play. Not every game is for every group of players, and you need all the players to buy into the conceit of the game.

Some of this is indirectly decided by what sorts of characters you make and what type of Chosen and Broken you select. For example, if you want themes of revenge, pick Shreya as your Chosen, with Blighter serving as one of the counterpoint Broken. Talk through your decisions so that everyone is on the same page about what you're trying to do. If someone is uncomfortable with a direction, negotiate with each other to ensure everyone is on board. Be vocal about what you're excited about! The road to Skydagger is long and you want to be enthusiastic about the stories you're telling.

There will be questions that come up in your story for which this text has no answer. How exactly does a Chosen become Broken? What giant animals inhabit the forests of Aldermark? These are questions you should answer through play. For your world, the answer may be different than someone else's, and that's okay. The things not expressly stated in this book are yours to create, and we look forward to seeing the answers your group comes up with.

## TOUCHSTONES

Here are some media touchstones you can use when pitching the game, which players might be familiar with:

**MOVIES:** *Princess Mononoke* by Hayao Miyazaki, *Seven Samurai* by Akira Kurosawa

**TV:** *Game of Thrones* by George R.R. Martin, *Battlestar Galactica* by Glen Larson, *Fullmetal Alchemist* by Hiromu Arakawa

**BOOKS:** The Black Company series by Glen Cook, *Anabasis* by Xenophon.

**THEME SONG:** *We Will Fight* by Battle Beast

## WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

- ◆ Four to five players (one will be the GM). For larger groups see page 436.
- ◆ A handful of six-sided dice (four or five per player might be handy).
- ◆ Printed sheets—including Roles, Specialists, extra Rookies, Chosen, Broken, and reference sheets (available at <http://offguardgames.com/bandofblades>).
- ◆ This book, as a reference tool.
- ◆ Blank paper, index cards, and other materials for note-taking.

# THE CORE SYSTEM

## THIS IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME

Playing **Band of Blades** is a collaborative discussion between all the players at the table, in which narrative uncertainty is resolved with dice. The GM presents the world to the other players, who determine the Legion's actions within that context. Everyone works together to make sure the game is played fairly. The outcomes of the dice rolls dictate changes to the story, which leads to new situations, actions, and eventually more dice rolls.

Importantly, this isn't a story with an outcome that we know about in advance. Maybe your soldiers will survive or maybe they won't. The mechanics will tell you what happens and you will decide what to do next. In this way, the direction of the story will take unpredictable turns and reach exciting conclusions that you could have never foretold from the start.

## JUDGMENT CALLS

Each type of decision has a particular set of people in charge of resolving it.

When you play, you'll make several key judgment calls. Everyone contributes, but either the players or the GM gets final say for each:

- ◆ Which actions are a reasonable solution to a problem? *Must we **MANEUVER** across the courtyard past the Rotters or could we quietly **SCOUT** our way around the carts here?* The Legion players have final say. For more on choosing appropriate actions, see page 268.
- ◆ How dangerous is a given action in this circumstance, and also how effective will it be? *How risky is this? Can this person be **SWAYED** very little or a whole lot?* The GM has final say.
- ◆ What consequences are inflicted to manifest the dangers in a given circumstance? *Do you break your leg when the Horror picks you up in a huge hand and hurls you across the field? Do the Rotter's claws merely rend flesh or are they coated in corrupting ichor?* The GM has final say.
- ◆ Does this situation call for a dice roll—if so, which one? *Is your character in a position to make an action roll or must they first make a resistance roll to gain initiative?* The GM has final say.
- ◆ Which events in the story match up with the xp triggers for character and Chosen advancement? *If you brought into play your heritage or traumas, mark xp.* The Legion players have final say.

A number of other decisions are made by each specific Role. For example, the Commander decides whether to advance. The Marshal decides who to send on each mission. Each of these duty-specific decisions are noted in the rolebooks.



## CUSTOMIZING YOUR TONE

By default the world **Band of Blades** is dark and gritty. Decisions about what risk is associated with which actions, and what can actually be attempted can push the story away from a dark military style and towards a more action/adventure tone.

The decisions you make can set the tone of your game between gritty and hopeful, and between action and drama. These choices say what **Band of Blades** is for you and your group. There aren't wrong answers here! Make the world one you want to play in!

## ROLLING THE DICE

**Band of Blades** uses six-sided dice. You roll several at once and read the single highest result.

- ◆ If the highest die is a **6**, it's a **full success**—things go well. If you roll more than one **6**, it's a **critical success**—you gain some additional advantage.
- ◆ If the highest die is a **4/5**, that's a **partial success**—you do what you were trying to do, but there are consequences, such as trouble, harm, reduced effect, etc.
- ◆ If the highest die is **1-3**, it's a **bad outcome**. Things go poorly. You likely don't achieve your goal and you suffer complications, too.

If you ever need to roll but you have zero (or negative) dice, roll two dice and take the single lowest result. You can't roll a **CRITICAL** when you have zero dice.

All the dice systems in the game are expressions of this basic format. When you're first learning the game, you can always "collapse" back down to a simple roll to judge how things go. This will let you keep the game moving; you can look up the exact rule later when you have time.

Even with sizable dice pools, the most common result will be **4/5**—partial success. You'll tend to succeed, but at a cost. Life in the field is tough and messy, and the die mechanic will continue to push towards complications. You have tools to mitigate these bad outcomes, such as resistances, or armor, but war always takes its toll. Be mindful of your resources; you cannot protect yourself from everything.

To create a dice pool for a roll, you'll use a trait (like your **SHOOT** or your **PROWESS**, your Chosen's threat level, or the assets of the location you're in) and take dice equal to its rating. You'll usually end up with one to four dice.

Even one die is pretty good—a 50 percent chance of some sort of success. The most common traits you'll use are your action ratings. A player might roll dice for their **SKIRMISH** action rating when they fight an enemy, for example.

There are five types of rolls that you'll use most often in the game:

- ◆ **ACTION ROLL:** When a PC attempts an action that's dangerous or troublesome, you make an action roll to find out how it goes. Action rolls and their effects and consequences drive most of the game. See page 12.
- ◆ **CAMPAIGN ROLL:** When the PCs return from a mission and you move into the campaign phase, various Legion Roles will take actions, such as the Quartermaster's campaign actions or the Spymaster's long-term assignments. See page 136.
- ◆ **ENGAGEMENT ROLL:** The engagement roll is made at the beginning of each mission. It helps jump past the planning, and showcases what position the PCs are in when the twists and complications of the mission hit them. See page 130.
- ◆ **FORTUNE ROLL:** The fortune roll is a tool the GM can use to disclaim decision making and leave something up to chance. *How loyal is a squad member? How much does this Broken want revenge? How valuable is the information on that Blighter formula you stole?* See page 44.
- ◆ **RESISTANCE ROLL:** A player can make a resistance roll when their character suffers a consequence they don't like. The roll tells us how much stress their character suffers to reduce the severity of a consequence. When you resist that "Broken Leg" harm, you take some stress and now it's only a "Sprained Ankle" instead. See page 40.



## THE GAME STRUCTURE

**Band of Blades** alternates between two large phases—the **mission phase** and the **campaign phase**.

At the beginning of this mission phase, the GM briefs the other players on the situation at hand, and gives a list of available missions to choose from. The Commander chooses one of these to be the primary mission, and another to be the secondary mission. The Marshal will assign Legionnaires to those missions, and the Quartermaster will decide what supplies to spend.

The Marshal assembles the engagement roll, which establishes the starting position as we move to the primary mission. See page 130 for more details.

During the mission, the PCs try to complete the mission objectives—they make rolls, overcome obstacles, complete the operation (successfully or not), and tally their xp. The results of the secondary mission are resolved with an engagement roll. Once both missions are complete, the GM tallies the rewards and penalties of each mission, and the various Roles will update their resources accordingly. There is a brief roleplay scene as soldiers return to camp. Once that is complete, the game shifts into the campaign phase.

The campaign phase is more focused on the Legion as a whole. Time causes the Legion's resources to dwindle. Many of the Roles have activities to perform, such as the Quartermaster's campaign actions, the Spymaster's spy deployments, or the Lorekeeper's tales told before the Legion. Afterwards the Commander decides whether to advance the Legion (paying all costs for doing so) or spend more time in the current location.

Finally, the GM generates new missions and the process begins again, until the Legion reaches Skydagger Keep or fails in their retreat.

### MISSIONS

**PRIORITY.** Commander picks primary and secondary mission.

**PRIMARY MISSION.** Play out the details at the table. Legionnaires gain xp.

**SECONDARY MISSION.** Resolve the outcome via an engagement roll by the Marshal.

**BOOKKEEPING.** Gain mission penalties, mission rewards, and lose morale loss for dead soldiers.

**BACK AT CAMP.** Play out what happens at camp during missions.

**GO TO CAMPAIGN PHASE.**

### CAMPAIGN

**TIME PASSES.** Pressure and Time increase. Food is consumed. A Lorekeeper tells tales if present.

**CAMPAIGN ACTIONS.** Choose and resolve campaign actions (see Quartermaster/Marshal). If you have a Spymaster they deploy spies.

**ADVANCE.** Commander chooses whether to advance the Legion.

**NEW MISSION GENERATION.** Commander picks mission type to focus. GM generates missions.

**GO TO MISSION PHASE.**

## ACTIONS AND ATTRIBUTES

There are **11 actions** (and 7 **Specialist actions**) in the game that PCs use to overcome obstacles (see list on page 70).

Each action has a rating (from zero to 4) that tells you how many dice to roll when you perform that action. Action ratings don't just represent skill or training—you're free to describe how your character performs that action based on the type of person they are. Maybe your character is good at **DISCIPLINE** because they have a scary stillness to them, while another character barks orders and intimidates people with their military bearing.

**CONSORT**  
**DISCIPLINE**  
**MANEUVER**  
**MARSHAL**  
**RESEARCH**  
**RIG**  
**SCOUT**  
**SHOOT**  
**SKIRMISH**  
**SWAY**  
**WRECK**

You choose which action to use to overcome an obstacle. Actions that are poorly suited to the situation may be less effective and may put the character in more danger, but they can still be attempted. Usually, when you perform an action, you'll make an action roll to see how it turns out.

### SPECIALIST ACTIONS

Each Specialist has an action associated with their playbook, and this action is under the **INSIGHT** attribute. If you have multiple Specialist actions available, you count only one of these towards your **INSIGHT**.

Unlike regular actions like **SHOOT** or **SWAY**, Specialist actions are not rolled. Instead, a fortune roll using their rating may be made. For more information on fortune rolls, see page 44.

**AIM**  
**ANCHOR**  
**CHANNELS**  
**DOCTOR**  
**GRIT**  
**SCROUNGE**  
**WEAVE**

The Specialist actions work alongside the general actions, but their rating determines a number of **uses**. These are described in more detail on page 72.

### ACTION ROLL

You make an **action roll** when your character does something potentially dangerous or troublesome. The outcomes of the roll depend on your character's **position**. There are three positions: **controlled**, **risky**, and **desperate**. If you're in a controlled position, the possible consequences are less serious. If you're in a desperate position, the consequences can be severe. If you're somewhere in-between, it's risky—usually considered the default position for most actions.

If there's no danger or trouble at hand, don't make an action roll. You might instead make a **fortune roll** (see page 44), or a **campaign roll** (see page 136), or the GM will simply say that you accomplish your goal.

## ATTRIBUTE RATINGS

There are three **attributes** in the game system that the player characters use to resist bad consequences: **INSIGHT**, **PROWESS**, and **RESOLVE**. Each attribute has a rating (from zero to 4) that tells you how many dice to roll when using that attribute.

**INSIGHT**

**PROWESS**

**RESOLVE**

The rating for each attribute is equal to the number of actions the Legionnaire has in the first column under that attribute (see the examples below) plus any bonuses they get from their heritage. The more well-rounded your character is with a particular set of actions, the better their attribute rating.

## RESISTANCE ROLL

You make a **resistance roll** when you want to avoid or reduce a consequence.

Each attribute **resists** a different type of danger. If you get stabbed, for example, you resist physical harm with your **PROWESS** rating. Resistance rolls always succeed—you diminish or deflect the bad result—but the better your roll, the less stress it costs to reduce or avoid the danger.

When the enemy has a big advantage, you might need to make a resistance roll before you can take your own action. For example, when you fight the clockwork assassin Lugos, it may disarm you before you can strike. You need to make a resistance roll to keep hold of your weapon if you want to attack it!

The GM judges the threat level of the enemies and uses these “preemptive” resistance rolls as needed to reflect the capabilities of especially dangerous foes.

## ACTION AND ATTRIBUTE EXAMPLE

### INSIGHT



◆ ◆ ◇ ◇ **ANCHOR**  
 ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ **RESEARCH**  
 ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ **RIG**  
 ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ **SCOUT**

*This character is a Heavy (see **ANCHOR**—the Heavy’s Specialist action—in their insight column). They have an **ANCHOR** Specialist action rating of 2, and an **INSIGHT** attribute rating of 1.*

### PROWESS



◆ ◇ ◇ ◇ **MANEUVER**  
 ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ **SHOOT**  
 ◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **SKIRMISH**  
 ◆ ◆ ◇ ◇ **WRECK**

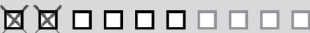
*This character has a **WRECK** action rating of 2, **SKIRMISH** 3, and **MANEUVER** 1. They also have a **PROWESS** attribute rating of 3 (the number of dots in the first column).*

# STRESS AND TRAUMA

## STRESS

Player characters in **Band of Blades** have a special reserve of fortitude and luck called **stress**. When they suffer a consequence that they don't want to accept, they can take stress instead. The result of the resistance roll determines how much stress it costs to avoid a bad outcome. Each character starts with 6 stress available—but can gain more via the Hardened special ability.

*During a mission, Rachel's character Marchioness Phaera Rodano takes a nasty blow to her side from a powerful undead. Rachel rolls her **PROWESS** rating to resist, and gets a 4. It costs 6 minus 4 (the result of the resistance roll) stress to resist the consequences. Rachel describes how the Marchioness negates the brunt of the blow, and marks off 2 stress.*

**STRESS** 

*The Marchioness suffers reduced harm “Cracked Rib” instead of the higher “Punctured Lung.” Rachel may want to look into utilizing some armor to reduce that harm further.*

## PUSHING YOURSELF

You can use stress to **push yourself** for greater performance. For each bonus you choose below, take 2 stress (each can be chosen once for a given action):

- ◆ Add **+1d** to your roll. (See Action Roll, page 22.)
- ◆ Add **+1 level** to your effect. (See Effect, page 30.)
- ◆ Take action when you're incapacitated. (See Consequences and Harm, page 36.)

Being able to push yourself is one of the key mechanics of the game. Since even a single die gives you a 50/50 chance of success, being able to push yourself means you almost always have a chance of accomplishing whatever dire action you need to accomplish. Legionnaires have a knack for pulling themselves out of the fire.

It's important to remember you have this option! It can be easy to dismiss the actions for which you have zero ranks, on the basis that you'd have to take the worst of two dice. But if you have the stress available, you can boost your roll with an extra die and at least have even odds of succeeding.



## TRAUMA

When a PC needs to mark stress, and cannot, they suffer a level of **trauma**.

When you suffer trauma, you're taken out of action. Perhaps you've taken a crippling wound or simply passed out from pain or shock. When you take trauma, you're out for at least a scene while you recover.

If you take trauma while in a perilous situation, you might need to be recovered by your squad. If that doesn't happen, you may die even if this is your first trauma suffered. If you mark your last available trauma box, you die. See Death on page 41.

When you take trauma, you must also take a **trauma condition**. Your character acquires the new personality trait indicated by the condition, and can earn xp by using it to cause trouble.

## TRAUMA CONDITIONS

- ◆ **COLD**: You're unmoved by emotional appeals or social bonds.
- ◆ **HAUNTED**: You're often lost in reverie, reliving past horrors or seeing things others may not see.
- ◆ **OBSESSED**: You're enthralled by one thing: an activity, a person, a goal, an ideology.
- ◆ **PARANOID**: You imagine danger everywhere and can't trust others.
- ◆ **RECKLESS**: You have little regard for your own safety, best interests, or well-being.
- ◆ **SOFT**: You lose your edge, becoming sentimental, passive, gentle.
- ◆ **UNSTABLE**: Your emotional state is volatile. You can instantly rage, fall into despair, act impulsively, or freeze up.
- ◆ **VICIOUS**: You seek out opportunities to hurt people, even for no good reason.

You can play your trauma conditions as much or as little as you like. They can totally transform your character's persona or they can have only a small impact—it's up to you. If you do play them strongly and allow a trauma condition to complicate your character's life, you earn xp for it. (See Character Advancement, page 56.) Gaining a trauma on a mission always counts for the purposes of advancement.



*This character suffered one trauma, and took the Reckless condition.*

## CORRUPTION AND BLIGHT

Attacks that spread the unwholesome essence of undeath, like the bile of a Spitter, give **corruption** equal to the **threat** of the enemy. Corruption is the spread of an unnatural essence to living things. It can be reduced with a **RESOLVE** resist (usually one level). Reliquaries aid in resisting (+1d, and corruption is reduced by one), though such items will shrivel and crumple after being exposed to too much corruption (most come with only a few uses).

Corruption is increased on a track, similar to stress, but there are no common ways to reduce it. When you gain your seventh point of corruption, reset your corruption to zero and gain a **blight** and a **blight condition**.

Blight is corruption made manifest. If you fill up all available blight, your character descends into blight sickness, being taken over by corrupt influences, and potentially mutating and growing violent with your fellow squadmates.

- ◆ **Level 1 blight** is visible, but concealable with long sleeves or a button-up coat. This blight is painful, but can be ignored, similar to an exceptionally bad rash. **EXAMPLE:** *Patches of rotting flesh. Discolored hair or eyes. Boils.*
- ◆ **Level 2 blight** causes wide-spread changes. This can be concealed with clothes, but squadmates may notice. Reliquaries boil in your presence. **EXAMPLE:** *Claws. Eyes in places they should not be. Widespread rotting skin.*
- ◆ **Level 3 blight** drastically transforms the body with new limbs (or old ones rotting off), or other changes that would give anyone pause. Visions of your friends as monsters are common. Powerful undead may command you. **EXAMPLE:** *Fangs. Tentacle growth. New mouths growing and whispering.*
- ◆ **Level 4 blight** converts the mind and body completely. This new entity is an enemy to the Legion, and will attack them or flee. Threat 2 or higher undead may command it at will. This character is no longer a Legionnaire.

### BLIGHT CONDITIONS

- ◆ **ANATHEMA:** Sources of divine power, like Reliquaries, burn you.
- ◆ **HOST:** Something has infested your body and is slowly taking over.
- ◆ **HUNGER:** You have an unnatural desire to feed on human flesh and blood.
- ◆ **MIASMA:** You generate an aura or cloud of sickness and decay.
- ◆ **MUTATED:** Your body warps, growing new features or changing old ones.
- ◆ **RAGE:** An ever-present need to destroy fills your mind.
- ◆ **ROT:** Your body begins to rot and die.
- ◆ **VISIONS:** Hallucinations and terrors fill your hours waking and sleeping.

*This character suffered one blight, and took the Visions condition.*

**BLIGHT**



—MUTATION—RAGE—ROT—VISIONS





## PROGRESS CLOCKS

A **progress clock** is a circle divided into segments (see right). Draw a progress clock to track ongoing effort against an obstacle or an approaching trouble.

*Infiltrating an enemy camp? Make a clock to track the alertness of the guards and troops. When the PCs suffer consequences from partial successes or missed rolls, fill in segments until the camp is alerted.*

The more complex the problem, the more segments in the progress clock. A basic obstacle is a 4-segment clock. A daunting one, an 8-segment clock. More difficult problems may have as many as 12 segments.

The **effect level** of an action should guide how many segments on a clock are ticked (see page 30). Sometimes circumstances change to radically alter the fiction. Adjust clocks so the progress reflects the effect the PCs are having.

Generally, you don't create clocks with fewer than four segments. (A rare exception might be for a Long-Term Project.) If a situation is simple enough for one action to complete, you don't need a clock. Use the situation's effect level and position to determine how the action resolves.

When you create a clock, make it about the obstacle, not the method. Clocks for an infiltration should be "Undead Patrols" or "Shrine Traps," not "Sneak Past the Guards" or "Disarm the Oil Trap." The patrols and the traps are the obstacles—the PCs can overcome them in multiple ways.

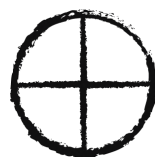
Complex threats can be broken down into multiple clocks. For example, if the Doctor (one of Blighter's infamous minions) sets up a lab in a village, he might have "Perimeter Security," "Town Patrols," and "Trapped Lab" clocks. The squad would have to bypass all three to get into the lab and find out what the Doctor is doing.

Remember, a clock tracks progress. A clock is like a map. It shows you where you are—it doesn't get you there. Advancing a clock also advances the fiction.

## SIMPLE OBSTACLES

Not every obstacle requires a clock. A mission may require a few clocks, or none at all. If you use too many clocks, the play space can get cluttered and it can actually make it harder to keep track of what is going on.

Use clocks when a situation is complex and you need to track something over time or an obstacle is simply overwhelming and needs to be dealt with in several steps—otherwise, resolve the result of an action with a single roll.



Examples of progress clocks follow. These are some of many ways to use clocks; feel free to come up with new ones!

## **DANGER CLOCKS**

The GM can use a clock to represent a progressive danger, like the growing suspicion during a stealth operation, a dark ritual being performed by cultists, or the pressure building in an Old Empire steam system as the players navigate a temple. In this case, when a complication occurs, the GM ticks one, two, or three segments on the clock, depending on the consequence level. When the clock is full, the danger comes to fruition—the undead discover the Legionnaires, the thing from beyond is summoned, the pressure violently vents into the hall, etc. (See *Consequences and Harm*, page 36.)

## **RACING CLOCKS**

Create two opposed clocks to represent a chase. The PCs might have a progress clock called “Escape” while the Hounds chasing them have a clock called “Cornered.” If the PCs finish their clock before the undead fill theirs, they get away. Otherwise, they’re cornered and must fight the horde. If both clocks complete at the same time, the PCs get to camp and are safely within, but those guarding the perimeter must now square off against a wave of undead!

You can also use racing clocks for environmental hazards. Maybe the PCs are trying to complete the “Search” clock to find clues about the Cinder King in a decaying tomb before the GM fills the “Crumbling” clock and the cave collapses.

A number of starting missions involve these sorts of clocks, and any time a Chosen fights a Broken or Lieutenant, consider using racing clocks to indicate what injuries each has suffered and which is defeated first.

## **LINKED CLOCKS**

You can make a clock that unlocks another clock once it’s filled. For example, the GM might make a linked clock called “Trapped” after an “Alert” clock fills up. Once the undead are alerted and working to corner the PCs, any following actions would lead to them becoming trapped.

When you fight an Elite, she might have a clock for her “Defense” and then a linked clock for “Vulnerable.” Once you overcome the “Defense” clock, you can attempt to overcome the “Vulnerable” clock and defeat her. You might affect the “Defense” clock with violence in direct conflict, or lower her defense with deception. As always, the method of action is up to the players and the details of the fiction at hand.

## MISSION CLOCKS

The GM can make a clock for a time-sensitive mission, to represent the window of opportunity you have to complete it. If the countdown runs out, the mission is scrubbed or changes—the target escapes, the line is routed, etc. Such a clock can be ticked as a consequence, or if the PCs take actions that eat up too much time.

For example, Zora's starting mission has a mission clock for how long Zora can hold the attention of the castle defenses (see page 180).

## LONG-TERM PROJECT

Some projects will take a long time. A basic Long-Term Project (like concocting a new kind of alchemical) is four segments. Truly Long-Term Projects that might take an army with dedicated laborers months to complete (like designing and creating a clockwork siege engine) may be outside the scope of the campaign. Add or subtract to the clock depending on the details of the situation and complexity of the project. These projects are undertaken by the Quartermaster (see page 138).

Long-Term Projects are the default tool to deal with any unusual Legion goal, including things that change elements of the mechanics or the setting. For example, maybe the Legion wants to work on a project where they create mechanical prosthetics for those who have lost limbs. It will be a long and difficult task to set up everything needed to begin and work on a project like this, but almost anything can be attempted as long as the Quartermaster is interested and it seems feasible to everyone.

Some difficult goals may have several linked Long-Term Project clocks (see linked clocks on the previous page). Think about the steps involved. If you want to equip the whole Legion with fine gear down to the newest Rookie, you may have to first work on a project to acquire quality Orite steel, and then spend time machining and smithing it.

## THREAT CLOCKS

Monsters of higher threat are often represented by a clock. A typical threat 2 monster, such as a Shadow Witch, is eight segments, while a threat 3 monster might be ten. Various ways of defeating the creature will advance the clock—the obvious candidates being **SKIRMISH** or **SHOOT**, though any action can be used if the fiction can be justified. See page 228 for more information on fighting the undead.

# PROGRESS CLOCKS IN PLAY

## INFILTRATING THE BANDIT CAMP

A self-styled bandit queen has been raiding local encampments, which has made resupply difficult. The Commander has dispatched a squad to deal with the issue and recover supplies the bandits might have for the Legion. The GM makes an “Alert” 8-clock because the bandits feel secure high up in the mountain passes, and aren’t the most disciplined troops to begin with. A few suspicious events can be overlooked. During the operation, Juan (playing a Scout) makes a risky roll to take out a guard high up on the bluff before they’re able to alert any of the camp below—he gets a 4/5 result. He manages to put an arrow in the guard, but the “Alert” clock increases. Someone might wonder why the guard didn’t come down when it was time to change shifts. Later Alice rolls 1-3 on a desperate **SCOUT** roll to try and sneak into the horse paddock. Something goes wrong—there’s a lock of surprisingly good quality on the gates, and moreover, someone spots a suspicious figure fiddling with it. The clock ticks three times due to the desperate nature of the action.

This proceeds until the mission is complete or the clock fills—in the latter case, the guards beat the drums and bandits start grabbing weapons and searching the camp.



**ALERT**

## SHREYA HOLDING THE LINE

Reports come in that Blighter gassed a local town and began extensive construction on a new lab. Now that it has become one of her major centers for converting corpses into undead, the Legion decides to take care of the issue. The Wailer (an Infamous Horror) guards the lab with a heavy assortment of units. The objective is destruction of the lab. Shreya and other Legion troops will attack from the east, luring out the Wailer and engaging the defensive troops, while the primary unit sneaks through the gas-filled streets to detonate the lab.

The GM makes one clock for Shreya and the Legion attack force, and another for the Wailer and the undead defenders. Whenever time passes or PCs suffer consequences, the GM rolls for each side and ticks the clocks appropriately. The outnumbered Legion can only hold the undead off for so long. Better blow that lab up fast!



**SHREYA &  
THE LEGION**



**WAILER &  
THE UNDEAD**

## ACTION ROLL

When a player character does something challenging, we make an **action roll** to see how it turns out. An action is challenging if there's an obstacle to the PC's goal that's dangerous or troublesome in some way. We don't make an action roll unless the PC is put to the test. If their action is something that we'd expect them to simply accomplish, then we don't make an action roll.

Each group will have their own ideas about what "challenging" means. This is good! Coming to consensus about what difficulties look like establishes the tone and style of your campaign.

To make an action roll, we go through six steps. In play, they flow together somewhat, but let's break each one down here for clarity:

1. The player states their **goal** for the action.
2. The player chooses their **action**.
3. The GM sets the **position** for the roll.
4. The GM sets the **effect level** for the action.
5. The player adds **bonus dice**.
6. The player **rolls** the dice and we **judge the result**.

### 1. THE PLAYER STATES THEIR GOAL

Your goal is the concrete outcome your character will achieve when they overcome the obstacle at hand. Usually the character's goal is pretty obvious in context, but it's the GM's job to ask and clarify the goal when necessary. It never hurts to be clear and avoid any confusion.

*"You're punching your commanding officer in the face, right? Okay, what do you want to get out of this? Are you trying to get your way, or do you just want to inflict harm?"*

### 2. THE PLAYER CHOOSES THEIR ACTION

The player chooses which action to roll, following from what their character is doing on-screen. If you want to roll your **SKIRMISH** action, then get in a fight. If you want to roll your **DISCIPLINE** action, then tell a Rookie to hold fast in the face of certain death. You can't roll a given action rating unless your character is presently performing that particular action in the fiction.

Some actions overlap and the same end result can come via several methods. If you want to hurt someone, you might **SHOOT** them or use **SCOUT** to sneak up and stab them in the back. If you want to convince townsfolk to follow your lead, you might **DISCIPLINE** them through your intimidating presence or **CONSORT** with them over common pains. Which action to perform is the player's choice.

### 3. THE GM SETS THE POSITION

Once the player chooses their action, the GM sets the **position** for the roll. The position represents how dangerous or troublesome the action might be. There are three positions: **controlled**, **risky**, and **desperate**. To choose a position, the GM looks at the profiles for the positions below and picks one that most closely matches the situation at hand.

#### CONTROLLED

*You have a golden opportunity. You're exploiting a dominant advantage. You're set up for success.*

#### RISKY

*You go head to head. You're acting under duress. You're taking a chance.*

#### DESPERATE

*You're in serious trouble. You're overreaching your capabilities. You're attempting a dangerous maneuver.*

**By default, an action roll is risky.** You wouldn't be rolling if there weren't any risk involved. If the situation seems more dangerous, make it desperate. If it seems less dangerous, make it controlled.

Negotiate with your GM over the position you find yourself in and what you might do to improve it. Sometimes the position is risky for reasons that aren't clear until you ask questions.

*"It's risky? It seems like this single Rotter isn't a real threat to me, given that I'm an armed and armored Legionnaire and it can only bite and scratch. Shouldn't this be controlled?"*

*"No, the danger isn't this specific Rotter, but the ability to dispatch it quickly and quietly before any undead in the area are alerted to your presence."*

Remember that a position reflects possible consequences of an action. If you're likely to end up incapacitated if things go wrong, the position is probably desperate. If there's confusion about the outcomes, it's often a good indicator that not everyone is visualising the fiction in the same way.

The GM gets final say over the position of the roll, but should explain and clarify so no one is caught by surprise. Talking about the position will help establish the fictional situation much more clearly and set the tone of the game.



#### 4. THE GM SETS THE EFFECT LEVEL

The GM assesses the likely **effect level** of this action, given the factors of the situation. Essentially, the effect level tells us how much this action can accomplish—will it have **limited**, **standard**, or **great** effect? Effect level is explained in detail in the next section, starting on page 30.

The GM's choices for effect level and position can be strongly influenced by the player's choice of action. If a player wants to try to make a new friend by **SKIRMISHING** with someone, maybe that's possible, but the GM wouldn't be out of line to say it's a desperate roll and probably limited or zero effect to start. Seems like **CONSORTING** would be a lot better for that. Players are always free to choose the action they perform, but that doesn't mean all actions are equally risky or potent.

#### 5. THE PLAYER ADDS BONUS DICE

You can normally get two bonus dice for your action roll (but some special abilities might give you additional bonus dice).

For one bonus die, you can get assistance from a teammate. They take 1 stress, say how they help you, and give you +1d.

For another bonus die, you can either push yourself (take 2 stress) or you can accept a Devil's Bargain. You can't get dice for both; it's one or the other. Pushing yourself can also allow you to take +1 effect. You can push for effect and still accept a Devil's Bargain for an additional die on your roll. You can also push yourself once for effect and once for +1d.





## THE DEVIL'S BARGAIN

PCs in **Band of Blades** are desperate Legionnaires who often have to make sacrifices to get what they want—they don't always act in their own best interests in pursuing their goals. To reflect this, the GM or any other player can offer you a bonus die to accept a **Devil's Bargain**. Common bargains include:

- ◆ Collateral damage, unintended harm.
- ◆ Sacrifice an item.
- ◆ Betray a friend or loved one.
- ◆ Offend or anger your Chosen.
- ◆ Start and/or tick a troublesome clock.
- ◆ Suffer harm or corruption.

The bargain occurs regardless of the outcome of the roll. You pay the price and get the bonus die. Don't force it if there's no interesting bargain in a situation. Sometimes there isn't one, and that's okay.

*"The Rookies are looking pretty scared. They're used to charging into enemy fire, but that thing just threw your Heavy a hundred paces."*

*"Well I'll just go hard and **DISCIPLINE** them to get in there!"*

*"Ooh, I have a Devil's Bargain. You can take +1d but you have to make an example of one of the Rookies. The squad won't feel comfortable going out with you in charge again, and I'll make a 4-clock for that Rookie to start nasty rumors about you at camp and tick it twice."*

*"Okay! Let's do that. Maybe I can focus on that during free play or during a Back at Camp scene in the future."*

Some players like to inject something new in the story with Devil's Bargains, or use them to focus on a character's backstory or nature.

*"Covering yourself in undead parts to help you hide works—but corrupts your body."*

*"You give it your all—but an old war wound reopens, bothering you till you can get it treated."*

*"You can leverage your reputation to convince a local mayor to resupply your troops—but supplies and goods may be more difficult to acquire in this region as word of how you treated them spreads."*

A Devil's Bargain is always a choice. If you don't like one, reject it (or suggest how to alter it so you might consider taking it). You can always just push yourself for that bonus die instead.

If needed, the GM has final say over what Devil's Bargains are valid.

## 6. ROLL THE DICE AND JUDGE THE RESULT

Once the goal, action rating, position, and effect have been established, add any bonus dice and roll the dice pool to determine the outcome. (See possible outcomes, by position, on the next page.)

The action roll does a lot of work for you. It tells you how well the character performs and how serious the consequences are. They might succeed at their action with no consequences (on a 6), or succeed but suffer consequences (4/5), or it might all go wrong (1-3).

On a 1-3, it's up to the GM to decide if the PC's action has any effect or if it even happens at all. Usually, the action just fails completely, but sometimes it might make sense or be more interesting for the action to have some effect even on a 1-3 result.

*Harish, a Rookie, is attempting to disarm a trap of metal blades. The squad is trying to move quickly through tunnels before they're discovered, but it's risky to rush a delicate operation such as this. The roll is a 1-3. The GM could say that he fails and the trap is set off, but it's more interesting to escalate the situation and change the approach. When Harish pulls on a piece of the blighted metal, there is an audible click, and now the trap is live. Any movement by him could set it off. Meanwhile, the undead patrol can be heard coming down the tunnels. The situation just got a touch more desperate.*

Each 4/5 and 1-3 outcome lists suggested **consequences** for the action. The worse your position, the worse the consequences are. The GM can inflict one or more of these, depending on the circumstances of the action roll. Consequences are explained in detail on page 36. PCs have the ability to avoid or reduce the severity of consequences by resisting them. See page 40 for details about resistance.

When you narrate the action after the roll, the GM and player collaborate together to say what happens on-screen. The GM will tell you the results of your actions.

*"So are you leading the charge and thus the first one through the enemy line?"*

*"What do you look like when that fight is finished—do you clean and sheathe your blade matter-of-factly, or do you keep stabbing the Horror's corpse to make sure no bit of it is still twitching?"*

*"You convince the Alderman General, but what is it you lean on that causes him to cave finally?"*

## ACTION ROLL

• 1d per ACTION dot

+ Take +1d if you  
**PUSH YOURSELF**  
(you take 2 stress)  
— OR —  
+1d if you accept a  
**DEVIL'S BARGAIN**

*Note: You cannot both push yourself and accept a Devil's Bargain for +1d.*

*Risky actions are the staple position of Band of Blades. If no position is declared, assume the roll to be risky.*

*Each time you roll a desperate action, mark a tick of xp for that attribute.*

### CONTROLLED

*You act on your terms. You press a strong advantage.*

**CRITICAL:** You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You hesitate. Withdraw and try a different approach, or else do it with a minor consequence: a minor **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you suffer **lesser harm**, you end up in a **risky** position.

1-3: You're blocked or you falter. Press on by seizing a **risky** opportunity, or withdraw and try a different approach.

### RISKY

*You go head-to-head. Act under fire. Take a chance.*

**CRITICAL:** You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it but there's a consequence: You suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you end up in a **desperate** position.

1-3: Things go badly. You suffer **harm**, a **complication** occurs, you end up in a **desperate** position, you **lose this opportunity**.

### DESPERATE

*You overreach. You're in serious trouble.*

**CRITICAL:** You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You do it but there's a consequence: You suffer **severe harm**, a **serious complication** occurs.

1-3: It's the worst outcome. You suffer **severe harm**, a **serious complication** occurs, you **lose this opportunity**.

## DOUBLE-DUTY ROLLS

Since NPCs don't roll for their actions, an **action roll** does double duty. **It resolves the action of the PC as well as any NPCs that are involved.** The single roll tells us how those actions interact and which consequences result. On a **6**, the PC wins and has their effect. On a **4/5**, it's a mix—both the PC and the NPC have their effect. On a **1-3**, the NPC wins and has their effect as a consequence on the PC.

## WITHDRAW OR PRESS ON

Controlled positions allow you to leverage your advantage in the fiction as an opportunity to try a few approaches until you find success. No matter how poorly you roll, you have the choice to withdraw (accepting that you cannot make headway against the current obstacle) and try another approach (selecting a different action to use).

If your result is a **1-3**, you may press on by seizing a risky opportunity. When you do so, you make the same action roll (including any bonus dice from previous Devil's Bargains or assists), but with your new, more risky position.

## ACTION ROLL SUMMARY

**1** The player states the outcome they want to achieve when they overcome the obstacle in the fiction.

**2** The player chooses the action to roll. Choose the action that matches what the character is doing in the fiction.

**3** The GM establishes the position of the roll (is it controlled, risky, or desperate). This governs the consequences of the roll.

**4** The GM sets the effect level of the action. The choice of position and effect is influenced strongly by the player's choice of action.

**5** Add bonus dice, usually up to two. You can get assistance from a teammate, push yourself (and take 2 stress), or accept a Devil's Bargain.

**6** Roll the dice pool and judge the outcome. The Legion players and GM narrate the action together. The GM has final say over what happens and inflicts consequences as called for by the position and the result of the roll.



## EFFECT

In **Band of Blades**, you achieve goals by taking actions and facing consequences. But how many actions it takes to achieve a goal depends on the effect level of your actions. The GM judges the effect level using the profiles below. Which one best matches the action at hand—limited, standard, or great? Each effect level indicates the questions that should be answered for that effect, as well as how many segments to tick if you're using a progress clock.

### EFFECT LEVELS

### TICKS

#### GREAT

*You achieve more than usual. How does the extra effort manifest? What additional benefit do you get?*

3

#### STANDARD

*You achieve what we'd expect as "normal" with this action. Is that enough, or is there more left to do?*

2

#### LIMITED

*You achieve a partial or weak effect. How is your impact diminished? What remains to achieve the goal?*

1

## ASSESSING FACTORS

To assess effect level, start with your gut feeling, given the situation. Then assess three factors: **potency**, **threat**, and **scale**. If the PC has an advantage in a given factor, increase the effect level. If they have a disadvantage, reduce it.

### POTENCY

This factor considers particular weaknesses, taking extra time or a bigger risk, or the influence of strange powers. An Old Empire siege weapon may be potent against walls. An alchemical acid may be potent against a lock. An assassin will be more potent **SCOUTING** in the dark.

### THREAT

Threat represents the effectiveness of tools, weapons, or other resources, usually summarized by equipment quality. Basic Legion equipment is threat 1. Fine items count as threat 2. Some heavier weaponry will be higher threat. For more information on threat and how to deal with it, see page 228.

*Marchioness Phaera Rodano is facing off against the Wailer, an Infamous Horror sewn together from many screaming people. The Marchioness is a Legionnaire (threat 1) and she's clad in the finest Orite weapons and armor, so she fights equivalent to threat 2. Too bad the Wailer is a threat 3 opponent. She's outclassed in threat, so the effect of her blows will be limited.*

### SCALE

Scale represents the number of opponents, size of an area, scope of influence, etc. Larger scale can be an advantage or disadvantage. In battle, more people are better. When **SCOUTING**, more people are a hindrance.

When considering factors, the effect level might be reduced below limited, resulting in zero effect—or increased beyond great, to extreme effect.

## OTHER EFFECT FACTORS

If an item or ability gives +1 effect, it comes into play after the GM has assessed the effect level. For example, if you ended up with zero effect, the +1 effect bonus from your Books and Scrolls item would bump you up to limited effect. Also, remember that a PC can push themselves (take 2 stress) to get +1 effect on their action. (See Stress and Trauma, page 14.)

## DOMINANT FACTORS

If one effect factor overshadows the others, the side with that advantage dominates the situation. It doesn't matter if you have a fine knife and extra effect if you try to fight 20 Rotters at once. Their scale dominates the battle and you're left with very limited effect, or no effect at all. The same principle applies to "impossible" actions.

*The Marchioness wants to fight an entire army of undead in a fortified position. "I take my warhammer and I **SKIRMISH** with the whole army. Ha! I rolled a **CRITICAL!** Great effect!" Obviously, this can't happen. One person can't fight off thousands by themselves. It's inherently silly, like jumping over a mountain in a single bound. But this is also encoded in the effect factors. The army is dominant in threat, scale, and potency. Unless those factors are first countered somehow, the Marchioness's effect is zero before she starts. No matter what she rolls for her action, she'll have no effect. This concept is useful when assessing very tough (but achievable) situations.*

*Let's imagine our Marchioness up against the Wailer from the previous example. The Wailer is a 14-foot-tall monstrosity, with arms the size of anchors, wielding a club made of a tree-trunk and a cleaver of about the same size. Trying to **SKIRMISH** with a dagger is about as effective as trying to fight off an army. Even on a **CRITICAL** the GM says, "You manage to stab several solid blows about its legs and arms, but while green pus oozes out, its many heads just scream with anger." In other words, zero effect! (On a 1-3 the GM might say, "It grabs your arm and rips it straight out of its socket before kicking your bleeding corpse back towards your squad." Infamous are scary.)*

So should the Marchioness never fight an Infamous? No. There is a way to fight any opponent. This is where effect factors can help make sense of the situation. If the monster is dominant in scale, potency, and threat, then the players can work to understand the factors and take actions to address them. If it's got scale? Get explosives, or use a whole squad in an assault.

Effect factors are a way to codify the situation into a few key factors so it's easier to talk about what needs to change in order to have the desired effect.



## TRADING POSITION FOR EFFECT

After factors are considered and the GM has announced the effect level, a player might want to trade position for effect, or vice versa. For instance, if they're going to make a risky roll with standard effect (the most common scenario, generally), they might instead want to push their luck and make a desperate roll but with great effect.

This kind of trade-off isn't included in the effect factors because it's not an element the GM should assess when setting the effect level. Once the level is set, though, you can always offer the trade-off to the player if it makes sense in the situation.

*"Okay, I order the Rookies to open fire on the undead."*

*"You're using Black Shot and they're pretty armored. If you recall, Black Shot is extra effective against undead, but doesn't penetrate armor well at all."*

*"Ah. I didn't realize their armor was so heavy. Okay, what if I let them close? We can make sure our shots are hitting the exposed bits if we're shooting from point blank. How about a desperate **SHOOT** group action?"*

*"Sure. It'll expose your troops to greater danger since you'll be point blank and the undead are better equipped to attack there. Let's roll!"*

## EFFECTS IN THE FICTION

After the action roll, explain what the achieved effect looks like in the fiction. Leaving it just as a number of clock segments keeps the story static, whereas explaining the new situation allows players a way forward into new actions and rolls. Look at the questions for the effect level as a guide for the kinds of things to explain.

Actions can be simple (resolved entirely in one roll) or complex (resolved by filling up a clock).

*If the player says, "I want to convince the bandit queen to fight alongside the Legion or the undead will wipe both of us out," that could be a simple action. It might be limited, standard, or great effect, resulting in a number of possible new situations. The bandit queen may first want a challenge of strength to see if the Legion is worth fighting alongside (limited), or agree with your logic and send emissaries back to the Legion camp to work out the details (standard), or sign an accord and send you back with fresh horses or supplies (great), depending on the factors in the story so far.*

*If the player says, "I'm fighting this huge Horror and its squad of Rotters with a sword that only reaches its hips," that might be a complex obstacle. The GM creates a clock for the undead, then there are several action rolls to resolve the fight, each ticking the clock according to effect level (and risking consequences from the outcome of each).*



There's no rule for what is a simple action and what is complex. As a guide, think about whether you'd want to see this take up a few beats, or whether it's just a tense moment. For the latter, use a simple obstacle, and for the former, use a complex one. Most Elite and Infamous undead are likely complex obstacles unless you have a very good solution for them.

## WHY WE DO THIS

The biggest reason for setting effect is to set expectations about the result of a roll and the situation at hand.

*You shoot the highway robber. Do you bring him down with a single shot? Do you clip him as he rolls away? What goes into the effect that you're having? Can that be changed?*

Establishing effect and describing how it looks in the story shows players what they're accomplishing and what might go wrong. By understanding the effect of their actions, the group will have a sense of how many actions (and consequences) will achieve their goals. Sometimes a black eye is all you need to prove your point. Maybe nothing short of death will do. After each roll, the players have a clear picture of what has happened and can make decisions about what to do next.

## CONSEQUENCES

PCs affect the world around them. When a PC suffers an effect from an enemy or a dangerous situation, it's called a **consequence**. Consequences are the companion to effects. See page 36 for details on consequences and how they impact the player characters.

## SETTING POSITION AND EFFECT

The GM sets **position** and **effect** for an action roll after the player says what they're doing and chooses an action. Usually, risky/standard is the default, modified by the action being used, the strength of the opposition, and any applicable effect factors.

When you first start learning the game, you might cautiously step through the process with some deliberation, but after a bit of practice, you'll be able to set position and effect with a quick "gut feeling" that can then be tweaked if a PC has a particular ability, item, or some other element to consider as a special case.

If anyone is unclear why something is set at a specific position/effect, feel free to drop back to going through the process step by step. Frequently there happens to be a factor someone hasn't anticipated or remembered (or they envisioned the scenario and threats differently).

The ability to set position and effect as independent variables gives you nine combinations to choose from, to help you convey a wide array of fictional circumstances.

For example, if a character is facing off alone against a small group, the situation might be:

- ◆ She fights the group directly, rushing into their midst, punching and hacking away in a wild **SKIRMISH**. In this case, being threatened by the larger force worsens her position to indicate greater risk, and the scale of the group reduces her effect. (Desperate / Limited)
- ◆ She fights the group from a choke point, like a narrow ravine where their numbers can't overwhelm her. She's not threatened by several foes all at once, so her risk is similar to a one-on-one fight, but there are still a lot of enemies to deal with, so her effect is reduced. (Risky / Limited)
- ◆ She doesn't bother to fight the group directly, instead trying to **MANEUVER** her way past them and escape. She's still under threat from many enemy attacks, so her position is worse, but if the ground is open and the group can't easily corral her, then her effect for escaping isn't reduced. (Desperate / Standard)
- ◆ If she were trying to leave without focusing on a fight, and she had some immediate means of getting away (like leaping onto a nearby horse), then while the enemy numbers still make her position worse, her effect might even be increased! (Desperate / Great)
- ◆ The group isn't aware of her yet—she's set up in a sniper position on a nearby roof. She takes a shot against the leader of their group. Their greater numbers aren't a factor, so her effect isn't reduced, and she's not in any immediate danger. (Controlled / Great)

- ◆ Maybe instead she wants to fire off a salvo of suppressing fire against the whole group, in which case their scale applies. (Controlled / Limited)
- ◆ If the group is on guard for potential trouble, her position is more dangerous. (Risky / Great)
- ◆ If the group is alerted to the Sniper, then the effect may be reduced further, as they scatter and take cover. (Risky / Limited)
- ◆ If the group is able to muster covering fire while they fall back to a safe position, then things are even worse for our Legionnaire. (Desperate / Limited)
- ◆ If she happens to have brought the heavy ammo her Officer requisitioned for her, we'd see the effect change again as such rounds easily penetrate the cover. (Desperate / Standard)



## CONSEQUENCES AND HARM

Enemy actions, bad circumstances, or the outcome of a roll can inflict **consequences** on a PC. There are six types (see right).

A given circumstance might result in one or more consequences, depending on the situation. The GM determines the consequences, following from the fiction and the tone established by the group.

**REDUCED EFFECT**  
**CORRUPTION**  
**COMPLICATION**  
**LOST OPPORTUNITY**  
**WORSE POSITION**  
**HARM**

### REDUCED EFFECT

The consequence of **reduced effect** represents impaired performance. The PC's action isn't as effective as anticipated. *You hit it, but it's only a grazing wound. They don't spot you, but find signs of your passing. You're able to scale the wall, but it's slow going—you're only halfway up.* This consequence essentially reduces the effect level of the PC's action by one after all other factors are accounted for.

### CORRUPTION

Like harm, **corruption** represents a long-lasting debility, this time affecting your supernatural essence and whole person. It is the corrupting influence of undeath passing into your body and soul, changing you forcibly into its own agent. There is no known cure for corruption (though there are tales of relics or arcane powers that may protect you from it), and the body has no mechanism for healing that damage.

Also like harm, corruption is assessed in levels, where each level represents a point of damage on your corruption track. As a rule of thumb, an undead monster should deal as much corruption as its threat level, though monsters that are more of a physical threat may deal one less and those that are more metaphysical might deal one more. Often, the vector for corruption matters, so armor that can avoid or reduce physical damage can sometimes affect the corruption one experiences as well.

- ◆ **VAST (5):** Touched directly by the Cinder King. Accepting a mark of allegiance from a Broken.
- ◆ **WITHERING (4):** Drowned in foul chemicals. Poisoned with Broken blood. Possessed by a spirit.
- ◆ **SEVERE (3):** Branded with an evil sign. Hexed. Covered in acidic ichor.
- ◆ **MODERATE (2):** Doused in corrupt blood. Gassed by plague. Seared with supernatural fire.
- ◆ **LESSER (1):** Exposed. Spattered. Bitten. Gouged.



## COMPLICATION

A **complication** represents trouble, mounting danger, or a new threat. The GM might introduce an immediate problem that results from the action: the room catches fire, you're disarmed, the target evades you and now it's a chase, reinforcements arrive, etc.

The GM might tick a clock for the complication instead. Maybe there's a clock for the alert level of the undead guarding the camp. Or maybe the GM creates a new clock for the alchemical poison that's coursing through your veins. Fill one tick on a clock for a minor complication or two ticks for a standard complication.

A **serious complication** is more severe: the room catches fire and falling ceiling beams block the door, your weapon is broken, your target escapes out of sight, reinforcements surround and trap you, etc. Fill three ticks on a clock for a serious complication.

**Don't inflict a complication that negates a successful roll.** If a PC tries to corner an enemy and gets a 4/5, don't say that the enemy escapes. The player's roll succeeded, so the enemy is cornered, but maybe the PC has to wrestle them into position and during the scuffle the enemy grabs the PC's rifle.

## LOST OPPORTUNITY

A **lost opportunity** represents shifting circumstances. You had the chance to achieve your goal with this action, but it slipped away. To try again, you need a new approach—usually a new action or a change in circumstances. Maybe you tried to **RIG** the door open to the old keep but have discovered the entire mechanism is so rusted it won't open even if you had a key. If you want to get in, you'll have to try another way—maybe by **WRECKING** the door or **MANEUVERING** up the keep's walls.

## WORSE POSITION

When you lose control of the situation, you wind up in a **worse position**. Perhaps you make the leap across to the next stone outcropping, only to end up dangling by your fingertips. You haven't failed, but you haven't succeeded yet, either. You can try again, re-rolling at the new, worse position. This is a good consequence to choose to show escalating action. A situation might go from controlled, to risky, to desperate as the action plays out and the PC gets deeper and deeper in trouble.

## HARM

When you suffer **harm**, record the specific injury on your playbook equal to the level of harm you suffer. If you suffer **lesser harm**, record it in the bottom row. If you suffer **moderate harm**, write it in the middle row. If you suffer **severe harm**, record it in the top row. See examples of harm and the harm track on the next page.

Your character suffers the penalty indicated at the end of the row if any harm recorded in that row applies to the situation at hand. So, if you have “Tired” harm in the bottom row, you’ll suffer reduced effect when you try to run away from the Rotters. When you’re impaired by harm in the top row (severe harm, level 3), your character is incapacitated and can’t do anything unless you have help from someone else or push yourself to perform the action.

If you need to mark a harm level but the row is already filled, the harm moves up to the next available row. So, if you suffered moderate harm (level 2) but had no empty spaces in the second row, you’d have to record severe harm (level 3) instead. If you run out of spaces on the top row and need to mark severe harm, your character suffers level 4 harm and is dying.

When you suffer harm, your level of harm suffered is based on the difference in threat and scale. Each unmatched level adds one level of harm to your harm suffered. See page 228 for more information on suffering harm.

## NON-PHYSICAL HARM

Harm doesn’t just have to be broken ribs and knife wounds. “Mistrusted by the Troops” could be a form of harm that applies whenever you need them to back you up. “Haunting Visions” moderate harm can happen from a Shadow Witch’s hex. It applies -1d (as per level 2 harm) whenever you’re taking an action that having haunting visions might affect.

Harm is removed through the Rest and Recuperation campaign action (see page 138), but it can also fictionally vanish. When applying unusual harm to someone, let them know how they can remove it. If you’re unsure, for example when dealing with those visions, discuss with your table what sort of action or Long-Term Project might remove it.

This can be a way to showcase powerful opponents without killing the squad. A tough bandit queen might punch you in the gut, leaving you with level 3 harm “Can’t Breathe.” The harm clears after 10 minutes of rest, but leaves you unable to do much for the rest of the scene.

## HEALING HARM

Healing harm is handled through the Quartermaster’s Rest and Recuperation campaign action. For more information on this see page 138.

## HARM DETAILS

- ◆ **DESTRUCTION (7+)**: Damage that reduces someone to bits. **Examples**: *Dissolved. Liquified. Shredded. Turned to Ash.*
- ◆ **DEATH AND DISMEMBERMENT (6)**: Catastrophic trauma that leaves very little of the original body. **Examples**: *Badly Crushed. Bisected. Ripped Apart.*
- ◆ **INSTANTLY FATAL (5)**: Instantly fatal injuries resulting in immediate death. **Examples**: *Decapitated. Ripped-out Heart.*
- ◆ **FATAL (4)**: Injuries that will not be recovered from. **Examples**: *Drowned. Poisoned. Sucking Chest Wound.*
- ◆ **SEVERE (3)**: Injuries that make it impossible to perform basic actions. **Examples**: *Impaled. Broken Leg. Catatonic. Crushed Rib. Shot in Chest.*
- ◆ **MODERATE (2)**: Injuries that make it difficult to accomplish fundamental tasks. **Examples**: *Bleeding Cut. Burns. Exhausted. Panic.*
- ◆ **LESSER (1)**: Minor injuries that could be treated in the field with a Medic, or that are generally short-lived complications. **Examples**: *Bruised. Confused. Distracted. Drained. Scared. Sprained Ankle.*

Harm like “Drained” or “Exhausted” can be a good fallback consequence if there’s nothing else threatening a PC (like when they spend all night watching an encampment, looking for any weaknesses before they sneak in).

## HARM EXAMPLE

HARM			
4			DEATH
3	Broken Ribs	☐☐☐	NEED HELP
2		☐☐	-1D
1	Battered	Tired	LESS EFFECT

This character has 3 harm. “Broken Ribs” (level 3) plus “Battered” and “Tired” (level 1). If they suffer another level 1 harm, it will move up to level 2. If they suffer another level 3 harm, it will become level 4: Fatal.

## RESISTANCE AND ARMOR

When your PC suffers a consequence that you don't like, you can choose to **resist** it. Just tell the GM, "No, I don't think so. I'm resisting that." Resistance is always automatically effective—the GM says if the consequence is reduced in severity or if you avoid it entirely. Make a **resistance roll** to see how much stress your character suffers as a result of their resistance.

You make the roll using one of your character's attributes (**INSIGHT**, **PROWESS**, or **RESOLVE**). The GM chooses the attribute, based on the nature of consequence:

- ◆ **INSIGHT**: Consequences from deception or understanding.
- ◆ **PROWESS**: Consequences from physical strain or injury.
- ◆ **RESOLVE**: Consequences from mental strain or willpower.

Your character suffers 6 stress when they resist, minus the highest die result from the resistance roll. So, if you rolled a **4**, you'd suffer 2 stress. If you rolled a **6**, you'd suffer zero stress. If you get a **CRITICAL** result, you also clear 1 stress.

*Juan rolls a 4/5 on a desperate **SCOUT** roll while trying to creep up on a well-armed Black Oak Knight guarding one of Render's camps. Blue Rising gets the drop on the guard, but both of them inflict serious wounds on the other during the struggle. Since the position was desperate, the GM inflicts severe harm (modified by any other factors). She tells Juan to record level 3 harm "Nasty Gut Wound" on Blue Rising's playbook. Juan decides to resist the harm instead—he describes how Blue Rising spots the sword being raised and twists at the last second to take a less devastating blow. The GM says Juan can reduce the harm by one level with a resistance roll. Juan rolls 3d for Blue Rising's **PROWESS**, and gets a 5. Blue Rising takes 1 stress and the harm is reduced to level 2, "Badly Bleeding Gash."*

Usually, a resistance roll reduces severity of a consequence. If you're going to suffer fatal harm, for example, a resistance roll would reduce the harm to severe instead. Or if you got a complication when you were sneaking through an enemy camp, and the GM was going to mark three ticks on the "Alert" clock, she'd only mark two (or maybe one) if you resisted the complication.

The GM also has the option to rule that your character completely avoids the consequence. For instance, maybe you're in a sword fight and the consequence is getting disarmed. When you resist, the GM says that you avoid that consequence completely—you keep hold of your weapon.

**Each consequence can only be resisted one time.**



## RESISTANCE ROLL

• 1d per ATTRIBUTE

You **reduce** or **avoid** the effects of the consequence (GM chooses).

**Suffer 6 stress minus the highest die result.**

**CRITICAL:** Also clear **1 stress**.

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**By adjusting which consequences are reduced vs. which are avoided, the GM establishes the overall tone of your game.** As this game tends to be grittier, most consequences will only be reduced with resistance instead of completely avoided, but if the resistance roll provides a completely orthogonal approach, it's fine to accept it as a full resistance.

The GM may also threaten several consequences at once, then the player may choose which ones to resist (and make rolls for each).

*"The undead's acid vomit burns into your flesh. You'll take moderate harm and 2 corruption."*

*"Ouch! I'll take the harm, but I'll resist the corruption. I can heal up harm, but I don't want to face our Chosen when I'm reeking of corruption after the mission!"*

Once you decide to resist a consequence and roll, you suffer the stress indicated. You can't roll first and see how much stress you'll take, then decide whether or not to resist.

## DEATH

There are a couple of ways for a PC to die:

- ◆ If your character suffers level 4 or higher fatal harm and they don't resist it, they die. Sometimes this is a choice a player wants to make, because they feel like it wouldn't make sense for the character to survive or it seems right for their character to die here.
- ◆ If you mark your last available trauma box, you die.
- ◆ If you mark your fourth blight box, your character is completely corrupted. They may not technically be dead, but they are no longer playable, and pose a serious threat to the Legion.

When your character dies, you can immediately play one of the unplayed Rookies or Soldiers on the mission, if any are remaining. This means you won't be out of the action for long, often able to pick up mid-scene after being killed. If you're out of extra Legionnaires . . . you've got bigger problems.

## ARMOR

If you have a type of **armor** that applies to the situation, you can mark an armor box to reduce or avoid a consequence as well as rolling to resist.

*Blue Rising Iron is taking level 2 harm “Badly Bleeding Gash,” and the fight isn’t even over yet, so Juan decides to use Blue Rising’s armor to reduce the harm. He marks the armor box and the harm becomes level 1, “Slashed.” If Blue Rising had a shield, or heavy armor—such as what the Officer or Heavy might equip—Juan could mark a second armor box and reduce the harm again, to zero. Alas, Blue Rising is a Scout and doesn’t come equipped with those.*

When an armor box is marked, it can’t be used again until it’s restored. All of your armor is restored when you choose your load for the next mission.

## EQUIPMENT





The most common type of armor is granted through equipment, and it’s used to reduce consequences (most commonly harm) gained through actions in physical combat—as in the example above.

When you choose your load for a mission, a Legionnaire may be equipped with armor. Regular armor grants one use (it’s labeled “armor” on the playbook). Heavy armor (found on Heavies, Soldiers, and Officers) grants a second use (labeled “heavy” on the playbook). If you also happen to bring a shield, it too can reduce or negate a blow.

## SPECIAL ARMOR

Some gear and special abilities may grant **special armor**. The ability will tell you how to reduce the consequences of an action by marking a Specialist action **use** or a utilizing a piece of gear. For example, the Scout’s Ghost ability allows them to spend uses of their Specialist skill to avoid detection. Medical Kits can help you mitigate or outright avoid disease or poison.

Chosen can grant special armor uses not tied to expanding a specific resource. If you have such a special armor ability, tick the special armor box as required when you activate one of them. If you don’t have any such special abilities, then you can’t use that armor box.

ARMOR	
HEAVY	
SHIELD	
SPECIAL	

*Rachel is playing Marchioness Rodano, the Heavy. She reduced harm from the lethal blow of a Wolf-like Transformed by spending armor from her gear (in the fiction her shield/armor were rent). Because her Legion’s Chosen is Zora, and she grants them special armor against mystic effects, she used that to resist a Shadow Witch’s hex.*



## FORTUNE ROLL

The **fortune roll** is a tool the GM can use to disclaim decision making. You use a fortune roll in three different ways:

**When you need to make a determination about a situation the PCs aren't directly involved in and don't want to simply decide the outcome.**

*The Chosen is creating a distraction by assaulting the walls of the undead camp to lure away troops and the powerful Lieutenant stationed there. How many undead leave? How long will they be gone? How does the Chosen fare?*

*The GM makes a fortune roll for the undead troops and the Chosen. The undead get a good result, and the Chosen a limited effect. The GM decides that the undead manage to push the Chosen back, and will return to their patrols and posts shortly. The Chosen managed to distract most of them, but she's wounded and won't be able to assist again until she has a chance to rest.*

**When an outcome is uncertain, but no other roll applies to the situation at hand.**

*The Legion Scout snuck into the undead Lieutenant's tent during the distraction, but the distraction is short-lived and the undead are returning. Blue Rising grabs whatever paper and maps they can before sprinting towards safety. How useful are the papers they grabbed? Did important parts get ripped up? The GM makes a fortune roll to see how it turns out.*

**When determining the outcome of a Specialist performing their Specialist action, when the outcome is uncertain.**

*Malendhra is seeing to the wounds of a bandit that was recently shot. Since this is in the field and without the comforts of a medical tent, the GM decides to make a fortune roll using Malendhra's **DOCTOR** rating. Her player Alice asks if she can influence the roll in any way, and the GM suggests that spending Tonics would be a benefit in this circumstance (+1d). Alice agrees, and Sam—the GM—rolls three dice total to see how it goes.*

When you make a fortune roll, you may assess any trait rating to determine the dice pool of the roll.

- ◆ When a Chosen or a Broken takes an action with uncertain outcome, you might use their threat rating to make a fortune roll.
- ◆ When the players ask whether there might be a siege engine available for purchase in the area, you might use the location's assets rating to decide.
- ◆ When a PC gathers information, you might make a fortune roll using their action rating to determine the amount and quality of the info they get.
- ◆ When slogging through the cold and wintry pass, your Scout might make a fortune roll using their **PROWESS** to see how swiftly they can cover ground.

## FORTUNE ROLL

• 1d per **TRAIT** rating

+ 1d per **MAJOR ADVANTAGE**

- 1d per **MAJOR DISADVANTAGE**

**CRITICAL:** Exceptional result/Great, extreme effect.

**6:** Good result/Standard, full effect.

**4/5:** Mixed result/Limited, partial effect.

**1-3:** Bad result/Poor, little effect.

If no trait applies, roll 1d for sheer luck or create a dice pool (from one to four) based on the situation at hand. If two parties are directly opposed, make a fortune roll for each side to see how they do, then assess the outcome of the situation by comparing their performance levels. (This is often the case in battles between Chosen and Broken.)

The fortune roll is also a good tool to help the GM manage all the moving parts of the world. Sometimes a quick roll is enough to answer a question or inspire an idea for what might happen next.

Other examples of fortune rolls:

- ◆ If a Legion Role character such as the Commander takes the field, you might make a fortune roll to see how well they lead the main forces while the Legion players lead a smaller mission.
- ◆ The Sniper takes up a good position on a rooftop to shoot an enemy Infamous through a window. An enemy patrol is coming up on their position, though. Will they get a chance at a shot? Will the Infamous walk by the window, or maybe even linger in the crosshairs? The GM decides to make a fortune roll using the Sniper's **SCOUT** rating to find out.
- ◆ The Legion is searching through an ancient temple when they encounter a ward, set up by ancient ascetics using a relic. One of the soldiers decides to test the defenses. How might these energies affect the soldier? The GM decides on the threat level of the ascetics (2 for wards, at least), and makes a fortune roll.
- ◆ The Legionnaires are captured and brought before one of Breaker's Shadow Witches. Knowing she's feuding with a different Lieutenant and has been punished for failing against the Legion before, one of the PCs wants to convince her that the Legion can help her more than a few turned soldiers. Would a Shadow Witch even listen to the PCs? The GM isn't sure. How inhuman is this creature? She's possessed by a piece of Breaker herself—are her orders stronger than her desire to see her rival brought low? The GM makes a 2d fortune roll to see if a spark of ambition remains in her heart. If so, maybe one of the PCs can roll to **CONSORT** or **SWAY** her to their plan.

## GATHERING INFORMATION

The flow of information from the GM to the other players about the fictional world is very important in a roleplaying game. By default, the GM tells the Legion players what their characters perceive, suspect, and intuit. But there's just too much going on to say everything—it would take forever, and be boring, too. The players have a tool at their disposal to more fully investigate their world.

When you want to know something specific about the world, your character can **gather information**. The GM will ask you how your character gathers the info (or how they learned it in the past).

If it's common knowledge, the GM will simply answer your questions. If there's an obstacle to the discovery of the answer, an action roll is called for—set the position based on the obstacle. If it's not common knowledge but there's no obstacle, a simple fortune roll determines the quality of the information you gather.

Each attempt to gather information takes time. If the situation allows, you can try again if you don't initially get all the info that you want. But often, the opportunity is fleeting, and you'll only get one chance to roll for that particular question. The GM always answers honestly, but with a level of detail according to the level of effect.

The most common gather information actions are **SCOUTING** the situation to reveal or anticipate what's going on, or **RESEARCHING** for secrets and intelligence.

Sometimes, you'll have to put yourself into position before you can gather information. For example, you might have to **MANEUVER** to a good rock outcropping first and then **RESEARCH** the ritual being performed.

### GATHER INFORMATION

*Ask a question and make an action roll or a fortune roll. The GM answers you honestly with a level of detail depending on the effect level.*

**GREAT:** You get exceptional details. The information is complete and follow-up questions may expand into related areas or reveal more than you hoped for.

**STANDARD:** You get good details. Clarifying and follow-up questions are possible.

**LIMITED:** You get incomplete or partial information. More information gathering will be needed to get all the answers.

## EXAMPLES AND QUESTIONS

- ◆ You might recall texts you've read in your **RESEARCH** on alchemy when Blighter is deploying new alchemical agents against you. *What might this green gas do? How can we protect ourselves? What might neutralize it?*
- ◆ You might **RESEARCH** a new type of undead you encountered on a mission. *Whose army does it report to? What weaknesses might it have? What's its purpose in the undead armies of that specific Broken?*
- ◆ You might recall **RESEARCH** in the Annals about what the Legion knew about a monastic order. *What were their specific beliefs? Does this mural contain a clue to where the relic is hidden? What would their holy texts suggest is a way to avoid this trap?*
- ◆ You might **SCOUT** an area for signs of the enemy. *Where are the undead in this area? What special troops might I encounter? What is our best approach?*
- ◆ Or you might **SCOUT** the route an undead courier takes to deliver their message. *To whom is it delivering a message? What sort of message might it be? Where's the best place to ambush the response?*
- ◆ You might **RIG** up an experiment, given the proper supplies. *Can we use Shreya's blood to protect ourselves from corruption? Can powdered black shot be used to disinfect wounds?*
- ◆ You might **CONSORT** with locals to learn about the factions within a city. *Who is behind keeping out the refugees? Who pulls the strings behind the Church of the Twins?*
- ◆ You might **DISCIPLINE** a squad member to tell you what they've been hiding from the rest of the squad. *Where's the extra booze that vanished from the Quartermaster's ledgers? Where are they hiding that new pet they picked up in Talgon?* Note that if there's true risk (your discipline is more than a stern talking to, or the Legionnaire faces lasting enmity from their squad), this may be an action roll. Your table should decide.
- ◆ You might leverage your own ability to **SHOOT** to find where a sniper might be hiding. *Where's a good vantage point to cover the street from? How do we get closer without being exposed?*
- ◆ You might **SWAY** a powerful councilwoman to learn what they're planning. *What do they intend to do? What might I suspect about their motives?*
- ◆ Or you might **SWAY** a member of a different military unit to confide in you about recent events. *Why is the Guard Mechaniq being so insular? Why aren't the city's own units being deployed to defend the walls?*





## EXAMPLE OF PLAY

### TROUBLE IN GRACHENHEIM

The Legion's been struggling with food supplies of late. Blighter has deployed a number of her units to poison granaries and food supplies in the region, and restocking has become extra difficult. The Quartermaster has been researching a solution and recently completed a Long-Term Project. There is an artifact in a local shrine—it won't cleanse the poison, but it should help fortify the Legion against foul alchemy. Better bellyache and stretched supplies than starvation.

The squad bypasses some undead patrols and enters the half-burned out town of Grachenheim. They work their way into the temple and lift the artifact—the preserved hand of a long-dead Chosen grasping a chalice—when they realize there are a dozen Aldermani villagers between them and the exit. “I think,” says the lead villager, brandishing a family musket, “that you’ll be putting our relic back.”

Maleksei, the Officer in charge of the mission, exchanges a meaningful glance with the squad and Medic before pushing through the troops to face the villagers. “Neighbors,” he says, pointing to the crest on his shoulder. “Perhaps you don’t know what this is. This is the mark of the Legion. Now, my orders are to bring this relic back. Lives of my soldiers depend on it. Whether or not we go through you to do that is your choice.”

Sounds like a **DISCIPLINE** roll, and Dwayne (Maleksei’s player) goes with this. The GM reveals that these half-starved and scared villagers believe the relic’s blessing is the only thing that’s kept the village from being overrun. They are hungry and full of despair—this is a risky roll, with standard effect.

Dwayne gets 1d for Maleksei’s **DISCIPLINE** rating, plus 1d from an assist from Harish Katu, one of the Rookies on the squad. Rachel—Harish’s player—describes how Harish shifts his weight and puts a hand on his weapon; the rest of the squad, seeing things get tense, follow suit. The sight of armed troops getting ready for violence should help make the villagers reconsider. Dwayne rolls 2d and gets 4/5—partial success.

Maleksei also suffers consequences. Harm isn’t really appropriate (yet). Sam, the GM, opts for a complication and an escalation. (When appropriate, there can be more than one consequence.) Sam has an idea. She describes how the villagers are shaken and unsure about the fight, but their leader trains his gun on Maleksei’s head, and they all raise their weapons. This is lesser effect. The GM makes a “Villagers Give Up” 4-clock and ticks it twice. The villagers don’t really want a fight, and they can be convinced to back down, but the situation has escalated. The second consequence is that the Legion players are now in a desperate situation!

## COSTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Alice wants to resist a consequence of the last roll. Being in a desperate situation sounds like a bad idea. Her character Malendhra—the Medic—raises her hands and steps between the two groups, unarmed. If either side wants to take a shot, it'll have to be through her. She gives everyone a pointed look, willing to risk her life to broker a peaceful solution.

Alice rolls 2d for Malendhra's **RESOLVE** attribute and gets a 4. She takes 2 stress and avoids the complication. The villagers who weren't one hundred percent for fighting heavily armed soldiers ease up enough to hear her words. The situation is no longer desperate.

Malendhra pulls back her collar and shows the villagers the mark of Asrika—which is widely recognized and respected as the mark of a healer. "Look, I can tell from the shape of your town that you've had undead troubles. I can tell you that there's a whole lot more of them coming in this direction. Now, I cannot save your village, and I understand if you don't want to leave your homes. But if you let us take this, and come with us, I promise you the Legion can at least get you someplace more safe. There's no point in the living fighting each other," she glares at Maleksei, "when there are undead and other troubles out there that take all of us to deal with."

So what action is this? Alice considers it and says, "Well, I'm trying to relate to them as humans and people with an Asrikan shrine in town. So **CONSORT** might be appropriate, but I think this is a question of can I get them to believe and trust me. Which sounds like **SWAY**. I have one die in that and this is risky, but if I'm going to make the speech, I need to make the roll!" Maleksei volunteers to take a stress to give Alice a die from the **assist**—he makes a gesture for the squad to stand down and helps de-escalate the situation. Alice asks for a Devil's Bargain, and the GM has one—the villagers ask for some of the soldiers' guns and weapons right now. If they hand them over, they might be in a worse position in a fight, but it would certainly help alleviate any sore feelings and build trust. Alice checks with the rest of the players. Seeing thumbs up from the group, she nods and grabs an extra die, accepting the bargain.

Alice rolls and gets a 6! She smiles confidently and says, "All right! I guess violence doesn't solve all problems!" The GM says, "The makeshift village militia takes your weapons, and sits down for a town meeting. They convince most of the survivors of the village to come with the Legionnaires back to the Legion camp. At this point it's night, the squad has the relic, but now you have to escort a large group of villagers past several of those undead patrols you snuck by on the way in." This is a situation where numbers and scale may not actually be helpful. Things are about to get interesting in the dark.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The above is just an example. Consider how you would you change some of the calls made during your own game:

- ◆ How threatening is a group of villagers to a squad of well-armed Legionnaires? Should that have been a risky position? Should their numbers have dictated it start desperate? Or does their lack of training, quality arms and armor, and discipline reduce their threat and make the position controlled?
- ◆ What if the players had resisted the villagers surrounding them in the first place? Could they have rolled **INSIGHT** to spot the oncoming villagers and then hole up in the shrine? How does that change their position in the opening discussion?
- ◆ How will an influx of mouths affect the Legion's already strained food supplies? Will this cost of food be something that should be accounted for in the mission rewards and penalties?

## PC VS. PC

It's common for two or more PCs to come into conflict. Mechanically, the rules for PC vs. PC action are the same for PC vs. NPC action. You still use action, resistance, fortune rolls, effects, and consequences. These resolve into new situations that may require more rolls. But though it's mechanically straightforward, it's not exactly the same. There are guidelines you should follow when PCs start to battle it out.

- ◆ **Halt play for a bit.** When two PCs conflict, it's like two writers arguing over the direction of the story they're working on. You don't need to rush to roll dice. Instead, pause what you're doing and figure out how things should proceed. "Who acts first" is sometimes a sticking point for players, especially when blades are drawn. Usually the answer is clear from the situation—one player is acting while the other is reacting. When it's not, you can make fortune rolls to see who gets the drop on whom—have each player make an **action roll** and compare the results.
- ◆ **Decide how to resolve the conflict.** Determine what's at stake, what actions need to be rolled, and what outcomes might occur from those actions. If you want to go down a different road, speak up! This is why pausing play is important—it gives you a moment to really consider what's going to happen. If you can't agree on how to resolve the conflict, you're at an impasse.
- ◆ **Ask about the situation to establish how things will resolve.** You might ask, "Can your character be **SWAYED** into going along with my plan?" or "Are you all up in my character's face or are we shouting from across the room?" or even "Is your character out for blood here, or is this about your appearance to the rest of the squad?"
- ◆ **Live with the results.** Once you decide on the resolution method, follow through with that method and stick to the outcomes. Rather than argue with the process, use the outs the system already gives you—bad results can be resisted, armor is often an option, and the future remains open to new courses of action.

There are no specific player vs. player mechanics. When the PCs fight, the players are still collaborating and making judgments about what happens, like any other event. Conflicts between the characters can be fun and engaging, provided that everyone at the table is into them! Conflicts between **players** are outside the scope of the game; no roll or mechanic can resolve a dispute between people. Talk with your friends and resolve any interpersonal conflicts that come up so PC vs. PC conflicts can just be about the story you're telling.





## PC VS. PC EXAMPLE

### THE CASE OF THE ORPHAN CHILDREN

*The squad is on mission in the small town of Ordenast, looking for intel on what the Broken have been developing and how they plan to use it. Dodging some undead, the squad hides in a basement, only to discover there are a half-dozen starving children already there. Maleksei—the Zemyati Officer played by Dwayne—pulls the squad of Ember Wolves aside and orders them to pack up and get ready to move. Alice—currently playing Red Striking Pyre, a Soldier in the squad—says, “No. We are not leaving these kids behind. There’s no way I’m going to have nightmares when they return as undead.”*

*“I gave you an order, soldier,” Dwayne says crisply, mimicking Maleksei’s sternest look.*

*“Okay,” says Sam, the GM. “Sounds like we have a bit of a PC versus PC situation here. Dwayne, Alice, do you agree?” Both nod. “So Dwayne, I know Maleksei is very loyal to the Legion, and driven by objectives, but do you think there’s any way he can be **SWAYED**?”*

*“Yeah, of course. Maleksei is being all strong and harsh and trying to lead by example, but those kids’ eyes are going to haunt him for sure. He’s not going to just cave, but I think a good argument might be able to **SWAY** him.”*

*“So what about Pyre?” Sam says turning to Alice. “Remember at the start of the mission we asked if anyone was going to disobey orders. So this is probably extra hard, here.”*

*“Yeah,” says Alice. “I don’t think Pyre is doing this lightly. He respects the Officer, and wouldn’t disobey an order on the battlefield, but this is a bit different. And yeah, I can probably be browbeaten into falling in line.”*

*“Great,” says Sam. “So Dwayne, you just ended that scene with a strong tone. Were you trying to **DISCIPLINE** Pyre to fall in line?”*

*“Yep! That’s exactly what I was going for. Should I make a roll? What’s my position and effect?”*

*“I think it’s risky,” says Sam. “If you appear too callous, you might get some resistance from the rest of the squad. But your effect is great. This is a soldier trained to obey and fall in line—you basically have potency from rank here.” Dwayne rolls his **DISCIPLINE** and gets a **4**—partial success.*

*“Okay, the consequence here is lesser effect, which reduces your effect to standard. Alice, do you just fall in line here?”*



*“Nah, I can’t just give up right away. I want to grind my teeth and resist my impulses to obey. I’m resisting with...**RESOLVE**, I guess? ‘Consequences from mental strain or willpower’?” Sam nods. “Hrm. I’ve got one die in that. I might trauma here. Okay! For the kids!”*

*Alice rolls and takes 3 stress. Ouch! “Worth it,” she says as she notes it on Pyre’s playbook. She also makes a note that Pyre cares about children, to remind whomever might play the character next.*

*“Okay, I’m convinced that the mission is important. But I still can’t just leave these kids. I want to **SWAY** Maleksei, but I’ll temper my request. Pyre says, ‘Sir, I get that it’s mission first. But they won’t make it on their own, and we have no idea if we’re even coming back this way. One less soldier for you won’t make a difference to the mission, but it’ll make every difference for them. Let me lead them back towards camp. I know the Legion won’t adopt them, but there are refugee families back at camp that might.’ Does that sound reasonable, Dwayne?” Dwayne gives a thumbs up. “What’s my effect and position?”*

*“I think controlled/standard here,” says Sam. “If you fail, you’ll have to do something more drastic, or try a different approach—something other than **SWAYING**. But you’re not exactly putting down an ultimatum.”*

*Alice rolls and gets a 6. “Oho! I got your back, kids, and so do my dice!”*

*“Okay Maleksei, the soldier just outlined the plan and **SWAYED** pretty effectively. What do you think? Is this resolved?”*

*Dwayne nods. “Yeah, Maleksei wants the full squad for action, but he worries that if he pushes this issue, a stressed-out Pyre will be more liability than asset. So how do we deal with the outcome?”*

*“We’ll make a fortune roll after the mission to see how Pyre does with the kids getting back to camp. And Alice, you can just grab a fresh Rookie playbook and create someone new to play for the rest of the mission. Sound good?” Everyone nods.*

# LEGION ADVANCEMENT

## CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Each player keeps track of the **experience points** (xp) that their character earns.

During the game session when you roll for a desperate action, mark 1 xp in that action's attribute. For example, if you roll a desperate **SKIRMISH** action, mark 1 xp in **PROWESS**. When you roll for a desperate group action, everyone involved marks xp.

At the end of the mission, review the **xp triggers** on your playbook. For each one, mark xp (playbook or attribute) as appropriate. The xp triggers are:

- ◆ **Surviving the mission.** No matter how the mission goes, each character learns something.
- ◆ **Your playbook-specific xp trigger.** For example, the Heavy's is "if you helped your squad through might or fortitude." To "help," your character should attempt to overcome a tough obstacle or danger. It doesn't matter if the action is successful or not. You get xp either way.
- ◆ **You used a heritage trait.** If you invoked a heritage trait during the mission, you can gain xp. You get this xp when you use the mechanical benefit of your trait. For instance, if you gain +1 **SWAY** from your Orite Connected trait, and you rolled **SWAY** to gain information from reluctant nobles, you can mark xp. You might also bring cultural aspects of your heritage into the story, such as swearing a Zemyati blood oath or giving someone a Bartan necklace charm. These scenes should be memorable and poignant. Either way, feel free to tell the group what you remember when you mark xp.
- ◆ **You struggled with issues from your traumas.** Mark xp if your trauma conditions caused you trouble during a mission.
- ◆ **Per threat of the highest threat opponent.** For example, if the highest threat of opponent you faced was threat 3, then you gain **3 xp**.

You may mark end-of-mission xp on any attribute xp clock, your Specialist clock, or your playbook xp clock (the one on the big red banner).

At the end of a **secondary mission**, any Specialists on that mission mark 2 xp for surviving.

*Dwayne just finished a mission playing Maleksei, a Zemyati Officer. Juan, as the Marshal, reminds everyone that it's time to record xp. He made two **desperate** group **SKIRMISH** rolls and he makes sure he remembered to note that on Maleksei's **PROWESS** clock.*

*He gains **1 xp** for surviving the mission, and another for helping the squad with some strategy. He has no trauma conditions, and can't remember using his heritage, but Alice reminds him that his Zemyati **Loyal** trait was part of those group actions—so he gains **1 xp** for that. Finally the Infamous (threat 3) monstrosity they faced gives him **3 xp**. So he has **6 xp** to place wherever he wants on his playbook.*

When you fill an xp clock, clear all the marks and take an **advance**. When you take an advance from your playbook, you may choose a new special ability. When you take an advance from an attribute, you may add an additional action rating to one of the actions under that attribute (up to a max of 3). The same applies to the Specialist action clock and the respective Specialist abilities below it. After filling an xp clock, reset the clock to zero and mark the remaining xp.

*Dwayne decides to drop all 6 xp into his **RESOLVE** xp clock. This fills it up, so he clears it and fills in another rank of **MARSHAL**.*

## ADVANCEMENT CAPS

In addition to the limits on a single ability, a character may have no more than 20 ranks of actions and six abilities.

It is rare for a character to hit these caps over the course of one campaign. Those Legionnaires that do are considered champions and become the backbone that anchors near-impossible missions. They don't gain xp anymore but they're still key players, and necessary for more aggressive strategies.

## CHOSEN ADVANCEMENT

In addition to your individual Specialists, your Chosen can advance by completing missions that earn them the **favor** of a matching divine aspect. After earning four favor, your Chosen advances and takes a new ability.

## SWITCHING CHOSEN

If something truly exceptional happens in your game, such as your Chosen dying and/or the Legion finding another to ally with, switch out the Chosen sheet you're using. Remove the abilities your original Chosen was providing (they no longer apply to the Legion) and create the new Chosen as if it were the start of the game, applying the new Chosen abilities as appropriate.





# CHAPTER 2

# CHARACTERS

## CHARACTERS

*I watched a fellow Orite become a Heavy today. At the crack of dawn, the old horn called at the center of camp, but she was already there, as was the Marshal. She had tried this test twice before, but this time, looking into the cold determination of her eyes, I knew she was going to make it.*

*I watched afterwards as her old squad rushed in to embrace her. The soldiers she had tossed like sacks about the field shook her hand, grinning through swollen lips and bruised eyes. I realized that the war may have broken our numbers, but we still find reason to celebrate even our small victories.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

Legionnaires come in many stripes, from the intrepid Rookie, to the jaded veteran, to those with specialized training. All of them can do the 11 basic actions of the game—they're all able to **SKIRMISH** with their opponents, **SCOUT** out an enemy position, **MARSHAL** a group of soldiers. And of the Specialist skills, all can be learned by any character.

Characters are created at various times during the campaign, usually as they're needed. Before the first mission, each player will create a Specialist. When a player chooses to play a previously unplayed Rookie or Soldier, they should create the character. If a character dies, their player can quickly flesh out one of the squad's remaining Rookies or Soldiers to play in the same scene. When the Legion recruits a new Specialist or Rookie, the Marshal should detail them, and when a Rookie or Soldier is **promoted**, whoever played the character before the promotion should detail the changes.

# CHARACTER CREATION

## CHOOSE A PLAYBOOK

Your playbook contains all the specific rules needed to play a certain character type in **Band of Blades**. By choosing a playbook, you're determining which type of Legionnaire your character is. The Specialist playbooks are:

### HEAVY

*Play a Heavy if you want to shine with might and determination against the dark.*

### MEDIC

*Play a Medic if you want to get your fellow soldiers through a mission alive.*

### OFFICER

*Play an Officer if you want to command your troops to victory even when they're up against certain death.*

### SCOUT

*Play a Scout if you want to see the enemy coming and always know what you're up against.*

### SNIPER

*Play a Sniper if you want to dispatch the most dangerous threats from afar.*

In addition, there are two playbooks for rank and file troops. These types of characters will always be assigned to a squad and five will be sent on missions, usually alongside a pair of Specialists.

### ROOKIE

*Play a Rookie if you want to earn your stripes on the field.*

### SOLDIER

*Play a Soldier if you want to slog through the mud as a tough-as-nails veteran.*

Each playbook has a set of **special abilities** (which give your character ways to break the rules) and **xp triggers** (which determine how they earn experience points for character advancement). All playbooks have actions (like **SKIRMISH**) and no playbook has a monopoly on the 11 basic actions.

Every playbook aside from the Rookie also has a **Specialist action**, which helps them perform their role and generates uses rather than being rolled.

By selecting a playbook, you select a set of initial action ratings and special abilities that will be easiest for you to access. You determine your character's essential nature, and both your skills and nature can evolve over time.

Each playbook is detailed in this section, starting on page 79.



## CHOOSE A SPECIAL ABILITY

Each playbook has a list of **special abilities**. Choose one special ability for your character.

If you can't decide which one to pick, go with the first one on the list—it's placed there as a good default choice. If you're very familiar with the other playbooks, you can start with a Veteran advance if you like. Each character can have up to two Veteran advances (which can be earned through play).

## GENDER IN THE MILITARY

Because militaries and military fiction can be heavily male-dominated, it's easy to slip into a mode of viewing these playbooks, and the Legionnaires themselves, as mostly male. This is not the case, and you should feel free to create a character you find compelling without restriction based on their gender. The Legion and the armies of the Eastern Kingdoms have people of every gender at every rank, and in every role.





## CHOOSE A HERITAGE

Your character's **heritage** describes their upbringing or place of origin. The heritages of the Eastern Kingdoms infuse the story of **Band of Blades** with a sense of multiculturalism and give characters a national identity. Individuals from these cultures may be as varied as you can imagine, but the traits are meant to give you a quick way to come up with characters.

- ◆ **BARTANS** are close-knit and devout. Many wear jewelry made of tokens granted to them by family and people they have forged strong friendships with. Their culture is agrarian and ruled by a council.
- ◆ **ORITES** are cosmopolitan and influential. Their country is known for its technology. Their advances in clockwork and alchemy are almost as defining as their obsession with nobility and lineage.
- ◆ **PANYAR** come from the deep forest, which was touched by an ancient god. Everyone that spends enough time in the forest eventually gains an animal trait, such as cat-like eyes or noticeable fangs. Their culture focuses on great deeds and Panyar must earn the third part of their name.
- ◆ **ZEMYATI** are mountain-dwelling clans, and their culture is a complex arrangement of oaths between various clans, between a clan and its members, and between a Zemyati and the world.

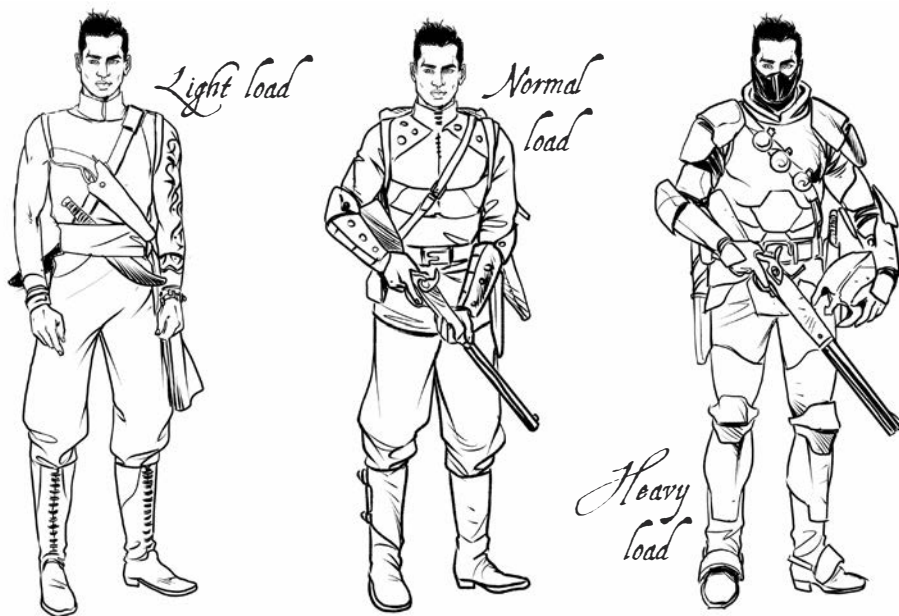
Once you select a heritage, choose a name and two cultural traits your character embodies. These traits are cultural, not racial: they're an insight into the things those cultures value. If you want to play someone from a Bartan family that was raised in Zemya, have fun and take Zemyati heritage traits. However, the game is designed for you to take traits from only one heritage, not to mix and match. Alternately, see page 67 for unique heritages or page 434 regarding custom heritages.

At the end of each mission, playing your heritage traits can earn you xp. While players are encouraged to explore their heritage and bring in details, earning xp for heritages is simple. Did the mechanic you get from your culture enter play? Great. Mark that xp. Don't overthink it.

Each of these heritages are described in more detail starting on page 356.

To help the next player picking up that character, you may want to make a note of heritage traits in the character notes ("always equip a Reliquary") or mark one of the gray resistance boxes next to the actions (so they know they get an extra **INSIGHT** die as a Shrewd Panyar).

Choose a name for your character from the sample list or create your own that fits the cultural naming pattern. Each heritage has a different way of naming their people—the Bartan still use the Old Empire style of given and family name, the Orites often insist on being addressed by title, the Panyar customarily have three-part names, and the Zemyati often use patronymics.



## BARTAN LOOKS

Most Bartans are tall, dark-haired people, with skin of varying shades of brown, and red or black eyes. Their dress favors wraps and flowing cloth, dyed in bright colors. Many Bartans decorate their skin with complex tattoos and detailed, painted designs. Both men and women wear jewelry displaying tokens granted to them by family and people with whom they have earned a place of deep trust.

## BARTAN HERITAGE TRAITS

- ◆ **WARM:** Mark an additional rank of **CONSORT** when you create the character, up to a maximum of 2.
- ◆ **PIOUS:** Whenever you go on a mission, you may equip a Reliquary in addition to anything else you take.
- ◆ **STOIC:** When you **resist** with **PROWESS**, take +1d.
- ◆ **EDUCATED:** Mark an additional rank of **RESEARCH** when you create the character, up to a maximum of 2.

## BARTAN NAMES

**Given Name:** Adikar, Arun, Karoj, Kirish, Makit, Nadit, Parkresh, Raghav, Rakash; Adisha, Aswina, Kalyika, Kaviya, Kita, Rahika, Rashi, Riya, Seneha, Shimya, Vani.

**Family Name:** Arani, Chabarti, Dardhi, Dewa, Kapatia, Khatri, Pakshi, Manabur.



## ORITE LOOKS

Orites are cosmopolitan, with a wide variety of skin tones, and hair and eye colors. They favor complex embroidery, garments of linen and velvet, and pattern inlays in their armor. They often wear fancy masks instead of hats.

## ORITE HERITAGE TRAITS

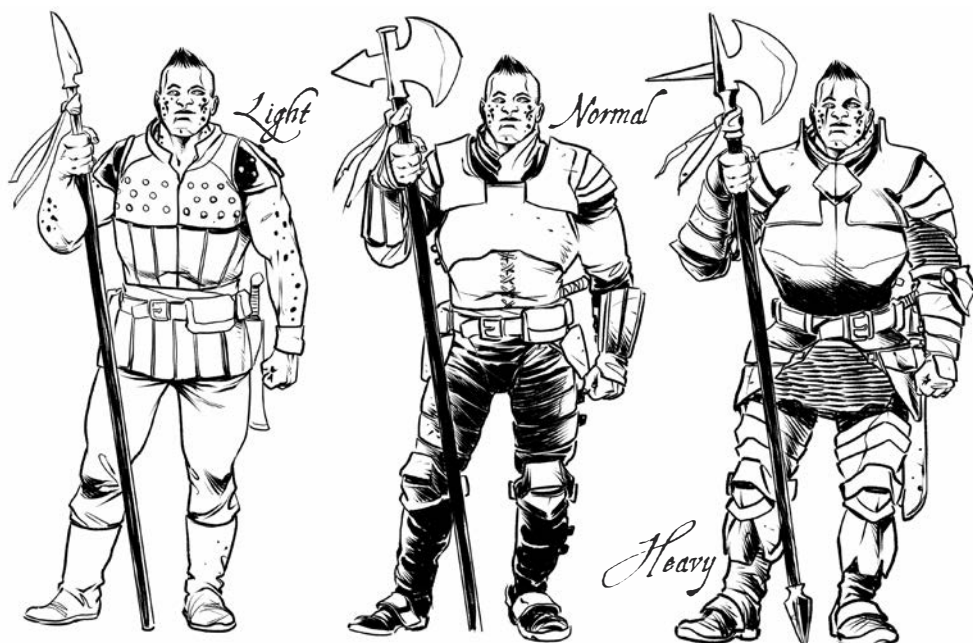
- ◆ **NOBLE:** When the Quartermaster declares campaign actions, you may boost the effect of one action you are affected by (see Quartermaster, page 135). So if the Quartermaster declares the Liberty campaign action, your Orite may clear all their stress (though the whole Legion doesn't get extra **morale**).
- ◆ **CONNECTED:** Mark an additional rank of **SWAY** when you create the character, up to a maximum of 3.
- ◆ **VENGEFUL:** You gain potency when a harm penalty applies.
- ◆ **STERN:** Mark an additional rank of **DISCIPLINE** when you create the character, up to a maximum of 2.

## ORITE NAMES

**Noble Titles:** Baronet, Contessa, Dame, Gallant, Graf, Landgrave, Marquess, Principis, Reina, Viscount.

**Given Name:** Alben, Anton, Blas, Cyprian, Elrik, Farian, Leon, Marilo, Rubin, Silvin; Aurora, Chiara, Emetta, Hadriana, Katovica, Livia, Millia, Severina, Tiana, Valeria.

**Family Name:** Albrekt, Garossi, Loprio, Martiko, Rodano, Sanicci, Zardani.



## PANYAR LOOKS

Though dark eyes and dark hair are most common in the forests of their homeland, most Panyar color their hair using bright-hued dyes from Barta mixed with forest tubers. Each Panyar has an animal feature gained by living a dozen years in the forest of Panya. They favor clothes that allow for freedom of movement, but tend to copy local dress customs when traveling.

## PANYAR HERITAGE TRAITS

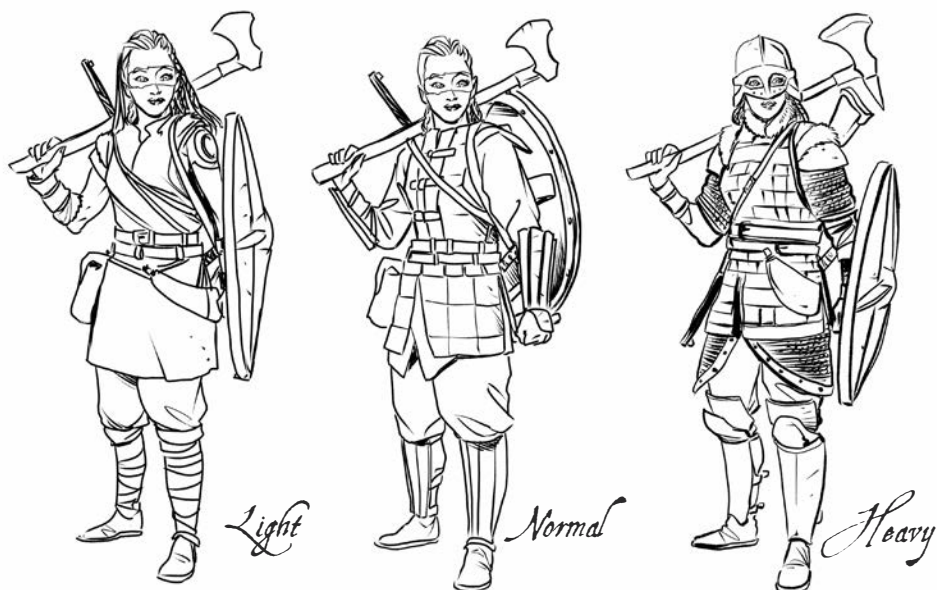
- ◆ **ARTISAN:** Your **RIG** action can advance to 4.
- ◆ **TRAVELER:** In normal load you're considered fast and quiet, as if you had equipped a light load. This may make a difference in position or effect when running, jumping, climbing, (**MANEUVERING**), or sneaking (**SCOUTING**).
- ◆ **SHREWD:** When you **resist** with **INSIGHT**, take +1d.
- ◆ **MARKED:** When you **resist corruption**, take +2d.

## PANYAR NAMES

**Color Name:** Amber, Azure, Russet, Sapphire, Scarlet, Silver, Vermillion, Violet.

**Mark Name:** Charging, Dancing, Flowing, Growing, Raging, Standing, Surging.

**Deed Name:** Blaze, Ember, Flood, Glade, Grove, Reef, Storm, Tempest, Tide, Weald, Wind.



## ZEMYATI LOOKS

Zemyati are pale skinned, and favor heavier cloth in their dress, embroidred with gold and silver thread. Both men and women wear braided jewelry and accent their dress with forged pieces akin to armor. All Zemyati keep a small ritual dagger on them, for the swearing of blood oaths.

## ZEMYATI HERITAGE TRAITS

- ◆ **TOUGH:** You never take less effect from level 1 harm penalties.
- ◆ **BOLD:** When you resist the **consequences** of **desperate** actions, take +1d.
- ◆ **LOYAL:** When you lead or participate in a **group action**, take +1d to your roll.
- ◆ **STUBBORN:** When you **resist** with **RESOLVE**, take +1d.

## ZEMYATI NAMES

**Given Name:** Adrimir, Colay, Gabridyor, Liavel, Maleksei, Melislav, Theonin, Viltory; Alike, Dania, Emilinya, Freriya, Isalana, Klarina, Sverena, Tatinika, Valentina, Zaya.

**Patronymic/Matronymic:** (masculine) -ovich, -evich, -ich; (feminine) -yevna, -ovna, -ichna. These endings are added to your father's or mother's name. Such as Malekseevich or Klarinovna. For more details see page 362.

## OPTIONAL: UNIQUE HERITAGE

Though the traits assigned to heritages are drawn from common cultural practices, they do not describe absolutely everyone from that country. Some people do not absorb the customs of their birthplace, are raised in unique environs, or find their own way and learn their own lessons. Perhaps they're simply not from the Eastern Kingdoms.

As an optional rule, a Legionnaire can choose not to select any of the listed heritage traits. Instead, mark an additional rank of two different actions (up to a maximum of 2). Tell everyone what your upbringing taught you and why.

## ASSIGN FOUR ACTION RATINGS

Every playbook starts with a few action ratings already filled in—some more than others. You get to add four more ratings. During character creation, no action rating may be higher than 2 (unless a special ability or heritage trait tells you otherwise). Brief descriptions of all the actions follow on pages 70-72.

In addition to the shared actions, most playbooks also have an additional Specialist action that works a little differently. These actions aren't rolled, but they have a number of uses equal to their rating. Brief descriptions of the Specialist actions are found on page 297.

## RECORD YOUR LOOK

Finally, think about how your character looks and acts towards others. Do they tend to be decked in fine garb befitting their noble station? Are they secretive by nature and tend to lurk in shadows? Record a quick description about the character's appearance and presentation in their notes section.

## REVIEW YOUR DETAILS

Look at the **xp triggers** for your playbook (like the Heavy's "Earn xp when you helped your squad through might or fortitude," for example) and the special items available to a character of your type (like the Heavy's Flare Gun, for example). Don't worry about equipping items—you'll decide what your character is carrying later on and it can change on any given mission.

That's it! Your character is ready for play. When you start the first session, the GM may ask you some questions about who you are, your outlook, or some past events. If you don't know the answers, make some up! Or ask the other players for ideas.



## CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

**1 Choose a playbook.** Your playbook represents your character's role in the Legion, their special abilities, and how they advance.

**2 Choose a playbook special ability.** If you can't decide, choose the first ability on the list. It's placed there as a good first option.

**3 Choose a heritage.** Pick a name, and two heritage traits. Make a note about your look and any heritage detail. *Are you from an old mining family, or did you grow up as a farmer?*

**4 Assign four additional action ratings.** No action may begin with a rating higher than 2 during character creation. (After creation, action ratings may advance up to 3.)

**5 Review your playbook details** such as Specialist action and xp triggers. Make any notes you need to. Remember that others may play this character in the future.

### WHY RANK DOESN'T MATTER

At one point, the Legion was a well-organized and regimented fighting force. Now shattered, practicality has taken over, and aside from those fulfilling the vital Roles of the Legion, there is little concern given to former rank. It's not uncommon for a squad to include a corporal or sergeant or two, but the Marshal will dictate who is in charge of a given mission.

The exception to this rule is the Officer playbook. These lieutenants, captains, and majors still have rank the Marshal must acknowledge, and when they are assigned to a mission, the Marshal must place them in charge. (If two Officers are assigned to a single mission, then the Marshal can choose between them.)





## ACTIONS

When you **CONSORT**, you socialize with friends and contacts.

*You might gain access to resources, information, people, or places. You might make a good impression or win someone over with your charm and style. You might make new friends or connect with your heritage. You could try to direct your friends with social pressure (but **DISCIPLINE** may be better).*

When you **DISCIPLINE**, you compel obedience with your force of personality.

*You might intimidate or threaten to get what you want. You might fiercely bark orders to get a squad to fall in line (though **MARSHAL** may be better). You might coerce people to do what you want (though **SWAY** may be better).*

When you **MANEUVER**, you lift, climb, jump, run, or swim, usually either away from or into danger.

*You might vault over a barricade while pressing an assault. You might climb up the side of a cliff to approach a secret camp. You might ride a horse into battle or drive a wagon full of supplies through a dangerous battlefield. You might dodge crossbow bolts as you cross a courtyard to get a downed soldier. You might chase after an Infamous you're following (though **SCOUT** may be better).*

When you **MARSHAL**, you direct a squad or group of people to action.

*You might organize a flanking maneuver to surround an enemy. You might coordinate fire to focus on the biggest threat on the field. You might direct the people under your command to set for a charge. You might organize and direct your squad to keep them from routing (but **DISCIPLINE** may be better).*

When you **RESEARCH**, you scrutinize details and interpret evidence.

*You might gather information from ancient tomes, the Annals of the Legion, and whispered rumors from Aldermani citizens. You might do research on an esoteric topic. You might closely analyze a person to detect lies or true feelings (but **CONSORT** may be better). You might read what the histories have to say about a place (but **SCOUTING** it out for yourself may be better).*

When you **RIG**, you alter how an existing mechanism works or create a new one.

*You might disable a trap. You might repair a damaged siege weapon. You might set an alchemical bomb to explode. You might build fortifications. You might fieldstrip a rifle. You might force a door open (though **WRECK** may be better).*

When you **SCOUT**, you move or observe without being noticed.

*You might watch an undead's creation while hiding in the shadows. You might lift a key off an undead guard. You might sneak up behind someone to attack them by surprise (but **SKIRMISH** may be better). You might try to climb up the side of a building (but **MANEUVER** may be better).*

When you **SHOOT**, you fire on a target with precision from a distance.

*You might fire from a sniper's perch. You might make a trick shot. You might target one enemy in a group. You might clear a jam in your rifle (though **RIG** may be better.) You might fire while undead overrun your position (though **SKIRMISH** may be better).*

When you **SKIRMISH**, you engage in close combat with a hostile opponent.

*You might brawl or wrestle with your foe. You might use a melee weapon. You might fire pistols at short range (though **SHOOT** may be better). You might ambush an opponent (though **SCOUT** may be better).*

When you **SWAY**, you influence someone with guile, charm, or logic.

*You might outright lie to someone's face. You might persuade a sucker to believe you. You might argue the facts with an officer. You might try to influence people's affection or obedience (but **CONSORT** or **DISCIPLINE** may be better).*

When you **WRECK**, you apply savage force or careful sabotage to destroy a place, item, or obstacle.

*You might use siege weapons. You might throw or place explosives or alchemicals. You might distract and sow chaos (but **SWAY** may be better). You could try to overwhelm an enemy with sheer force (but **SKIRMISH** may be better).*

Many actions overlap with others, which is by design. As a player, you get to choose which action you roll by saying what your character does. Can you try to **SCOUT** behind someone during a fight? Sure! The GM tells you the position and effect level of your action in this circumstance. As it says, **SKIRMISH** may be better (less risky or more effective), depending on the situation at hand. (Sometimes it might be the other way around.)

## SPECIALIST ACTIONS

In addition, each playbook (except Rookie) has a **Specialist action**. These aren't rolled, but they do represent distinct actions that these Specialists learn that not everyone has access to.

When you **AIM**, you use careful timing and cool nerves to improve your shot. **AIM** uses increase the effect level of your shot, one-for-one.

When you **ANCHOR**, you use your size and training to clash with more numerous or far superior foes. Each **ANCHOR** use allows you to fight as a small group.

When you use **CHANNELS**, you leverage connections, social capital, and authority to acquire supplies beyond your allotment. You can spend **CHANNELS** uses to acquire an asset for the squad in a flashback. A **SWAY** roll will determine the quality, and additional uses can be spent to improve that quality.

When you **DOCTOR**, you use specialized medical training to soothe and treat a soldier's wounds. A **DOCTOR** use allows a soldier to ignore wound penalties for a scene.

When you use **GRIT**, you use the hard lessons taught over the course of your soldiering career to weather the worst the war has to offer. A **GRIT** use can be spent to reduce the stress cost of a resistance roll, once per roll.

When you **SCROUNGE**, you repurpose the environment around you to find shelter or source items. A **SCROUNGE** use will find you safe and secure shelter for an evening or one load's worth of supplies for everyone in the squad.

When you **WEAVE**, you invoke arcane powers to change the world around you. Doing so is not without cost, and should always be considered extremely risky. A **WEAVE** use will allow you to identify if something is an artifact, or to detect the presence of the divine.

For a complete description of each action, with examples, see pages 298-304.

## LOADOUT

Legionnaires are equipped with some standard gear for their position, being issued kits, weapons, and armor by the Quartermaster.

Before each mission, decide what your character's **load** will be.

- ◆ **LIGHT.** You're faster, less conspicuous; equipped to travel light and expected to source supplies as you travel. Pick this if you want to be able to blend in with a local populace, seem non-threatening, outrun your opponents, and sneak through tight places.
- ◆ **NORMAL.** You look like a soldier on a mission, or at the very least a bandit or mercenary. Pick this if you want to be ready for a variety of situations, but may need speed or stealth on occasion.
- ◆ **HEAVY.** You're slower. You look like a soldier ready for heavy combat—nobody will mistake you for anything other than what you are. Pick this when you know you're going to face trouble, and want to be able to take heavy hits and solve a variety of problems using your gear.

Your selected load determines what items you carry with you. At a given load, you gain all the items of that level and below. (For example, if you take normal load, you also gain all items at light load.) Some Specialists at some loads allow for a choice between items. For example, a Heavy at normal load can take either a Shield or a Large Weapon.

In addition to items that are part of your load, you also have **2 utility load** that you can spend for additional equipment. Some items require 2 utility load, on account of their scarcity (the Quartermaster is loathe to issue such things, and they have to be taken as tradeoffs). As well, your Quartermaster may spend various resources to outfit you with additional equipment. All equipment must be selected before beginning a mission. Prepare well, lest you find yourself missing a critical item when you're in the field.

*Red Striking Pyre is preparing for a mission. Alice, who is currently playing Pyre, picks normal load, knowing this is a recon mission and she doesn't want to be bogged down. Pyre gets all the light and normal items for Soldiers. Alice notes that he will wear standard Legion armor, bring the small clay flute his sister made for him (as a memento) and chooses a large spear with a haft of wood from Panya that Pyre is known for (Large Weapon). Pyre will also bring a Shield and Soldier's Kit from normal load, and will get an extra utility item (for a total of three). Alice knows that bad things may go down on this mission, so she prepares Pyre for the scraps ahead by adding a Pistol and some Black Shot. This Soldier is ready to report for duty!*

Review your personal items and the standard item descriptions on page 74.

## STANDARD ITEMS

This is common gear that anyone in the Legion could have access to. For example, though any character may have a sword of their own that they prefer, the Legion has stockpiles of extras in case theirs breaks. If a Legionnaire is at camp for any length of time, they can replace any standard items that broke or malfunctioned during a mission, and reset their load and equipment.

**Fine** items are made of better materials, with more exacting precision, or are just better than their standard counterparts. This is signified by increased threat—fine items allow you to act as threat 2 when applying them instead of threat 1. Not all items have fine counterparts.

**Ammo:** Powder, wadding, or paper shells for loading powder guns and pistols. Spend to reload ranged weapons. Five uses.

**Armor:** Mostly leather. Some chain. Will turn a knife or undead teeth. Not much help against the big ones. Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. **Fine:** Ornate or dyed. Customized for you.

**Books & Scrolls:** You bring just the right academic treatise or section of the Annals of the Legion. Spend to gain +1d or +1 effect level to **RESEARCH** rolls. Two uses.

**Black Shot:** Crafted by Alchemists, these precious bullets are carried in sawdust-packed, sealed, wood and leather cases. A mere graze kills lesser undead. Grants potency against undead. Don't shake. Use sparingly. Three uses.

**Compass & Maps:** Fine Bartan compass (hard to replace). Maps of the local area that you've personally annotated.

**Flare Gun:** Break action pistol with colored smoke charges, and burning flares for night signaling. Standard pack includes four shells.

**Hand Weapon:** Sword, spear, or axe. Military one-handed weapon. Not knives. You can take two if you don't use a shield. **Fine:** Dueling blade, longsword, sabre, heartwood spear, or a similar one-handed weapon. Named and of exceptional quality. *What is it made of and who forged it?*

**Heavy Armor:** Metal plates and leather. Layers. Many have embossed designs, sigils, and painted crests. Not subtle or quiet. Small blades or fists have little to no effect against you. Provides 2 armor against physical attacks.

**Heavy Weapon:** Halberd, polearm, massive axe, maul. **Fine:** Claymore, warhammer, morningstar. Too heavy for most. Well worn and familiar to you.

**Lenses:** An expensive Bartan telescoping lens for viewing things at a distance. Expensive. Don't lose them.

**Oil:** Has a number of uses from quieting hinges to filling lanterns. Catches fire easily. Three uses.

**Musket:** Breech-loaded ball ammo rifle. Standard Legion issue. Accurate at 50 yards. Rookies caught without one get dressed down.

**Pistol:** Single shot. Breech loaded.  
**Fine:** A masterfully crafted Orite revolver (five shots) with fine embossing and balanced for quick reloading.

**Reliquary:** Bones of ancient Chosen in vials of sacred oil. Shavings of relics. Tomes of blessed scripture. Spend to reduce corruption taken by 1 and +1d to resist it. Three uses.  
**Fine:** Reduces corruption taken by 2.

## KITS

**Climbing Kit:** Grapples, pitons, rope. A must for mountains, useful in forests.

**Cooking Kit:** Pots, pans, grills, spices, and coal you're made to carry. If a Rookie doesn't have these, folks will be upset.

**Gun Maintenance Kit:** For clearing out jams and field-modifying a gun. No Sniper should be without this.

**Medic Kit:** Antiseptic, slings, sutures, poultices, gauze. Spend for special armor against disease and wound complications. Three uses.  
**Fine:** Also has bandages, draughts, sterile compresses, and medicines.

**Shield:** Wood with metal reinforcement. Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. **Fine:** Fully metal shield embossed with any symbol you desire.

**Supplies:** Dry food packed for travel. Not really appetizing unless cooked. Spend to feed a Legionnaire for a day. Hope a Rookie packed a Cooking Kit.

**Winter Clothing:** Don't freeze to death. If you do, don't come back.

**Repair Kit:** Hammers, files, nails, pins, planks, pulleys, rope, saws. Can jam traps, repair doors or siege devices, etc. Three uses.

**Soldier's Kit:** Bedroll, flint and tinder, knife, lantern, small mirror, soap, shaving kit, trowel, whetstone, a day's rations, etc. Issued identical, soldiers trade parts and customize with additional goods.

**Wrecking Kit:** Mallet, spikes, prybar, axes, drills. Vials of acid and small alchemical hand charges.

## REPLACEMENT AND UNLISTED GEAR

On several gear lists are items that **replace** another. The most common is replacing armor with heavy armor. An item must be taken at an earlier load to be replaced with a better quality version later. If a Heavy selects a Shield at normal load, it's replaced with a Tower Shield at heavy load.

Some missions provide gear, like the alchemical explosives given on Shreya's starting mission. These have to be carried by someone. Whomever is selected can track it in the blank utility slots. These can also be used to take common items (1 load) or fine/rare items (2+ load, as decided by the GM), or gear from abilities such as the Soldier's Grenadier.



## ORITE MEDICAL ALCHEMY

Orites have different branches of alchemical study. Medical alchemy is a bit of a misnomer, since it's a field that specializes in substances that can produce a change and reaction in the human body when consumed. Not everything in this kit is strictly medicines, and this is not an exhaustive list. Legion Medics often take care when administering such substances (which often have side effects). Any Legion medic with the Chemist ability may equip the following:

**Alchemical Bandolier:** A bandolier can be used up to four times to produce one of the following alchemicals:

- ◆ **Owlsight Oil:** Lets you see in the dark for 24 hours, but bright light is blinding.
- ◆ **Chembalm:** Neutralizes most poisons and toxins. Also an excellent battlefield disinfectant (this may effect **DOCTOR** fortune rolls).
- ◆ **Deep:** Lets you hold your breath for a scene.
- ◆ **Rage Venom:** Gain physical potency for a scene. You must make a **RESOLVE** resist to avoid attacking friends and foe indiscriminately. Addictive.

For more on alchemy see page 366.

## THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS

Assess the details that you're interested in when considering position and effect. If you want to include advantages from specific details of your items—reach, speed, adaptability, etc.—consider a Devil's Bargain that relates to a detail. Usually these bargains are suggested by the GM, but any player can suggest them! If both you and the GM agree, then you can take the extra die.

*"Can I take +1d here to **MARSHAL** by firing off my Flare Gun? The troops on both sides of the town will be waiting for my signal."*

*"I'll empty the whole revolver if it'll get me +1d, but then I'll be out of ammo. Either this thing dies or I do!"*

Consider how this item affects your position and/or effect. If you're unarmed and you wrestle a Transformed, your position is probably desperate. If that Transformed tries to rush you when you have a rifle loaded with Black Shot, your position is probably risky, or even controlled, depending on how far away it is before it starts running.

Alchemicals can also influence your position in a lot of ways. Perhaps making a shot into melee in the dark is **desperate** ordinarily, but only **risky** for someone who has used Owlsight Oil (see above).

## STANDARD ABILITIES

Each Specialist and Soldier can take any of the following abilities, regardless of their playbook. These abilities are not available to Rookies.

### ELITE

Gain **mastery** of two actions (up to rank 4).

*Normally, actions may only go to rank 3. You may only take this ability once.*

### HARDENED

You can mark **two additional stress boxes**.

*Normally, you only have six stress boxes. You may take this up to two times.*

*Each time, you gain **two additional stress boxes**, for a total of 10 boxes.*

### SURVIVOR

You can take **+1 trauma** before dying.

*Normally, you only have two trauma boxes. You may take this up to two*

*times. Each time, you gain another trauma box, for a total of four boxes.*

### VETERAN

Take a special ability from another source.

*You may take this up to two times. Each time, you gain a special ability from another playbook.*



# SPECIALIST THE HEAVY

## *A guardian and powerful melee fighter*

Shock troop and unbreakable tower of iron, the Heavy represents the Legion's unyielding determination on the field of battle. You might be the front-line protector of the troops under your care. Or you might be the unstoppable engine of destruction sent to tackle the toughest enemies. Rookies always breathe easier knowing you're there to stand between them and harm.

**When you play a Heavy, you earn xp when you help your squad with might or fortitude.** It's your job to be the tip of the spear, to square off with the most horrific thing on the field, and to take blows for those who would fall.

*Do you have a personal code that you follow? Are you fatalistic about the war? What has your devotion to battle cost you?*

### STARTING ABILITIES

- ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ **ANCHOR**
- ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ **SKIRMISH**
- ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ **WRECK**

### STARTING BUILDS

*If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action ranks and special ability, use one of these templates.*

**GUARDIAN:** Anchor +1, Discipline +2, Marshal +1. **Bulwark.**

**SLAYER:** Anchor +1, Maneuver +2, Discipline +1. **War Machine.**

**CORPORAL:** Anchor +1, Discipline +1, Marshal +2. **Weaponmaster.**

**KNIGHT:** Research +1, Maneuver +1, Consort +1, Marshal +1. **Backup.**

### SPECIALIST ACTION

As a Heavy, you start with one rank in **ANCHOR**. As with all Specialist actions, these are not rolled. Instead, each rank gives you one **ANCHOR** use per mission. **ANCHOR** allows you to use your size and training to clash with more numerous or far superior foes. **ANCHOR** uses are restored when you select your load at the start of a mission.

Each **ANCHOR** use allows you to fight as a small group. This means you can face groups of lesser undead without loss of effect. There are also some undead that simply have massive size, represented via scale. **ANCHOR** can be essential for evening the odds when you face off against a larger opponent such as Blighter's Horrors.

# HEAVY SPECIAL ABILITIES

## BULWARK

You can spend **ANCHOR** uses as **special armor** against consequences to a squad you are defending.

*When you stand in defense of your squad, you can mark **ANCHOR** uses as special armor against consequences to the squad, even when not involved the roll. You protect the squad as a whole, including other PCs, but not yourself. **ANCHOR** uses are restored when you select your load at the start of a mission.*

## BACKUP

When you **protect** a squadmate, resist with **+1d**. When you **assist** someone, their pushes only cost **1 stress**.

*The assist (see page 222) still grants a bonus die as usual.*

## TENACIOUS

Penalties from **harm** are one level less severe (though level 4 harm is still fatal).

*Level 1 harm does not penalize you, level 2 harm gives less effect rather than -1d, and level 3 harm does not incapacitate, but gives -1d instead. Level 4 harm is still lethal, however, and suffering it will still kill you.*

## WEAPONMASTER

You're known as a Weaponmaster even outside the Legion. When you **push yourself**, you also gain **potency** in melee combat.

*A Weaponmaster is exceptional with almost any weapon, and may have invented a style of fighting all of their own. Those who are Weaponmasters are respected or feared for their talents.*

## WAR MACHINE

When you **push yourself**, you can do one of the following: *perform a feat of physical force that verges on the superhuman — reduce the threat level of all the enemies you're facing by one.*

*When you push yourself to activate this ability, you still get one of the normal benefits of pushing yourself (+1d, +1 effect, etc.) in addition to the special ability.*

*A superhuman feat is one a regular person could not do unassisted, such as tearing apart iron chains. When reducing threat, you may not reduce threat below 1. War Machine is an excellent tool for dealing with a single dangerous opponent, but when fighting hordes of rank and file undead, you should look to **ANCHOR**.*

## VIGOROUS

When you check wounds during **rest and recuperation**, place one free check. When you take **harm**, clear **1 stress**.

*When the last check on a row of wounds is filled, you clear all wounds on that row. Even grievous wounds can be shrugged off with adequate treatment for those with this ability.*

## AGAINST THE DARKNESS

You and all squadmates that can see you gain **+1d** to **resist** fear and corruption.

*You don't need to see the source of this fear or corruption, and it doesn't need to be supernatural to gain this bonus. For example, you take **+1d** to resist troops breaking on a **MARSHAL** roll, or to **DISCIPLINE** them against the horrific.*

# HEAVY ITEMS AND LOADOUT

## LIGHT LOAD

- ◆ **Flare Gun:** Break action pistol with colored smoke charges, and burning flares for night signaling. Standard pack includes four shells.
- ◆ **Fine Armor:** Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. Ornate or dyed. Customized for you. *What identifies it as yours?*
- ◆ **Fine Hand Weapon:** A blade, dueling blade, longsword, sabre, heartwood spear, or a similar one-handed weapon. Named and of exceptional quality. *What is it made of and who forged it?*

## NORMAL LOAD

- ◆ **Fitted Heavy Plate:** Replaces Armor. Your signature armor. Customized. Counts as fine. Grants 2 armor. *What stands out about it at a distance?*
- ◆ **Fine Shield:** Fully metal shield embossed with any symbol you desire. Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. *What insignia fills its front?*  
— OR (Choose either Fine Shield or Fine Large Weapon) —
- ◆ **Fine Heavy Weapon:** Claymore, warhammer, morningstar, or other two-handed weapon. Well worn and familiar to you. *What have you felled with this?*

## HEAVY LOAD

- ◆ **Fine Wrecking Kit:** Mallet and spikes, prybar, axes, drills. Vials of acid and small alchemical hand charges. *Where do you carry it?*
- ◆ **Fine Tower Shield:** Replaces shield. Massive shield that can stop missile and melee fire and protect others. Grants 1 armor. *Is it taller than you?*







# SPECIALIST THE MEDIC

## *A combat physician*

In this time of war, the Legion needs those who can wield a scalpel, as well as a sword. Fighting off alchemical plagues, claws, bites, broken bones, and bog-standard disease and infection are bad enough. You have to do it while fighting on the front line with the rest of the troops. When things go wrong (and they always do), the squad will look to you to keep them going.

**When you play a Medic, you earn xp when you help your squad through medical knowledge or emotional support.** Use all your resources to keep everyone whole and healthy, and most importantly, to return with everyone you started with.

*How did you learn to **DOCTOR**? Have you taken the Mark of the Healing Goddess or have you decided against it? Have you ever lost a patient?*

### STARTING ABILITIES

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇	<b>DOCTOR</b>
◆ ◆ ◆ ◇	<b>RESEARCH</b>
◆ ◆ ◆ ◇	<b>MANEUVER</b>
◆ ◆ ◆ ◇	<b>CONSORT</b>
◆ ◆ ◆ ◇	<b>DISCIPLINE</b>

### STARTING BUILDS

*If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action ranks and special ability, use one of these templates.*

**COMBAT MEDIC:** Doctor +1, Maneuver +1, Skirmish +1, Discipline +1. **First Aid.**

**SCIENTIST:** Rig +1, Scout +2, Maneuver +1. **Chemist.**

**MORAL COMPASS:** Scout +1, Shoot +1, Marshal +2. **Moral Support.**

### SPECIALIST ACTION

As a Medic, you start with one rank in **DOCTOR**. As with all Specialist actions, these are not rolled. Instead, each rank gives you one **DOCTOR** use per mission. **DOCTOR** allows you to use specialized medical training to soothe and treat a soldier's wounds.

Each **DOCTOR** use allows you to treat a soldier to ignore their wound penalties for a scene. Even if a soldier is incapacitated, you can treat them to get them back on their feet. Whatever ails them, you can get them back in the fight—though this only lasts a short time.

# MEDIC SPECIAL ABILITIES

## ATTACHÉ

You may deploy on any mission even outside the usual Specialist caps. Gain this ability for free when you promote to or create a Medic.

*All Medics gain this ability for no extra cost. Normally, a mission will only allow for two Specialists. The Marshal may deploy a Medic with any mission regardless of how many Specialists have already been assigned. This applies to primary and secondary missions.*

## FIRST AID

You can spend **one use** of Tonics to remove appropriate level 1 harm on any one person on your mission.

*You need a moment to apply whatever medicine or first aid you have in your bag. If you attempt this during combat, this may require a **DOCTOR** roll.*

## NOT TODAY

You can spend a **DOCTOR** use on a Legionnaire who has taken level 4 harm on a mission, but you must do so quickly before they die. You treat them and reduce the wound to level 3 harm instead.

*Your quick actions can stabilize the dying, but not those completely torn asunder by level 5 or greater harm. You may apply Not Today after resistances and armor, but only if the final result is lethal harm exactly.*

## DOCTOR FEELGOOD

Spend one use of Tonics to grant one person **potency** for a physical action.

*Medically induced surges of strength can be taxing or habit-forming. A single instance isn't a problem, but if the same person is repeatedly the target, the GM may start a clock or require a **DOCTOR** roll to avoid this trouble.*

## FIELD DRESSING

At the end of a mission you may expend remaining **DOCTOR** uses to add one check to a Legionnaire's level 2 or 3 harm, once per person.

*Level 2 harm requires two checks to heal. Level 3 harm requires three checks to heal. This ability gives you up to one free check per Legionnaire, provided you have the **DOCTOR** uses to spend at the end of the mission.*

## CHEMIST

You have training in Orite alchemical medicine. You may equip an Alchemical Bandalier on each mission. It holds four charges of alchemicals. (See page 76.)

## MORAL SUPPORT

You know how to keep troop spirits up. Once a mission, if you tell a funny, personal, or meaningful story when the squad is resting, anyone listening may clear **1 stress**.

*The rest need not be overly long. Good moments are when the squad is taking a break from hiking from one point to another, or after composing itself following a fight.*

## MEDIC ITEMS AND LOADOUT

### LIGHT LOAD

- ◆ **Fine Medic Kit:** Antiseptic, slings, sutures, poultices, gauze, bandages, draughts, sterile compresses, and medicines. You may spend uses as special armor against disease and wound complications. Provides three uses.
- ◆ **Tonics:** Potions and draughts to remove pain, heal common ailments, aid in sleep, or give mercy to those that cannot be saved. Chirurgy materials. Provides one use. *Do the others know where you keep them?*
- ◆ **Holy Symbol of Mercy:** A physical symbol of the Goddess of Mercy often worn as a brooch or necklace, or wrapped around the hand. *Where do you wear yours?*
- ◆ **Mark of the Healing Goddess:** Those physicians who take the oath of healing and mercy (*seek no harm to any person, turn away no patient, give mercy to those that cannot be saved*) at a temple to Asrika are branded with a sigil of folded wings. Such a symbol is universally recognized as a Medic's mark, and villagers and strangers will provide courtesy and passage to those branded when they wouldn't otherwise. If you take this mark, you will always have it in the future. *Where did you get yours and where is it on your body?*

### NORMAL LOAD

- ◆ **Fine Pistol:** A masterfully crafted Orite revolver (five shots) with fine embossing and balanced for quick reloading. *Have you ever fired it?*
- ◆ **Ammo:** Orite pistol shells for your fine sidearm. Spend to reload ranged weapons. Five uses. *Do you carry them in a case or loose in a leather bag?*
- ◆ **Armor:** Legion-issue leather cuirass and chain shirt. Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. *Do you know who used to own it?*
- ◆ **Tonics:** Provides an additional use (for a total of two).

### HEAVY LOAD

- ◆ **Tonics:** Provides two more additional uses (for a total of four).



# SPECIALIST THE OFFICER

## *A leader and tactician*

One of the few remaining true officers in the Legion, the Officer is recognized for their rank and experience. You might be in the middle of the chaos, fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with your squad. Or you might be the type to orchestrate their movements from a position above the battle. Either way, you're expected to accomplish the mission against all odds.

**When you play an Officer, you earn xp when you help your squad through enforcing discipline or strategic planning.** When all hell breaks loose, the squad is going to need someone to lead them to victory. Someone like you.

*Are you an Officer by training or through acts of valor? Are you close to the people you lead, or do you command at a distance? What do the troops call you?*

### STARTING ABILITIES

- ◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ CHANNELS
- ◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ DISCIPLINE
- ◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ SWAY

### SPECIALIST ACTION

As an Officer, you start with one rank in **CHANNELS**. As with all Specialist actions, these are not rolled. Instead, each rank gives you one **CHANNELS** use per mission. Using **CHANNELS** allows you to leverage connections, social capital, and authority to acquire supplies beyond your allotment.

Each **CHANNELS** use allows you to acquire an asset for the squad in a flashback. Make a **SWAY** roll to determine the quality. Additional uses can be spent to improve that quality. These extra **CHANNELS** uses need not be spent up-front, and the stress cost for the flashback is zero. If you do not meet the minimum quality, you cannot get that asset, though a lesser version may be available at the GM's discretion.

## STARTING BUILDS

*If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action ranks and special ability, use one of these templates.*

**LEADER:** Channels +1, Maneuver +1, Shoot +1, Marshal +1. **Tactician.**

**SERGEANT:** Shoot +2, Skirmish +1, Marshal +1. **Lead from the Front.**

**PLANNER:** Channels +1, Research +1, Maneuver +1, Shoot +1. **Logistical Support.**

**FIREBRAND:** Maneuver +1, Marshal +2, Discipline +1. **Mission First.**

# OFFICER SPECIAL ABILITIES

## TACTICIAN

You anticipate problems others would never see coming. When you lead a **group action** you may suffer at most **1 stress**.

*You may get up to 5 stress—one for each player, plus one for the squad—without this ability.*

## LEAD FROM THE FRONT

Whenever you lead a **group action**, improve **scale** up or down one level (for example: a small group counts as a medium group or an individual). If you lead a **group action** in combat, you may count multiple **6s** from different rolls as a **CRITICAL**.

*When rolling an action rated zero (rolling two dice and keeping the lowest result), a player can only generate one 6, and can't **CRIT** on their own. You may choose not to apply this ability—if you're **SCOUTING** to stealthily flank an enemy, for example, increased scale is not advantageous.*

## LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

**CHANNELS** uses can be spent to **assist** a squadmate. When you do this they get an additional **+1d**. Tell us how your preparation or supplies help them against this threat or obstacle.

*Normally an assist costs 1 stress. Because your preparation or supplies are benefiting the squad member, and not your direct actions, you don't need to be present to assist. They get +2d total for the assist.*

## MISSION FIRST

Add the following to “at the end of mission” xp trigger: *If anyone died under your command.*

*When a Legionnaire dies, the Legion suffers -1 morale. This ability also gives xp if people die in secondary missions you are assigned to. You can only ever gain 1 xp this way per mission.*

## OBEDIENCE

An NPC squadmate sacrifices themselves, on your orders. They die, and absorb all the harm for you or another Specialist from one attack. Remember that the Legion takes **-1 morale** each time this occurs.

*This allows you to order an NPC to step in front of an attack and absorb the damage. For example when a Gut-Sack explodes, the Rookie heroically tackles it to the ground, saving the squad from its caustic spray, but dies in the process. This death cannot be resisted or mitigated with other special abilities.*



## STRATEGIST

You gain **+1d** to **SWAY** when **acquiring assets** for a mission via **CHANNELS** uses. You also get **+1d** to the **engagement roll** for a mission.

*The engagement die is applied after all modifiers. If you end up with no dice, you'll roll a single die. Multiple instances of Strategist do not stack.*

## OFFICER SCHOOL

You're well educated and know arcane esoterica. Gain **+1d** when **gathering info** through **RESEARCH** and when **resisting** with **INSIGHT**.

*This ability also changes the kinds of information you might know. You might know things related to alchemy, Orite technology, history, or the sciences.*

## OFFICER ITEMS AND LOADOUT

### LIGHT LOAD

- ◆ **Flare Gun:** Break action pistol with colored smoke charges, and burning flares for night signaling. Standard pack includes four shells.
- ◆ **Fine Armor:** Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. Ornate or dyed. Customized for you. *What identifies it as yours?*
- ◆ **Fine Hand Weapon:** Dueling blade, longsword, sabre, heartwood spear. Named and of exceptional quality. *What is it made of and who forged it?*
- ◆ **Fine Ornate Cloak:** An outfit befitting an Officer. Crested clasp. A mark of station among the troops. *What medals do you wear?*

### NORMAL LOAD

- ◆ **Fine Luxury Item:** Fine brandies. Beautiful game sets. A musical instrument. Privileges befitting rank. *Which one did you bring on this mission?*
- ◆ **Fine Shield:** Fully metal shield embossed with any symbol you desire. Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. *What insignia fills its front?*  
— OR (Choose either Fine Shield or Fine Pistol and Ammo) —
- ◆ **Fine Pistol:** A masterfully crafted Orite revolver (five shots) with fine embossing and balanced for quick reloading. *Have you ever fired it?*
- ◆ **Ammo:** Orite pistol shells for your fine sidearm. Spend to reload ranged weapons. Five uses. *Do you carry them in a case or loose in a leather bag?*

### HEAVY LOAD

- ◆ **Battlefield Banner:** A standard used to coordinate troops. These banners boost morale—unless they fall. *Who do you assign to carry it?*
- ◆ **Fine Heavy Armor:** Provides 2 armor against physical attacks. Ornate or dyed. Customized for you. *What identifies it as yours?*



# SPECIALIST THE SCOUT

## *A stealthy advance unit*

A whisper in the trees, a rumor in the streets, the Scout is always watching, but never seen. You're expected to cross into enemy territory, identify threats, sabotage offenses, and somehow make your way to safety with precious little support. Your squad will see your effects more than they will see you. Whether they're grateful is difficult to say.

**When you play a Scout, you earn xp when you help your squad with stealth or foresight.** You should be scouting on point, watching for looming dangers or treacherous ground.

*Are you solitary by nature? Have you always been stealthy or is it trained? What have you seen that you regret finding?*

### STARTING ABILITIES

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **SCROUNGE**

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **SCOUT**

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **MANEUVER**

### STARTING BUILDS

*If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action ranks and special ability, use one of these templates.*

**ASSASSIN:** Shoot +2, Skirmish +1, Sway +1. **Ghost.**

**WIND DANCER:** Scrounge +1, Shoot +2, Marshal +1. **Panther-Like Grace.**

**DEEP RECON:** Scrounge +1, Research +1, Shoot +2. **Infiltrator.**

**SPY:** Research +1, Shoot +1, Consort +1, Sway +1. **Sixth Sense.**

### SPECIALIST ACTION

As a Scout, you start with one rank in **SCROUNGE**. As with all Specialist actions, these are not rolled. Instead, each rank gives you one **SCROUNGE** use per mission.

Each **SCROUNGE** use will find you safe and secure shelter for an evening or one load of supplies for everyone in the squad. These supplies are the same for each member of the squad. You can dig up a cache of spare weapons left by a previous scouting expedition, hunt for some rations to feed the troops, or strip bark to make ropes. Only single load supplies can be **SCROUNGED**: Black Shot and Reliquaries are not something you can just find in the field.

## SCOUT SPECIAL ABILITIES

### GHOST

You can spend **SCROUNGE** uses as **special armor** against traps or detection.

*These are usually consequences of **SCOUT** or **RIG** rolls. For details on special armor, see page 42.*

### PANTHER-LIKE GRACE

When you are quick and carrying no armor, any harm you take starts as one level lower.

*Panyar travelers are quick in normal load—others usually under light load. If this reduces the harm to level 0, you negate the harm entirely. You are considered to have fine equipment when evaluating threat. Remember that difference in threat is added to harm, so consequences can still be quite severe against more powerful undead.*

### LIKE THE WIND

Whenever there's a question of who goes first, the answer is you. Also take **+1d** when **resisting** attacks with **PROWESS**.

*Two characters with this ability will act at the same time.*

### INFILTRATOR

When you **gather info** through clandestine observation, or attempt to bypass traps and security measures, gain **potency**.

*If you don't particularly need potency, consider asking if your position could be more favorable instead. The GM makes that decision.*

### SIXTH SENSE

You just know when there are undead nearby. You always know what the highest **threat** level of undead is in the area. You can **gather info** on them with **RESOLVE**.

*Reaching out with your senses is usually controlled, though there are some undead for which that contact might be riskier. A good result might indicate number, type, and direction, while a poor one might simply give a sense of how dangerous this area is.*

## READY FOR ANYTHING

When being ambushed, your **flashbacks** cost **0 stress** and you gain **potency** to all actions during those flashbacks. You also take one less level of harm on **secondary missions**.

*For example, on a 6 result, you would take no harm on a secondary mission.*

## DAREDEVIL

When you make a **desperate** roll, gain **+1d**.

*You may only take this extra die if the final position of the roll is desperate, so if you use a setup action to change the position to risky, for example, it does not apply.*

## SCOUT ITEMS AND LOADOUT

### LIGHT LOAD

- ◆ **Fine Compass & Maps:** Fine Bartan compass. Maps of the local area that you've personally annotated. *Are they well worn or freshly transcribed?*
- ◆ **Fine Bow & Arrows:** Panyar heartwood recurve bow. Whisper quiet. *What animal is engraved on it?*
- ◆ **Black Arrows:** Arrows tipped with Black Shot arrowheads. Grants potency against undead. *Which Alchemist did you trust to make them?*

### NORMAL LOAD

- ◆ **Climbing Kit:** Grapples, pitons, rope. A must for mountains, useful in forests. *What's the farthest you've fallen?*
- ◆ **Fine Lenses:** An expensive Bartan telescoping lens for viewing things at a distance. Expensive. Don't lose them. *Where do you keep it?*
- ◆ **Fine Reliquary:** Bones of ancient Chosen in vials of sacred oil. Shavings of relics. Tomes of blessed scripture written with the blood of a Chosen. Spend to reduce corruption taken by 2 and +1d to resist it. *Which Chosen's remains do you bear?*

### HEAVY LOAD

- ◆ **Camo Gear:** Netting, clothes, bedrolls, and tents designed to blend in with terrain. You can hide a whole camp with this. *What terrain is your camo best used in?*
- ◆ **Fine Armor:** Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. Ornate or dyed. Customized for you. *What identifies it as yours?*





# SPECIALIST THE SNIPER

## *A deadly distance soldier*

Patient, deadly, and accurate, the Sniper is a fearsome opponent when properly positioned with a wide view. The majority of Snipers prefer to sit back away from the din of combat to pick and choose their targets. Recently, a new brand of gunslingers have emerged, favoring the pistol and proximity over one good shot from a rifle.

**When you play a Sniper, you earn xp when you help your squad with keen observation or key shots.** Somewhere on the field of battle is the foul mind directing these troops, and a bullet of Black Shot is the cure.

*What's the farthest shot you've made? How long are you willing to wait for the perfect moment?*

### STARTING ABILITIES

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **AIM**

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **SCOUT**

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **SHOOT**

### STARTING BUILDS

*If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action ranks and special ability, use one of these templates.*

**OVERWATCH:** Aim +1, Scout +1, Maneuver +2. **One Eye.**

**GUNSLINGER:** Aim +1, Maneuver +2, Sway +1. **Akimbo.**

**SUPERIOR:** Research +1, Scout +1, Discipline +1, Marshal +1. **Cover Fire.**

**HUNTER:** Scout +1, Skirmish +2, Sway +1. **Notches.**

### SPECIALIST ACTION

As a Sniper, you start with one rank in **AIM**. As with all Specialist actions, these are not rolled. Instead, each rank gives you one **AIM** use per mission. **AIM** allows you to use careful timing and cool nerves to improve your shot.

Each **AIM** use allows you to increase the effect level of your shot, one-for-one. This is extremely handy for dispatching higher threat monstrosities, as they are often treated as a clock and each level of effect can grant you an additional tick. It can also make shots which might otherwise be almost impossible—zero effect—plausible.

## SNIPER SPECIAL ABILITIES

### ONE EYE

You've replaced an eye with an alchemical construct. You can see invisible targets clearly and identify supernatural forces.

*Creatures such as the shades that lurk within Shadow Witches and the supernatural effects like their hexes are plainly visible to you. Just because you can see the supernatural forces does not mean you always know what you're looking at—you may need to make a **RESEARCH** roll to identify the exact force at play.*

### AMBUSH

When you attack from hiding or spring a trap, you get **+1d**.

*To be considered as attacking from hiding, your target must be unaware of you. If you're springing a trap, your target must be unaware of the trap.*

### AKIMBO

When dueling at close range with two pistols, gain **potency**.

*One Ammo use counts for both pistols. You must have Ammo to use this ability.*

### NOTCHES

If you land the killing blow on a threat 2 or higher opponent, mark **1 xp** in any category.

*The killing blow is the one that fills the final tick in any sort of clock representing the threat.*

### SHARPSHOOTER

You can **push yourself** to do one of the following: *make a ranged attack at extreme distance beyond what's normal for the weapon — unleash a barrage of rapid fire to suppress the enemy.*

*A typical Legion rifle can carry a bullet 240 yards, while a pistol is usually only accurate within 25 yards.*

*A suppressed enemy is pinned down, unable to move without extreme damage. To suppress an enemy, you must be able to damage that enemy. If your weapon is generally ineffective against a threat, you may not suppress that threat.*

## COVER FIRE

If you **set up** someone with **SHOOT** or provide covering fire, they gain **potency** on their next action.

*You can set someone up by shooting to constrain an enemy's position, or you can use Sharpshooter to suppress an enemy. In either case, you must designate a single person to gain **potency** or you can designate the squad, if the squad is going to engage in a **group action**.*

## CRIMSON SHOT

You're authorized to bring one Crimson Seeker shell on missions. Firing it counts as a threat 4 attack, and you must mark a trauma.

*Crimson Seekers are relics of the Godswar, and require you cut yourself and bleed your life essence into the shell before it arms. You may fire the shell even if this is your last trauma, though doing so does kill you.*

## SNIPER ITEMS AND LOADOUTS

### LIGHT LOAD

- ◆ **Black Shot:** Three uses of specially crafted bullets refined for your high-caliber weapons. Grants potency against undead. *How do you mark the shells to distinguish them?*
- ◆ **Ammo:** Jacketed rounds for your rifle and pistols. Spend to reload ranged weapons. Five uses. *Do you carry them in a case or loose in a leather bag?*
- ◆ **Two Fine Pistols:** A matched pair of masterfully crafted Orite revolvers (five shots) with fine embossing and balanced for quick reloading. *How did you obtain them?*  
— OR (Choose either Two Fine Pistols or Fine Long Rifle) —
- ◆ **Fine Long Rifle:** A marvel of Orite priest machining, with matching scope. Accurate at 240 yards, but loud. Uses jacketed rounds. *Have you named this weapon?*

### NORMAL LOAD

- ◆ **Gun Maintenance Kit:** For clearing out jams and field-modifying a gun. No Sniper should be in the field without this. *How fast can you fieldstrip your weapon?*
- ◆ **Fine Armor:** Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. Ornate or dyed. Customized for you. *What identifies it as yours?*

### HEAVY LOAD

- ◆ Equip the Two Fine Pistols or the Fine Long Rifle you did not pick at light load.



# LEGIONNAIRE THE ROOKIE

## *An untested recruit*

The heart and soul of the Legion, Rookies come from all walks of life: mercenaries, criminals, and eager youth fighting for their homes. One thing is certain, no matter how deadly you might be with a weapon, you don't have the war experience that Specialists or Soldiers do. With commitment, and a bit of luck, you'll get your promotion quickly.

**When you play a Rookie, you earn xp when you stay out of the way and survive despite the odds.** Every squad member is a Rookie until they earn their stripes and are promoted to Soldier.

*Are you a fresh recruit or have you been in the Legion a while? What specialty are you looking to earn?*

### STARTING ABILITIES

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ MANEUVER

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ SKIRMISH

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ CONSORT

### STARTING BUILDS

*If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action ranks and special ability, use one of these templates.*

**MILITARY:** Shoot +2, Skirmish +1, Wreck +1. **Devil's Own Luck.**

**CRIMINAL:** Scout +2, Shoot +1, Sway +1. **Hard Knocks.**

**TRAVELER:** Research +2, Maneuver +1, Sway +1. **Jack of All Trades (Scout, Shoot).**

**MASCOT:** Shoot +1, Consort +1, Discipline +1, Sway +1. **Home Cooking.**

### SPECIALIST ACTION

As a Rookie, you start without a Specialist action. When you gain your first advance, you will **promote**, which will give you one rank of the Soldier's Specialist action and one Soldier special ability. Promotion is usually signified by a ceremony, and may become the focus of a Back at Camp scene if the table so desires.

Rookies also start with one trauma box instead of the usual two, which means that any trauma you suffer will kill you. Rookies are more fragile than weathered Specialists, and must protect themselves accordingly.

## ROOKIE ABILITIES

### DEVIL'S OWN LUCK

You gain +1d to all **resistance** rolls. This ability cannot be taken as a Veteran advance.

*This applies in all circumstances, to any resistance roll you might make, for any reason. Soldiers and Specialists can only have this ability if they took it as a Rookie.*

### EVERY INCH A...

You start with all the traits from your heritage. If taken as a Veteran advance, it must be the first ability selected during character creation.

*You gain the two remaining traits of your heritage (you will start with all four). Unlike other Rookie abilities, this is an ability that can be taken as a Veteran advance, but only as the first ability during character creation. It may not be taken as a Veteran advance if you become a Specialist by promotion.*

### HARD KNOCKS

Mark 2 **xp** in any category at the end of any mission where you took level 2 harm or higher. This ability cannot be taken as a Veteran advance.

*This only applies if the harm actually applied to you, so if someone protected you and took the harm themselves, or if the harm was resisted down below level 2, then you do not gain the xp. You may split up these two xp points into two separate categories. This ability cannot be taken as a Veteran advance.*

### JUST A KID

When someone suffers harm when **protecting** you, they mark **xp**. When you **promote**, choose a second special ability from your new playbook to replace this one. This ability cannot be taken as a Veteran advance.

*Being the youngest member of the squad wears off when you earn your stripes. The ability you replace this with can be a Veteran advance.*

### GOTTA MAKE IT OUT ALIVE

You can take 1 additional **trauma** before dying. When you **promote**, replace this ability with a level of Survivor. This ability cannot be taken as a Veteran advance.

*When you promote, replace this with a level of Survivor (see page 77).*



## HOME COOKING

If a mission takes multiple days, use your Fresh Food. Say what you cook. Everyone in the squad that partakes clears **1 stress**. This ability cannot be taken as a Veteran advance.

*You do need time to camp (and possibly build a fire) in order to prepare your feast. If you take this ability, you may always bring Camping Kit and Fresh Food at normal load, even after you promote.*

## JACK OF ALL TRADES

Increase two zero-ranked skills to rank 1. This ability cannot be taken as a Veteran advance.

*Because you choose a special ability before you choose heritage traits, you may then increase the skills you gain with this ability via those traits. For example, a Rookie who raised their **CONSORT** to 1 using this ability would then raise to 2 if they're also a Connected Orite.*

## NOT A ROOKIE ANYMORE

You are **promoted**! You become a Soldier. Gain one special ability and one rank of **GRIT**. You must take this as your first playbook advance. This ability cannot be taken as a Veteran advance or a starting ability.

*Rookies must take this ability as their first advance. Once they do, they become Soldiers. Transfer your actions and special abilities over to the new playbook. You gain a Soldier special ability of your choice, and one rank of **GRIT**.*

## ROOKIE ABILITIES AND PROMOTION

The special abilities in the Rookie playbook are, in general, unable to be taken as Veteran advances by other playbooks. When you promote, the Rookie ability you selected at character creation becomes part of your playbook and does not count against Veteran limits.

# ROOKIE ITEMS AND LOADOUTS

## LIGHT LOAD

**Naive Hope:** May be an asset or liability. You won't have this long either way. *What keeps you hopeful?*

**Memento of Home:** A piece of jewelry. Pressed flowers. A fine blade with a house crest. A tiny portrait. A letter or book. *What do you miss most about home?*

**Soldier's Kit:** Bedroll, flint and tinder, knife, small mirror, soap, shaving kit, trowel, whetstone, day's rations, etc. Issued identical, soldiers trade parts and customize with additional goods. *What's the last thing you traded for?*

**Musket:** Breech-loaded ball ammo rifle. Standard Legion issue. Accurate at 50 yards. Rookies caught without one get dressed down. *What part of this is most likely to break?*

**Ammo:** Paper cartridges for your musket. Spend to reload ranged weapons. Five uses. *Do you carry them in a case or loose in a leather bag?*

## NORMAL LOAD

**Family Weapon:** Not stylish, but has a history. This might be a hand weapon, musket, farm implement, or bow. *How did you get it?*

**Tents & Camping Gear:** Lean-tos and maybe the corporal's tent. Keeps the rain off. Everyone expects you to carry these. Nobody will thank you for it. *What does your tent look like?*

— OR (Take either Tents & Camping Gear or a Cooking Kit + Fresh Food) —

**Cooking Kit:** Pots, pans, grills, spices, and coal you're made to carry. If a Rookie doesn't have these, folks will be upset. *What are you missing?*

**Fresh Food:** Enough for a good meal or tasty stew. One of the few things Specialists will respect you for. One use. *What secret touch do you add to your recipe?*

## HEAVY LOAD

**Armor:** Legion-issue leather cuirass and chain shirt. Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. *Do you know who used to own it?*

**Shield:** Wood with metal reinforcement. Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. *What design is painted or worked on it?*





# LEGIONNAIRE THE SOLDIER

## *A hardened veteran*

The dogged and relentless core of the Legion, proper veterans are in short supply since the Battle of Ettenmark Fields. You might be the front-line protector of the troops under your care. Or you may be the relentless dog of war sent to tackle the toughest enemies. Rookies always breathe easier knowing you're there to stand between them and harm.

**When you play a Soldier, you earn xp when you help your squad through courage or determination.** Whatever the cost, you are there to finish the mission and bring recognition to your squad.

*When did you earn your stripes? How do you deal with officers? Who in the squad is least likely to make it back?*

### STARTING ABILITIES

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **GRIT**

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **SKIRMISH**

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **MANEUVER**

◆ ◆ ◆ ◇ **CONSORT**

### STARTING BUILDS

*If you want some guidance when you assign your four starting action ranks and special ability, use one of these templates.*

**INFANTRY:** Grit +1, Skirmish +1, Shoot +2. **Relentless.**

**PILLAR:** Grit +1, Research +1, Shoot +1, Marshal +1. **Iron Will.**

**CORPORAL:** Grit +1, Discipline +2, Marshal +1. **Over the Top.**

**DEMOLITIONS:** Rig +1, Maneuver +1, Wreck +2. **Grenadier.**

### SPECIALIST ACTION

As a Soldier, you start with one rank in **GRIT**. As with all Specialist actions, these are not rolled. Instead, each rank gives you one **GRIT** use per mission. **GRIT** allows you to use the hard lessons taught over the course of your soldiering career to weather the worst the war has to offer.

Each **GRIT** use allows you to add +2d to a resistance roll. The **GRIT** use must be spent before the roll, but it can mean the difference between survival and death. You may only spend one **GRIT** this way per roll.



## SOLDIER SPECIAL ABILITIES

### RELENTLESS

You may spend **GRIT** uses to push yourself.

*You only spend one **GRIT** for the push. If you spend **GRIT** to push for +1d, you can spend stress, or another **GRIT** to push for effect (or vice versa). You may not push with stress and **GRIT** for the same benefit.*

### OVER THE TOP

When you charge into the teeth of an enemy that outnumbered or outguns you, clear **1 stress** and take +1d to **MANEUVER**.

*You do not get this benefit when you sneak up on a position. As frontal assaults are dangerous, you usually have to make **MANEUVER** rolls to close.*

### IRON WILL

You can spend **GRIT** as special armor vs. fear, paralysis, corruption, and fatigue.

*If your roll produces a fear, paralysis, corruption, or fatigue consequence, you may use **GRIT** as special armor, even if the consequence is not applied to you directly. If you can **protect** others from the effect, you can use your **GRIT** as special armor against those effects.*

### LOADED FOR BEAR

When selecting load, you may select 4 utility load instead of 2.

*Utility load can be spent to acquire gear from the standard items list. Some of these items require more than 1 utility load.*

### EAT IRON, SHIT NAILS

When you **push yourself**, you may ignore all harm penalties. Also take +1d to resist the consequence of any roll you pushed yourself on.

*Normally, you may only push yourself to ignore being incapacitated, and doing so offers you no further benefit. With this ability, you may instead push for +1d or effect, and doing so allows you to ignore all wound penalties at the same time.*



## GRENADIER

You have had explosives training and can always bring a grenade (1 load) or explosive charges (2 load) as part of your light load.

*In addition to being granted access to such items for regular use, you also have the special training required to understand how they work, how best to place charges, and what chemicals might be improvised into explosives. This may give you the opportunity to make appropriate **RIG** or **WRECK** rolls. You may always pick one of the above to bring on a mission (grenade or charge) but additional instances should be written in on the blank utility load lines.*

## CAVALRY

If the Quartermaster has Horses uses available, members of your squad start missions with mounts. You gain +1d to **MANEUVER** while mounted.

*If the Quartermaster has even one use of Horses available, your squad may take horses out on the mission. These horses are surplus. The Quartermaster may insist they all return home safely, but if they do not, it does not affect the supply of Horses available to the Legion. Conversely, a few extra horses that come home at the end of a mission will not make the difference in moving the Legion, so simply return them to the stable and make no adjustments to the Quartermaster's rolebook.*

*Being on horseback might affect your position or effect while making **MANEUVER** rolls, especially while moving through enemy ranks or fire.*

## SPECIALIST TRAINING

You can **promote** to a Specialist (Heavy, Medic, Officer, Scout, or Sniper). Make a new playbook: mark one special ability of the appropriate type and a rank of the starting Specialist action.

*In order to promote to a Specialist, you must have all of the starting actions of that Specialist, at the ranks that a starting character would have. For example, if you want to become a Sniper, you must have 1 **SCOUT** and 2 **SHOOT**. You gain a rank of the Specialist's ability, so in this example, you would gain a rank of **AIM**. If you already have **AIM**, this would increase your rank by 1, up to the maximum rank allowed for your character, usually 3.*

# SOLDIER ITEMS AND LOADOUTS

## LIGHT LOAD

- ◆ **Fine Armor:** Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. Ornate or dyed. Customized for you. *What identifies it as yours?*
- ◆ **Memento of Home:** A piece of jewelry. Pressed flowers. Fine blade with a house crest. Tiny portrait. A letter or book. *Do you take it on missions?*
- ◆ **Fine Kit:** Pick one: Medic, Climbing, Cooking, Repair, Soldier's, or Wrecking. *What affectionate name does the squad have for you because of what you bring?*
- ◆ **Fine Hand Weapon:** A dueling blade, longsword, sabre, heartwood spear, or similar one-handed weapon. Named and of exceptional quality. *What is it made of and who forged it?*

## NORMAL LOAD

- ◆ **2 Additional Utility Gear:** Pick up to 2 additional utility load from the standard items list (this can be two 1 load items). If a fine version of that item exists (for example: a fine pistol), you get that version. *Why did this make it into your pack?*
- ◆ **Fine Shield:** Fully metal shield embossed with any symbol you desire. Provides 1 armor against physical attacks. *What insignia fills its front?*  
— OR (Choose Fine Shield or a Fine Large Weapon) —
- ◆ **Fine Heavy Weapon:** Claymore, warhammer, morningstar, or other two-handed weapon. Well worn and familiar to you. *What have you felled with this?*

## HEAVY LOAD

- ◆ **1 Additional Utility Gear:** Pick 1 additional utility load from the standard items list. If a fine version of that item exists (for example: a fine pistol), you get that version. *Why did this make it into your pack?*
- ◆ **Fine Heavy Armor:** Provides 2 armor against physical attacks. Ornate or dyed. Customized for you. *What identifies it as yours?*

# PROMOTION

**Promotion** is the act of gaining experience and changing playbooks. Rookies promote to Soldiers, who promote to Specialists. There are key notes to address when doing so.

## REQUIREMENTS

Promotion is achieved by taking a special ability. If you are at your maximum number of special abilities, you may not promote. Additionally you must have the minimum starting actions of your new playbook, not including the Specialist action. Because all Rookies start with the same actions as all Soldiers, a Rookie may always promote into a Soldier. Medics, on the other hand, are slightly harder to advance into, because of their additional actions.

When you promote, transfer any corruption, blight, trauma, wounds, and stress. Write down any relevant details about your character in the notes section, such as look, personality traits, or background details.

For a Soldier, the promotion ability is *Specialist Training*. You can only take this as a later ability, not when you first promote to Soldier or create the character. For Rookies this ability is *Not a Rookie Anymore*. You may only take this as your second special ability and you may only take that ability.

When you promote, you are granted one ability from your new Specialist playbook and a level of the Specialist action you're promoting to. For Rookies, this means you'll take a level of **GRIT**. When you take a special ability from your new playbook, you may not take another promotion ability. If you are promoting from Rookie to Soldier, you may not take *Specialist Training*.

If you started as a Rookie, make sure to add the Rookie ability you started with when you transfer to your new playbook. Usually, this can be written in the notes section. The ability *Just a Kid* is replaced with a second ability, but again, this must not be *Specialist Training*. *Gotta Make it Out Alive* is marked on your new playbook as having taken *Survivor*. If you had *Home Cooking*, add Fresh Food to a blank line in your utility load section.

If a Rookie is promoted to Soldier via a mission reward (see the special missions in Chapter 10 or the secondary mission engagement roll on page 132), simply treat it as if they took *Not a Rookie Anymore*. (Make the Rookie playbook first, if you have not already.)

## ADVANCEMENT CAPS

A character can have 6 abilities and 20 points of actions (see page 57). If you hit either of these maximums, you can't promote. This is very unlikely to occur in the first campaign.

When you promote as a Rookie, you get to keep your Rookie special ability! It's a reward for having a Rookie survive, and an incentive to promote from within the Legion. This ability does not occupy a Veteran slot after you promote. However, as a promoting Soldier, you can keep your Soldier-specific abilities only if you spend from your two Veteran slots to keep them. Specialists shift their focus away from soldiering, and this is reflected in a shift in abilities. If you have more than two special abilities, choose which ones you keep. Keep in mind that you don't keep the promotion special ability after you promote, so these abilities do not count against your limits, nor do they need to be tracked.

Some abilities are shared among Specialists and Soldiers, such as Hardened. Levels of those abilities transfer directly. If you've taken Elite, the actions it affects stay the same. But you never need to promote to a Specialist. Some Legionnaires become career Soldiers by choice.



## PROMOTION EXAMPLES

*Juan filled up his playbook clock with xp from the last mission, and decides that Red Striking Pyre is going to promote to Officer. He's been leading the Ember Wolves for a while now, and it's time to step up in the Legion. He selects the Specialist Training special ability and picks up a blank Officer playbook. He makes sure that Pyre has the requisite actions for the Officer (2 **SWAY** and 1 **DISCIPLINE**). He marks his name, heritage traits, and makes a note about Pyre's appearance and personality in notes.*

*Juan also transfers the 3 corruption Pyre has, and the one trauma he earned, circling the appropriate trauma condition. He marks two Veteran advances to keep two Soldier abilities—Relentless and Over the Top. Unfortunately, he'll lose Iron Will in the transfer. He transfers one level of Hardened without needing to spend a Veteran slot and chooses Lead from the Front as his first Officer special ability. He copies over Pyre's actions, marking 3 **GRIT** in the Specialist actions section. The playbook already has the Officer's Specialist action of 1 **CHANNELS** marked. Officer Red Rising Pyre is promoted and ready for duty!*

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*Using the same example above, if Juan had wanted Pyre to become a Medic to replace one recently killed, he would first check Pyre's actions. Since Pyre is missing a second level in **RESEARCH**, Pyre would not be allowed to promote to Medic. Pyre can study up and improve the required action. Juan can take a different special ability now or have Pyre promote into something else.*

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*Alice finished a mission with Chevalier Myrtia, and is ready to make her... Not a Rookie Anymore. She grabs a Soldier playbook. Because the starting actions are the same between the playbooks, she skips to marking her name, heritage traits, and notes about Myrtia's appearance and personality. Her Rookie ability Jack of All Trades is already incorporated in Myrtia's actions so she just makes a quick note "Rookie ability: Jack of All Trades" in the notes section, and copies her actions over. She picks the Veteran advance Akimbo from the Sniper, right off the bat. Myrtia, with her family Orite pistols, is going to become a close-quarters pistol fighter. She has no corruption, blight, or trauma to copy over, so she just transfers her 3 stress to the Soldier playbook. Soldier Myrtia is ready for duty!*







# CHAPTER 3

# THE LEGION

*We've been on the road for days now. We wake when it's dark, and camp long after it's the same. The Legion is tired, but whenever someone falters, the Commander happens to ride by with a joke. When short tempers lead to raised voices, they die instantly under the withering gaze of the Marshal. If our leaders are tired, they refuse to show it. The Quartermaster is still assessing supplies for the next day by the time we're in our bedrolls.*

*I don't know how much of this is a mask. I wonder about the people beneath these well-practiced exteriors. I don't even know their names. Everyone just calls them by their titles. I will ask the Lorekeeper if she has any records of their exploits before they were promoted. For now, I watch from my perch on the wagons, and sketch them in the moments they think nobody's looking.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

Central to the story is the Legion itself—the haggard characters, the dwindling resources, the few trustworthy spies, the scraps of intel. There's too much here for any one person to track, so the responsibilities are divided up into Roles.

Each player, including the GM, takes on a Role that divides up the responsibilities of the game so that it's manageable for the group. The GM's Role concerns generating missions, setting scenes, and portraying the undead and the Chosen. Each of the other players has an equally important responsibility in portraying the Legion and its interests.

Each Legion Role is also a character—one of the leaders in the Legion's command staff. They stay in camp and orchestrate day-to-day operations of the Legion. These characters often feature in Back at Camp scenes or in free play that emerges after. The GM might also include the Chosen in these scenes.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the Legion Roles and how to bring the full might of the army to bear. The GM Role is discussed more in Mission Phase, page 213.

## THE FIRST GAME

Legion Roles are most relevant during the **campaign phase**, so they're not created right away. During your first session you have to decide who should take on the GM Role. All the other players will create Specialists while the GM selects a Chosen, two Broken, and prepares the starting mission. Once the starting mission is complete, each of the Legion players will pick one of the Legion Roles.

## SELECTING LEGION ROLES

Feel free to read through the Role descriptions below, or share the rolebooks and let the players look at them and decide which seems the most interesting.

There are three required Roles:

### COMMANDER

#### REQUIRED

In charge of tracking time and position, and using gathered intelligence.

*Play the Commander if you want to decide the route to Skydagger, which of the missions are attempted, and make sound strategic decisions.*

### MARSHAL

#### REQUIRED

In charge of morale and Legion personnel.

*Play the Marshal if you want to decide who goes on each mission, who's in charge, and to detail the rank and file of the Legion.*

### QUARTERMASTER

#### REQUIRED

In charge of Legion materiel and non-combat personnel.

*Play the Quartermaster if you want to make sure your missions are stocked appropriately and that the Legion always has what it needs to be successful.*

These Roles control the Legion's core resources: morale (detailed under the Marshal), intel (detailed under the Commander) and supply (see the Quartermaster). They are tightly intertwined and will have to cooperate closely to get the Legion to Skydagger.

In addition, there are two optional Roles. For four-player tables, pick only one of these. For larger groups see page 436. These optional Roles are:

### **LOREKEEPER**

**OPTIONAL**

In charge of Legion beliefs, Back at Camp scenes, and keeping the Annals.

*Play the Lorekeeper if you want to speak for the Legion's character and guide its present with tales of the past.*

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### **SPYMASTER**

**OPTIONAL**

In charge of a stable of spies, and manipulating objectives.

*Play the Spymaster if you want to play the long game, dueling wits and strategic moves with the Broken themselves.*

## **SETUP**

Each Role has an individual setup. Among other steps, each will give you an opportunity to detail the personality and character of your command staff member, and require some questions to be asked of the GM to establish your resources in the aftermath of the starting mission.

Note that while the Roles exist as actual characters within the Legion they aren't usually named. The Legionnaires traditionally refer to them by their title: *We'll have to ask the Commander about that.* If you need to (or want to) name them, feel free.

## **DUTIES**

Each of the Roles has certain duties to execute. By design, each of the Roles is dependent on the others and a degree of discussion and cooperation at the table is required, but final decisions regarding the duties always rest with the Role in question.

If there are any questions, ask the appropriate Role on the topic. *Which Rookie messed up?* Ask the Marshal. *What does the Legion know about the Old Empire?* Ask the Lorekeeper.

## **DID YOU SAY REQUIRED?**

If someone misses a game (particularly with four Legion Roles)—don't worry. Select someone as deputy (ex: deputy Marshal). Any decisions for that Role can be handled by votes from the other Legion Roles, but tiebreakers and specific duties should be handled by the person deputised.



# LEGION ROLE THE COMMANDER

*My duty is to be the Legion's steady rudder in the river of fate, and find a way through the most dangerous waters.*

*A hundred voices, each with their own needs. A horde of undead on your heels. Dwindling supplies, lagging morale, and countless problems to be solved. Command is a heavy burden. Choose the wrong mission, and you'll be deprived necessary materiel for later. Ignore the morale of the troops and you'll suffer the worst war can throw at you. Fail to take opportunities as they arise, and even if you make it to Skydagger, you may not be able to last the winter. What choices will you make?*

**Play the Commander** if you want to decide what route to take to Skydagger, select which of the missions are attempted, and use the intelligence of the Legion to make sound strategic decisions.

## INITIAL SETUP

- ◆ **DESCRIBE THE COMMANDER.** Select traits from the list below.
- ◆ **INITIAL PRESSURE.** Ask the GM how much pressure remains after the first mission.
- ◆ **INITIAL TIME.** Ask the GM how the first mission affected the time you have left to make it to Skydagger.
- ◆ **INITIAL INTEL.** Ask the GM what intel the first mission revealed, if any.
- ◆ **ADVANCE.** After the Quartermaster's first set of actions, the Legion **must** advance to the Western Front.

## COMMANDER TRAITS

Choose from the following traits to describe your Commander:

**HERITAGE (choose 1):** *Bartan. Orite. Zemyati. Panyar. Other.*

**REPUTATION (choose 1):** *Fierce. Devious. Unstoppable. Proud. Inspiring.*

**PERSONALITY (choose 1-2):** *Bold. Cold. Calculating. Stoic. Prideful.*

**LOOK (choose 1-3):** *Lithe. Haggard. Well-kempt. Scarred. Athletic.*

## DUTIES

- ◆ **TRACK TIME AND PRESSURE.** Pressure and time increase when time passes or for certain mission penalties. Pressure decreases from some missions and advancing resets it to zero. Time (rarely) decreases as a result of select missions.
- ◆ **TRACK LOCATION AND MOVEMENT.** Decide when the Legion advances. You may never backtrack—behind are only undead. Mark the Legion position and route on your map.
- ◆ **PICK MISSIONS.** Decide on a type of mission to focus on (assault, recon, religious, or supply) and tell the GM. The GM will tell you what's available. Pick two missions to perform and designate one “priority,” to be played out at the table. The other is secondary and resolved with an engagement roll. If you were presented with a third mission, you automatically fail it.
- ◆ **TRACK AND SPEND INTEL.** Spend intel to add +1d to mission engagement rolls or gain access to a special mission at your location. Ask intel questions before each mission. Intel can be gained from mission rewards.
- ◆ **WORK WITH OTHER ROLES.** Consult with the rest of the players to make the best decisions you can, but you have the final say in the duties you are tasked with. The fate of the Legion is in your hands. Good luck.

## TIME

It's your job to track **time**. Time can increase or decrease as the result of a mission, and always increases by one during the **time passes** step. Having the time necessary to make it to Skydagger and shore up defenses is one of the Legion's most precious resources, and you should always be watching the clock to determine when to move on.

There are three “Time” clocks of 10 segments each. When a “Time” clock fills up, the world and the seasons change. The weather shifts towards cold, the leaves turn colors, the last summer rains become fall days with a hint of a nasty winter to come. The undead also grow in power, gaining an ability every time a “Time” clock fills up. (This only happens the first time each “Time” clock fills up, so if time is reduced due to mission rewards and the same clock fills up again, they do not gain another ability.)

If you ever run completely out of time, the Legion is cut off before reaching Skydagger. The game is lost, and the Legion is disbanded or killed. See page 428 for more information about ending the game.



## PRESSURE

**Pressure** is the representation of how heated the undead presence around the camp is. Whenever time passes, increase pressure by one. Failing certain missions can also increase pressure, as can ignoring problems in the story.

Pressure can obviously affect your missions, because if the undead are more present or deadly in an area, that should be reflected in the missions as well.

## ADVANCE

You can call for an advance during the campaign phase, after campaign actions. If there's disagreement here, you have final say. When you advance, mark the new Legion position on the map. Roll dice equal to pressure and add a number of ticks to the "Time" clock based on the roll. (1-3: One. 4/5: Two. 6: Three. **CRITICAL**: Five.)

Before you roll pressure, consult with the Quartermaster. If the Quartermaster expends a use of Horses, then you can reduce your pressure by one. If this reduces it to zero, treat it like other die rolls, and use the worst result from two dice. The Quartermaster can spend multiple uses of Horses on this roll, so long as they have them to spend.

After advancing, reset pressure to zero, as you have—momentarily—escaped the oncoming horde.

There are a number of locations (Plainsworth, Sunstrider, Fort Calisco) where you have to decide the path you advance along. The northern route is longer, but its rewards, including the temple hidden at Kevala, are significant. The southern route is more populous, with higher opportunities for restocking, but the treachery of humanity is well known. The middle road leads through the darkened forest of an ancient power. Choose wisely.

When considering whether to advance, think about how much time you have left and what the result of your pressure roll might be. If you are rolling one die, the worst outcome that can happen is three ticks on a 6. In this way, experienced Commanders often break the game down into the number of advances that are left on the clock.

There will be several instances throughout the campaign where spending extra time in the same place will be helpful. Most of the cities are viable options, particularly Plainsworth. Spending extra time in these places can allow you the opportunity to Acquire Assets, Recruit new personnel, or engage in supply or recon missions for key resources you'll need later in the campaign.

## LOCATION

One of your duties is to mark the current location of the Legion. Simply circle the latest location on the map when the Legion advances. You may also want to track notes about what you've learned about different locations—whether through intel questions (see below), or missions. It might be helpful to mark notes right on the map.

The full details on locations and the map of Aldermark (where these locations are) can be found in Chapter 10. The locations are as follows:

- ◆ **WESTERN FRONT:** Small military camp. Broken soldiers. Many undead.  
**Missions Types:** Assault, Recon. **Paths:** Plainsworth.
- ◆ **PLAINSWORTH:** A once prosperous plains town, protected by an ancient wall.  
**Missions Types:** All. **Paths:** Sunstrider or the Long Road.
- ◆ **LONG ROAD:** Ancient wards. Long marches. Too long. Few Supplies.  
**Missions Types:** Assault, Recon. **Paths:** Barrak Mines.
- ◆ **BARRAK MINES:** Rich, mountain mine. Good place for Black Shot supplies.  
**Missions Types:** Assault, Recon, Supply. **Paths:** Gallows Pass.
- ◆ **GALLOWS PASS:** Narrow mountain route. Many temples. Few resources.  
**Missions Types:** Assault, Recon, Religious. **Paths:** Talgon Forest.
- ◆ **SUNSTRIDER CAMP:** Plains camp. Crowded with refugees. Fine steeds.  
**Missions Types:** Assault, Recon. **Paths:** Duresh Forest or Westlake.
- ◆ **DURESH FOREST:** Fierce beasts. Distrustful hunters. Hard to navigate.  
**Missions Types:** Assault, Recon, Religious. **Paths:** Talgon Forest.
- ◆ **TALGON FOREST:** Forest heart sacred to the Horned One. Great Beasts.  
**Missions Types:** Recon, Religious. **Paths:** Fort Calisco.
- ◆ **WESTLAKE:** Walled city. Suspicious. Corrupt. Pride and politics.  
**Missions Types:** All. **Paths:** Eastlake.
- ◆ **EASTLAKE:** Rich city. Very religious. Very proud. Rivals with Westlake.  
**Missions Types:** All. **Paths:** Fort Calisco.
- ◆ **FORT CALISCO:** Besieged military outpost at the base of the mountains.  
**Missions Types:** All. **Paths:** High Road or The Maw.
- ◆ **HIGH ROAD:** Old pilgrimage route. Easy to be ambushed.  
**Missions Types:** Assault, Recon. **Paths:** Skydagger Keep.
- ◆ **THE MAW:** Ancient underground passage. Hidden defenders. Old tombs.  
**Missions Types:** Assault, Religious. **Paths:** Skydagger Keep.
- ◆ **SKYDAGGER KEEP:** Controls the pass. Your mission is to hold it until snows stop undead advance.

# MISSIONS

## MISSION PRIORITY

Before the GM generates missions at the end of the campaign phase, decide on what kind of mission you want to focus on and discuss it with the GM. This gives you the ability to influence what kinds of missions you receive.

If you need morale, focus on **assault missions**. If you need intel, focus on **recon missions**. If you need supply, focus on **supply missions**. If you have the luxury of time, focus on **religious missions**.

Bear in mind which missions are available (noted on the Commander rolebook) at any given location. Cities usually have all mission types available, while the winding roads and paths you take may not offer the luxuries of supply. If you're unsure, ask the GM—the Locations chapter has specifics for each location.

Your decisions will greatly influence outcomes, but they don't guarantee that you'll get missions of the type you want. Sometimes you'll have to try more than once to find the right opportunity the Legion needs.

## MISSION SELECTION

Every mission phase, the GM will generate two to three missions. Each of these missions will have different requirements, risks, and rewards. One of your biggest jobs during the game will be to select which of these missions to go on—which will become the priority mission, and which will be the secondary mission.

Whatever mission you don't select, you automatically fail. Since most missions have an associated penalty, you may choose your missions based on the penalties involved. Or you might decide that the rewards are too great for a mission to pass up. Intel questions can help sway you as well. If there's disagreement here, you have the final say, so make the best choices you can.

Every location has three special missions. You can sometimes find these through luck (via GM roll), or guarantee one by spending an **intel**.

Generally, the mission you gain access to is the GM's choice, unless the Spymaster completed a Research assignment. Special missions are often tied to the history of the world, and offer better rewards than normal, including possibly **favor**, which helps advance your Chosen.

## INTEL

**Intel** comes from mission rewards, and has many uses to an enterprising Commander. Intel can be spent to gain access to better missions, to improve your odds with missions you select, and to know more about those missions before you select them. It's a precious resource, but recon missions almost always give intel, so you can certainly focus on recon missions if you run low.

### ENGAGEMENTS

You can spend intel to add an engagement die to any mission, including a secondary mission. In this way, cold hard facts about the undead can create an advantage on the battlefield. As the outcome of secondary missions are entirely determined by engagement rolls, this can be an essential tool for the long-term health of the Legion.

### SPECIAL MISSIONS

Intel can be spent to gain access to a special mission in a location (see Special Missions in the Missions section on page 215).

### INTEL QUESTIONS

Before you choose which missions to prioritize, you will ask a number of intel questions, based on the amount of intel you hold. Ask one from every list, up to the number of intel you have. These questions are the benefit of the intelligence you've gathered, and the result of analyzing that intelligence in light of the missions you're encountering. Some questions are directly about the missions in front of you, while others address potential route or location information further down your path. Use those latter ones to help guide your choice in advancement.

Other questions may be available, at the GM's discretion. As a general rule, 0-intel questions are very narrow and focused on the missions at hand, and 3-intel questions are very broad, concerning the overall progress of the campaign.

If you hold **zero or more intel**, ask one of the following questions:

- ♦ *What's the highest threat we can expect on these missions?*
- ♦ *How much travel should we expect for the missions?*
- ♦ *What would be a useful item to bring on this mission?*
- ♦ *What are two approaches we could use here on a mission?*
- ♦ *Which squads distrust or don't respect the leadership?*
- ♦ *How does our Chosen feel about these missions?*

If you hold **1 or more intel**, also ask one of the following questions:

- ♦ *What's useful to bring on this mission?*
- ♦ *Who's invested in this mission?*
- ♦ *What's a challenge we might face on this mission?*
- ♦ *Which Broken's troops do we expect to face on these missions?*
- ♦ *What resources or benefits might we find at a specific location ahead?*
- ♦ *What might be a weakness of an Elite we have encountered?*
- ♦ *What might be a craving or instinct of an Elite we have encountered?*

If you hold **2 or more intel**, also ask one of the following questions:

- ♦ *Which Infamous or Lieutenant might we face on this mission?*
- ♦ *What's the main weakness of the undead's position on this mission?*
- ♦ *Is this related to a previous mission? How?*
- ♦ *Which way are the Broken moving?*
- ♦ *What challenges or problems are inherent in a specific location ahead?*
- ♦ *What is a weakness of an Infamous we've seen previously?*

If you hold **3 or more intel**, also ask one of the following questions:

- ♦ *What is the weakness of a Lieutenant we've encountered previously?*
- ♦ *What is a craving or instinct of a Lieutenant we've encountered previously?*
- ♦ *What is a specific Broken researching?*
- ♦ *What special missions have we heard of at a location ahead?*
- ♦ *What news of the Cinder King?*





# LEGION ROLE THE MARSHAL

*My duty is first to the people under my command, and I will ensure they are ready and fit for battle.*

*Of the hundred score soldiers that were once in the Legion, only a few dozen remain. All of them look to you for their orders. They expect you to be the strong leader they need, to protect them on and off the field. The Legion asks you send them into fire. Put the wrong person in charge of a mission, and the entire squad may not make it back. Field the wrong squad, and the mission will be lacking a fundamental skill. Do you risk sending out the injured Scout, when you have no others who can do the job? What choices will you make?*

**Play a Marshal** if you want to decide who goes on each mission, who is in charge on those missions, and to detail the rank and file of the Legion.

## INITIAL SETUP

- ◆ **DESCRIBE THE MARSHAL.** Select traits from the list below.
- ◆ **INITIAL MORALE.** Ask the GM how the first mission affected the Legion morale.
- ◆ **CREATE ADDITIONAL SPECIALISTS.** The Legion starts with five Specialists. Any that were not created by other players for the first mission are yours to detail. Describe where they were during the starting mission.
- ◆ **FILL OUT YOUR STARTING SQUAD.** The Legion starts with all six squads full of Rookies, but you are responsible for detailing them only when needed. For now, detail the one sent on the starting mission. Select the heritage and names for any squad members that weren't already named.

## MARSHAL TRAITS

Choose from the following traits to describe your Marshal:

**HERITAGE (choose 1):** *Bartan. Orite. Zemyati. Panyar. Other.*

**REPUTATION (choose 1):** *Callous. Fearless. Honorable. Proud. Protective.*

**PERSONALITY (choose 1-2):** *Bold. Cold. Cautious. Fierce. Vengeful.*

**LOOK (choose 1-3):** *Grizzled. Stylish. One-Eyed. Scarred. Crisp.*

## DUTIES

- ◆ **TRACK MORALE.** Morale increases during the Liberty campaign action (see Quartermaster, page 135) and from mission rewards. It decreases from mission penalties, when soldiers die (-1 per), or when the Quartermaster must lose supply and they have none (-1 per), or similarly for Food (-2).
- ◆ **ASSIGN WHO GOES ON AND LEADS MISSIONS.** Decide which Specialists and squads go based on availability and the mission requirements. If there's an Officer on a mission, they're in charge. Otherwise, you say who's in charge.
- ◆ **TRACK SQUADS AND SPECIALISTS.** Between missions, keep the Specialist playbooks. Mark losses, wounds, and promotions. Name squad members as needed (additional names beyond those on the playbooks are found in the heritage sections on pages 63-66). Detail any Specialists the Legion gains.
- ◆ **MAKE ENGAGEMENT ROLLS AS NEEDED.**
- ◆ **ENSURE LEGIONNAIRES ADVANCE.** Make sure the group remembers to track xp after missions.
- ◆ **WORK WITH OTHER ROLES.** Consult with others to make the best decisions you can, but you have the final say in the duties you are tasked with.

## MORALE

The lifeblood of the Legion, **morale** represents the esprit de corps, emotional fatigue, and the hopes and dreams of the troops. A high morale means the Legion operates as a well-oiled machine. As morale drops, people neglect their duties, whisper quiet doubts, act insubordinately, and challenge orders.

Morale increases from the Liberty campaign action, and through mission rewards. Morale decreases when failing certain missions, or when a Legionnaire dies (lose one morale per Legionnaire). It also decreases if you run out of supplies; each supply you need to spend when you have none costs 1 morale.

If you run out of morale, people desert the Legion. For each morale lost while at zero morale, lose one Legionnaire. (This loss does not cost any further impact to morale.) If you go below three full squads, your Legion will not make it to Skydagger and will either disband or fall prey to the undead hordes. See page 428 for more information about ending the game.

## MISSION DEPLOYMENT

The Commander selects which missions will be primary and secondary. Once selected, it is your job to determine who is assigned to accomplish those mission objectives. Look at the engagement roll requirements and the status of your Legionnaires. Unless the GM specifies otherwise, up to two Specialists and a squad can be sent on any given mission. Note that Medics can be added as a third Specialist to any mission (see Attaché on page 84.)

For primary missions, pull out any available playbooks for people assigned to the mission, and prepare blank Rookie or Soldier playbooks as appropriate for any players who don't play one of the assigned Specialists. Your group can use any method you want for determining who should play which character, but if there's a disagreement, you have final say.

For secondary missions, simply assign who is going.

## LEADERSHIP

The Legion has been shattered in the latest offensive and qualified staff are rare at best. As such, the Legion is ignoring rank and assigning different people to be in charge of any mission, based on the circumstances at hand. As the Marshal, it's your job to appoint one of the Specialists to be in charge on a mission, or if there are none on the mission, to appoint one of the Soldiers (or Rookies) as the acting corporal.

The only exception is if there's an Officer on the mission. These are people who have been specifically trained in how to command, and the Legion accepts them as competent leaders. If an Officer is assigned to a mission, you must place them in charge. (If two Officers are assigned to a mission, place just one of them in charge.)

If the character in charge of the mission dies or is incapacitated, the Marshal should be consulted as to the second-in-command (or third, etc.) is. You don't need to decide the chain of command in advance.

## TRACKING PERSONNEL

It's your responsibility to keep track of available troops, which includes detailing any Specialists the Legion picks up. Between missions, make sure to gather all the Specialist, Soldier, and Rookie playbooks, and keep your Marshal rolebook up to date with wounds, stress, and other information that will help you decide on deployments quickly.

Tracking personnel is critically important. If you ever have fewer than 15 Rookies or Soldiers, or fewer than two Specialists, you cannot adequately do the missions the Legion needs to stay ahead of the undead while still defending the Legion camp. The game is lost, and the Legion is disbanded or killed. See page 428 for more information about ending the game.

*Juan, playing the Marshal, is tracking a Specialist. He's using one slash to denote a wound, and two to indicate partial healing. Looks like Maleksei still needs some Rest and Recuperation, and Liberties before he's ready for action.*

### OFFICER — RELIGIOUS AND SUPPLY MISSIONS

NAME	STRESS	WOUNDS	ABILITIES	ACTIONS
Maleksei Boryevich	5	□ ▣ ▣	3	11

## THE LEGION SQUADS

Although you start with six squads at full strength (five Rookies per), they are not detailed at the start. If you assign a squad to a mission, write down the names of all its members. It's not important to know every Legionnaire at the start, but you should know their names before they fall in battle. For more details on the squads see below. When assigning position and effect for squad actions, the GM should keep in mind the squad's training.



### EMBER WOLVES

*The vanguard of the Legion, the Ember Wolves are the first unit sent into battle as shock troops. They charge head-on into danger, throwing the enemy into disarray and giving the rest of the Legion the chance to advance. Founded long ago by a seasoned Zemyati woman nicknamed the "Bloody Wolf," they are known for volunteering to go where battle is the toughest.*

**Squad Motto:** First Into the Fray.



### GRINNING RAVENS

*The backbone of the Legion and traditionally the most numerous squad, the Ravens are a second wave formation. They follow in the wake of the Ember Wolves, overtaking positions and holding against all odds. Their original founder was known for her famous spear, and the habit of laughing mid-battle when the odds were at their worst.*

**Squad Motto:** We Laugh at Death.



### STAR VIPERS

*The Legion has tangled with Great Beasts, fought alongside multiple Chosen, and faced incredible odds throughout the years. The Vipers are the ones who test and use strange alchemy and new weapons, and are trained to handle, research, and face the supernatural. They've sacrificed much over the years, and attract some eclectic individuals.*

**Squad Motto:** In Darkness We Shine.

Rookies that survive long enough will get promoted to Soldiers, either via xp and advancement, or through success on secondary missions. Soldiers and Rookies are always assigned to squads, but a Soldier promoting will leave a vacancy in the squad. You can always rearrange personnel by moving troops between squads, but that may cause friction as squad loyalty is certainly a factor. Specialists do not count towards the squad's limit of five.



## SHATTERED LIONS

*An elite unit of the Legion. They were the first unit ever formed, and once served as the personal guard to Emperor Tantaros as the Crimson Lions. When the Legion was shattered down to a handful, they rescued the Annals and reformed as the Shattered Lions. Bearers of the Legion's standard, many Commanders and Marshals are veterans of this unit.*

**Squad Motto:** Pride of the Legion.



## GHOST OWLS

*When the Legion needs problems dealt with quickly and quietly, they send the Owls. They're traditionally stocked with Legionnaires experienced as special operatives, trained in infiltrations and extractions. A little known fact is that their squad motto is an imperative, to always remain calm regardless of the situation. Many Legion Snipers and Scouts were once Owls.*

**Squad Motto:** Calm Before the Storm.



## SILVER STAGS

*Formed less than a hundred years ago, the Silver Stags have become the Legion's rear guard. The squad was commissioned after a handful of Legionnaires held a town against a vastly superior force, surviving on rats and shoe-leather. Their leader afterwards requested his own command. They are often sent on missions where the line absolutely cannot fall, or hard choices must be made.*

**Squad Motto:** No Matter the Cost.

## ENGAGEMENT

Before every primary mission, make an **engagement roll** to determine how the mission starts. This allows us to cut through the aimless marching through woods, the recon of an area, and the quiet approach on enemy forces, so we can jump straight to the point where things are tense. It's the Marshal's duty to assemble that engagement dice pool and make the roll.

Before every mission, you ask a number of questions to determine how many dice to roll. Some are generic, and apply to every mission. Some are specific to the mission type.

### ALL ENGAGEMENT ROLLS

Assemble the engagement roll for all missions by first asking the following:

- ◆ **LEGION LOYALTY:** Are all on the mission oathsworn to the Legion? Take +1d.

*Non-Legion personnel, such as Mercies or Alchemists, are not oathsworn to serve the Legion. Neither are people being escorted, diplomats being protected, or old priests being brought to a temple.*

- ◆ **INTEL:** Did the Commander spend 1 intel to give you advance information? Take +1d.

*Ask the GM to detail the information that was received when you spend the intel.*

- ◆ **VETERAN:** Is everyone on the mission a Specialist or Soldier? Take +1d.

*Rookies are not Specialists or Soldiers, so if your squad includes any Rookies, you do not get this die.*

- ◆ **LEADERSHIP:** Does any Legionnaire distrust or not respect the leadership enough to obey orders on the battlefield? Take -1d.

*This will depend on the morale of the Legion and the story up to this point. If there's a reason that the soldiers might not trust the person you put in charge, the GM will tell you. You may have a free play scene beforehand to play out some of the interpersonal exchanges before determining the answer here.*

- ◆ **PARAMETERS:** Are required Specialists or equipment not on the mission? Take -1d.

*All missions have specific Specialists they require. Those are listed on your rolebook under the Specialist types, as well as on the GM rolebook. They are also listed on the next page.*



## ASSAULT MISSIONS *Requires Heavy, Medic, or Sniper*

On each assault mission, also ask the following:

- ◆ **WEAPONS:** Did the Quartermaster equip the Legionnaires with Black Shot? Take +1d.

*The Quartermaster may expend one use of Black Shot to equip all troops on the mission with a unit of Black Shot and also add one die to the engagement roll of an assault mission.*

- ◆ **WOUNDS:** Is any Legionnaire starting the mission wounded? Take -1d.

*The undead can sense your troops' weaknesses. Field injured soldiers with care.*

## RECON MISSIONS *Requires Scout or Sniper*

On each recon mission, also ask the following:

- ◆ **SPEED:** Did the Quartermaster spend Horses to equip the mission? Take +1d.

*The Quartermaster may expend one use of Horses to equip all troops with mounts and add one die to the engagement roll of a recon mission.*

- ◆ **STEALTH:** Is any Legionnaire starting with heavy load? Take -1d.

*On a recon mission, moving quickly and quietly is paramount.*

## RELIGIOUS MISSIONS *Requires Officer or Medic*

On each religious mission, also ask the following:

- ◆ **ARCANE:** Did the Quartermaster spend Religious Supplies to ward and protect the squad? Take +1d.

*The Quartermaster may expend one use of Religious Supplies to equip all Specialists with a Reliquary and add one die to the engagement roll of a religious mission.*

- ◆ **CORRUPTION:** Is any Legionnaire starting the mission with blight? Take -1d.

*Holy relics and sites often react negatively around blight, and may be damaged by its presence.*

## SUPPLY MISSIONS *Requires Heavy, Officer, or Scout*

On each supply mission, also ask the following:

- ◆ **SUPPLIES:** Did the Quartermaster spend Food to equip the mission? Take +1d.

*The Quartermaster may expend one use of Food to equip all Specialists with Supplies and add one die to the engagement roll of a supply mission.*

- ◆ **ENEMIES:** Is the current pressure higher than 2? Take -1d.

*Gathering supplies while being overrun by undead is fraught.*

## ENGAGEMENT ROLL OUTCOMES

For primary missions, after you make the engagement roll, the GM will set your first scene in a position based on the result. Note that your first action roll should be in this position. The better your roll, the better the mission starts.

For secondary missions, the engagement roll determines the entire outcome of the mission, as described below. Note that certain special abilities (particularly the Officer's *Strategist* and *Mission First*) can trigger during secondary missions.

### PRIMARY MISSION OUTCOMES

- ◆ **CRITICAL.** You've overcome the first obstacle and are in a controlled position at the next obstacle.
- ◆ **6.** You're in a controlled position when the action starts.
- ◆ **4/5.** You're in a risky position when the action starts.
- ◆ **1-3.** You're in a desperate position when the action starts.

### SECONDARY MISSION OUTCOMES

- ◆ **CRITICAL.** You succeed at the mission, and promote one squad member. (See Rookie and Soldier special abilities for details, pages 101 and 107, respectively.)
- ◆ **6.** You succeed at the mission, all Specialists take level 1 harm, and you may choose to lose two squad members and promote a Rookie to Soldier. Note that these squad members count for morale loss (as the loss of any Legionnaire does).
- ◆ **4/5.** Choose: Fail the mission and all troops return unharmed **or** you can succeed, two squad members die, and all Specialists take level 2 harm.
- ◆ **1-3.** You fail the mission, lose three squad members, and all Specialists take level 3 harm.

Take a moment after the Secondary mission outcomes to discuss the mission. What went right? What went wrong? Which Broken's troops were deployed? This will help establish the harm the Specialists take. Note it on their playbooks as required.

If any squad members died, ask someone what they remember most about one of them (they should make something up).

Even though these secondary missions are resolved quickly, details such as this help influence further fiction, and detail the personality and strategies of the Legion.

## EXPERIENCE (XP)

After the primary mission, have everyone take a moment to note how much xp they are taking and remind everyone of how their traits came up during the mission. It's your duty to make sure the Legion advances correctly and learns from their missions.

For secondary missions—whether they were succeeded or failed—mark two xp for any Specialists assigned to that mission.



# LEGION ROLE QUARTERMASTER

*My duty is to the existence of the Legion, and I will guard its resources with my life.*

*Even before recent losses, there were endless requests for more food, more gear, more coin. Now, supplies are dwindling. Run empty, and the Legion will starve, and powder will run out. Spend on luxuries and you may appease the troops, but be short when bartering for essentials. When missions are in jeopardy, you're the only one who can tilt the balance with the right gear. What choices will you make?*

**Play a Quartermaster** if you want to determine the capabilities of the Legion and devise new ways to win the war.

## INITIAL SETUP

- ◆ **DESCRIBE THE QUARTERMASTER.** Select traits from the list below.
- ◆ **INITIAL SUPPLY.** Ask the GM how Legion supplies were affected by the first mission.
- ◆ **INITIAL NON-LEGION PERSONNEL.** Select a Mercy or an Alchemist to start with. Name them.
- ◆ **INITIAL FOOD.** Mark one Food box. This is what you've been left with in your stores after your retreat.
- ◆ **INITIAL MATERIEL.** Pick five additional boxes of materiel. Black Shot, Food, Horses, and Religious Supplies are used for bonus mission engagement dice, and have limited uses. Laborers, Siege Weapons, and Supply Carts modify how the Legion approaches those missions.
- ◆ **MODIFY MATERIEL.** Ask the GM how the first mission affected your materiel stores.

## QUARTERMASTER TRAITS

Choose from the following traits to describe your Quartermaster:

**HERITAGE (choose 1):** *Bartan. Orite. Zemyati. Panyar. Other.*

**REPUTATION (choose 1):** *Precise. Clever. Prepared. Frugal. Cautious.*

**PERSONALITY (choose 1-2):** *Smart. Kind. Resourceful. Frugal. Haughty.*

**LOOK (choose 1-3):** *Stylish. Opulent. Colorful. Tired. Grizzled.*

## DUTIES

- ◆ **TRACK AND SPEND SUPPLY.** You gain supply primarily from supply mission rewards. Spend supply for additional campaign actions, or to improve a campaign action.
- ◆ **PERFORM CAMPAIGN ACTIONS.** After each mission you perform a number of campaign actions according to troop morale. Ask the Marshal how many you get after the Back at Camp scene.
- ◆ **TRACK AND USE MATERIEL AND NON-LEGION PERSONNEL.** Expend materiel to make missions more successful. Track Mercy and Alchemist statuses, such as wounds and corruption.
- ◆ **WORK WITH OTHER ROLES.** Consult with the rest of the players to make the best decisions you can, but you have the final say in the duties you are tasked with. The fate of the Legion is in your hands. Good luck.

## SUPPLY

**Supply** comes from mission rewards (most commonly supply missions), and is used to fuel the Legion. It can be spent to gain more **campaign actions** and to boost those actions. While there are few ways to lose supply outright, you may often feel that there's never enough.

Supply is an abstract number, but in the fiction it occupies space and is made of material things. When the Commander advances the Legion, you need to be able to bring those things with you. The Legion can always take 3 supply with it, and can take an additional supply for each Supply Cart it has. Any over that limit must be left behind when you advance.

## CAMPAIGN ACTIONS

During the campaign phase, after time passes, you must perform campaign actions to bolster the Legion. Based on the Legion's morale, you will get two actions (for high morale), one action (for medium morale), or none (for low morale).

These campaign actions are the lifeblood of the Legion, allowing you to restock, gather essential assets, recruit new Legionnaires, improve morale, recover from injuries, and many other things as listed below. Each action represents a significant investment of the Legion's time and effort. Spend them wisely.

You can spend a **supply** to gain an additional campaign action but other than Acquire Assets and Long-Term Projects, each campaign action may only be performed once. Instead, you may also spend supply to **boost** a campaign action, as described on the following pages. Supply is precious, and the best Quartermasters keep a supply in reserve for when things are truly dire.



## ACQUIRE ASSETS

You send a Specialist to beg, borrow, or steal an asset the Legion needs.

What assets are available in a location is highly related to which location the Legion is in, and several have special rules concerning the assets that can be acquired there. Consult with the GM before rolling.

Roll the location's assets rating to determine the quality of the asset that is acquired, applying any of these special rules when you do. (1-3: Poor. 4/5: Standard. 6: Fine. **CRITICAL:** Exceptional.)

When you acquire resources (Black Shot, Food, Horses, or Religious Supplies), a poor roll may indicate one or two fewer uses than you might expect, while a fine or exceptional result might indicate more than the maximum uses, or special properties for that resource. The GM has final say on interpreting this roll (though they should use the location description and rules as guidelines).

Laborers, Siege Weapons, and alchemical concoctions are fine quality and their availability may be subject to the location. Alchemists and Mercies are exceptional quality and cannot normally be found in unpopulated areas.

Discuss with your GM before rolling what getting a poor result on a fine or exceptional asset might mean. Sometimes it means the person is wounded and won't be able to function for another campaign phase or two, or perhaps the Alchemist has much of their corruption clock filled. Rarely, it might mean the action is simply wasted and despite their best efforts the Specialist sent couldn't acquire the asset.

You may do this campaign action multiple times, but only if you acquire a different asset each time.

**BOOSTED:** Upgrade your result by one level. You may spend multiple supply for multiple levels of improvement.

## LIBERTY

Legionnaires are given leave of their responsibilities for a few days, good food and drink is provided, and campfire revelry is permitted. During this time, Legionnaires at liberty can party, fraternize, or relax as they see fit. Because it would be disastrous for all Legionnaires to be off-duty at the same time, they are described in the narrative as taking liberty in shifts.

Every character clears up to 3 stress and Legion morale increases by 2. Let the Marshal know as they'll need to update playbooks and track morale.

**BOOSTED:** Legionnaires clear all stress. Increase Legion morale by an additional 2 (total 4).

## LONG-TERM PROJECT

Work on a Long-Term Project, if you have the means.

Pick a Specialist to lead the project. They roll the appropriate action and mark segments on the project clock based on the result. (1-3: One. 4/5: Two. 6: Three. **CRITICAL:** Five.) You can do this campaign action multiple times during a campaign phase, but only if working on a different project each time.

**BOOSTED:** Upgrade result by one level. You may spend multiple supply this way—to boost by multiple levels.

Long-Term Projects are powerful tools that allow you to change how your game works. For instance, if you want to improve how much stress Liberty clears, perhaps you can design a still that produces quality libations and can travel on the back of a wagon. This tool can help you dig your way out of untenable situations. For example if your Spymaster has lost all of their spies, perhaps you can work a project to help them find a new one.

Work with your GM to establish a reasonable cost to these projects—the bigger the effect, the bigger the clock you'll ultimately have to work.

## RECRUIT

The war has left soldiers crawling home and mercenaries guarding villages and roads—or raiding them. You recruit these recluses, rejects, and returning warriors to serve in the Legion's ranks.

Gain up to five Rookies for the Marshal to replenish the squads with. Due to limited supplies and support staff, the Legion cannot have more than six squads in this campaign.

**BOOSTED:** Two of those Rookies are Soldiers instead. (The other three remain Rookies.)

## REST AND RECUPERATION

The Legion takes some time to tend their wounds and rest. Physicians see to the health of the rank and file. Those with serious injuries may receive specialized care.

Every Legionnaire may mark a tick in any harm row. Once a row's healing ticks are full, you erase both the ticks and all injuries in that row. You may employ a Mercy to take on injuries from a character, provided the Mercy isn't currently wounded. The character being treated marks an additional healing tick. This is your decision as Quartermaster, so if there are any disagreements, you have final say. Before the Rest and Recuperation action ends, heal any Mercies that were wounded before this recuperation action.

**BOOSTED:** Every Legionnaire gains a second healing tick.

## MATERIEL

In addition to abstract supply, you must also manage the stores of Black Shot, Food, Horses, Religious Supplies, and track the status of non-Legion personnel such as Mercies and Alchemists.

Resource materiels differ from regular materiel because they have uses. Each box worth of resource materiels yields three uses of that resource. For example, if you have Horses, you can use them up to three times before the asset is depleted and must be removed from your rolebook. (Supply Carts can expand the uses of Food, one-for-one.)

## NON-LEGION PERSONNEL

### ALCHEMISTS

Bound to the Maker or Builder, Alchemists are scientists able to transmute materials. With one of the three Orite crafter gods Broken, alchemy now corrupts those that practice it. Track that corruption with an 8-clock; after the clock is full, the Alchemist is corrupted and must be dealt with. Play out a scene, or simply describe what was done.

**Rules:** Alchemists can cure arcane diseases and make alchemicals for the Legion. The GM says if this is an Acquire Asset or an alchemical Long-Term Project, but this action is in addition to your regular campaign actions. Discuss with your GM the details of the project.

Roll dice equal to the number of Alchemists in your Legion to determine the effect (see Acquire Asset and Long-Term Project). Then roll the same number of dice for corruption (1-3: Three. 4/5: Two. 6: One. **CRITICAL:** Zero). Distribute that corruption among your Alchemists' "Corruption" clocks. Dangerous projects may add +1 or +2 corruption per roll.

### LABORERS

A catch-all category for blacksmiths, engineers, and carpenters that travel with and work alongside the Legion.

**Rules:** Each unit of Laborers puts one tick on any appropriate Long-Term Project during your campaign actions—regardless of whether you work on Long-Term Projects as an action in the campaign phase. They also increase your score at the end of the game (see page 430).

Laborers must be able to work on projects they tick, so they can't add ticks to alchemical projects, or clocks they don't have the resources to affect.

### MERCIES

Bound to the goddess Asrika, these unnerving red-and-white-clad mendicants can take the injuries of others onto themselves.

**Rules:** When taking the Rest and Recuperation campaign action, Mercies can become wounded to give one Specialist an extra healing tick. Mercies can only bear one wound at a time. Any Mercies not employed during Rest and Recuperation heal their wounds.

## COMMON MATERIEL

### BLACK SHOT

Once considered a novelty, this transmuted metal is anathema to undead. Each use of Black Shot is a crate worth of shot, either precious bullets or arrowheads. Alchemists are rare these days, so finding more can be tricky.

**Rules:** Spend one use of Black Shot to add +1d to an assault mission engagement roll. When you do, all Specialists on the mission equip Black Shot without spending utility load.

### FOOD STORES

Grains, cured meats, casks of clean water, wines, cheeses, breads. Anything you could use to bolster a soldier for a day. Each use of Food is a wagon worth of food.

**Rules:** The Legion consumes one use of Food whenever time passes. If you can't consume the food when you need to, the Legion loses 2 morale.

Spend one use of Food to add +1d to a supply mission engagement roll. When you do, all Specialists on the mission equip Supplies for free.

### HORSES

The Legion has horses to haul wagons, equip generals, or outfit Scouts, but extra horses are tough to source. A single use of Horses is a dozen spare horses, or perhaps the work of a single large warhorse.

**Rules:** Spend a use of Horses to add +1d to a recon mission engagement roll or reduce pressure by one when advancing. You may spend as many uses of Horses when advancing as you like.

### RELIGIOUS SUPPLIES

Bones and blood of ancient Chosen and other mystic supplies used to help fight off the corrupting influence of the undead. One use of Religious Supplies might be a crate of Reliquaries.

**Rules:** Spend a use of Religious Supplies to add +1d to a religious mission engagement roll. When you do, all Specialists on the mission equip a Reliquary for free.

### SIEGE WEAPONS

Ballista, catapult, trebuchet, or cannon. Used to assault fortified positions or powerful undead, these weapons are threat 3. A single Siege Weapon is one such weapon.

**Rules:** If you bring a Siege Weapon on a mission, the Legion only retains that weapon if you can bring it back. A Siege Weapon might be able to ignore the scale of some enemies, particularly the rank and file undead. Having Siege Weapons will make the fortification of Skydagger Keep easier and increase your final score.


### SUPPLY CARTS

Supply, food, gear, and the wounded travel by carts, wagons, or carriages. A single Supply Cart on your rolebook represents maybe a dozen small carts, or a few large wagons.

**Rules:** Supply Carts allow you to carry more supply. (By default, if you advance with more than 3 supply, you lose any additional supply you had.) Supply Carts also increase the number of uses each unit of Food Stores provides, one-for-one.

## EXAMPLES

The Legion spent an extra couple of turns in Barrack Mine resupplying. Pressure is high, but Dwayne, the Quartermaster, is prepared. He's stocked the Legion with Horses. When the Legion advances, he spends two uses to reduce the roll from 3 dice

(from a pressure of 3) to 1. 

**HORSES**



Since there's still a use left, he leaves the Horses box marked.

In Plainsworth Village, the Food Stores the Legion has started out with are dwindling.



**FOOD STORES**



Dwayne has already declared both a Liberty and Rest and Recuperation action, so he spends a supply for an extra campaign action. He tells the GM that he's acquiring an asset—food. He rolls the assets rating of Plainsworth, plus an extra die due to the Plainsworth special rule that makes gathering food there easier. He gets a 4, a standard result. It's enough to mark the box on new Food Stores, feeding the Legion a while longer.

Dwayne tries to acquire an Alchemist in Westlake. He rolls three dice (per the assets rating) and gets a 6. Since Alchemists are exceptional quality, this is not quite enough. Not wanting to spend extra supply, Dwayne asks Sam (the GM) what a fine Alchemist is. She mentions that there's one available to hire, but he starts with two ticks of corruption. Dwayne agrees and marks the box for a new Alchemist, and names them.

The Legion has recently faced one of Render's notorious Thorns, and they had significant trouble getting past its armor. Dwayne asks Sam what it would take to make an explosive that could offer the troops a chance to **WRECK** the armor and set up further attacks. Sam discusses a 4-clock Long-Term Project, but Dwayne needs a faster solution, and supply can't buy extra alchemy actions. He asks if he could acquire the asset of a prototype for an upcoming mission, and then research the full project later. Sam agrees.

Dwayne rolls 2d—he has two Alchemists. Another 6! A fine prototype. Sam mentions that it will grant **potency** to break down that armor. Dwayne then rolls 2d for corruption. Only a 3—3 corruption. Ouch. Dwayne decides to put it all on the new Alchemist for now, raising his initial two ticks to five. He makes a note that the prototype is ready.



**ALCHEMIST**

**CORRUPTION**



Viscount Farian Martiko



**ALCHEMIST**

**CORRUPTION**



Aether Magnus





# LEGION ROLE THE LOREKEEPER

*My duty is to the history of the Legion, and I will preserve its meaning above all else.*

*The Legion has existed for hundreds upon hundreds of years, since Emperor Tantaros created it to fight impossible odds under his own personal banner. It is no mere mercenary group. The Legionnaires who forget their history might as well not be Legionnaires at all. Without the Annals of the Legion that you carry, the Legion will be adrift against the unprecedented threats it faces today. Without you to guide them, the Legion will devolve into profiteering, bickering, and moral decay. What stories will you tell?*

**Play a Lorekeeper** if you want to speak for the Legion's character and guide its present with tales of the past.

## INITIAL SETUP

- ◆ **DESCRIBE THE LOREKEEPER.** Select traits from the list below.
- ◆ **REMEMBER ETTENMARK.** Tell us the tale of the battle where the Legion's offensive was shattered. What mistake did the Legion make? Which Broken did you face? What did you see? Who saved you? What did you learn?
- ◆ **INITIAL LEGION VALUES.** Cross out one option from each of the three morale categories for the Back at Camp lists on the Skydagger Keep sheet. Tell everyone how the lessons learned at Ettenmark have shaped the Legion's current values.

## LOREKEEPER TRAITS

Choose from the following traits to describe your Lorekeeper:

**HERITAGE (choose 1):** *Bartan. Orite. Zemyati. Panyar. Other.*

**REPUTATION (choose 1):** *Wise. Friendly. Inquisitive. Dedicated. Famous.*

**PERSONALITY (choose 1-2):** *Warm. Clever. Eloquent. Young. Curious.*

**LOOK (choose 1-3):** *Soft. Maimed. One-Eyed. Ink-Stained. Grizzled.*

## DUTIES

- ◆ **TRACK THE DEAD.** Note every Legionnaire that dies. The book weighs heavy, but while there is still a Legion, you have a sacred duty to remember all sacrifices.
- ◆ **TELL THE TALES OF THE LEGION.** When four new names are added to your lists of the dead, tell a Tale of the Legion. Answer all questions the Tale asks in your story, then choose one benefit to the troops.
- ◆ **KEEP THE ANNALS.** Note missions, who is sent, and their outcomes. If there is any question what happened, it is your duty to recall it for others. Keep these books safe.
- ◆ **SET BACK AT CAMP SCENES.** Consult with the Marshal on the morale before making your selection. If a decision needs to be made about the camp or its rules, you will make them.
- ◆ **WORK WITH OTHER ROLES.** Though other Roles won't often have input on your duties, listen to them and advise them as necessary. Keep in mind the Legion's beliefs and lessons you have set, and remind them.

## THE LISTS AND ANNALS

The Legion prides itself on recording the names of all its fallen. The massive amount of deaths at Ettenmark has filled many pages. Your rolebook has places to note the fallen. Whenever someone dies, ask the Marshal their name and any relevant title (Specialist, Legionnaire, etc.) and record it. For each four dead you'll get to frame a scene where you tell a Tale and inspire the troops with stories of the past.

The Annals are a record of all the missions that occurred. This can be as cut and dry as you like (a list of missions, assignments, and outcomes) or with commentary and in-character annotations. At the start of session, if anyone requests, do a brief summary of what happened the previous game. This duty is also relevant for the Legion to recall who and what they fought, and more importantly what they learned about their enemies' strengths and weaknesses. Feel free to add in-character notes as you desire.

The GM may also consult with you about the Annals to help them recall Broken plans and actions. If you keep the record, and it survives through the tumultuous events at Skydagger, it's worth additional points at the end of the game.

## BACK AT CAMP

After every mission, you will frame a **Back at Camp** scene. This scene occurs after applying all the penalties and rewards of the missions for this mission phase, before moving on to the campaign phase. Consult with the Marshal to learn what the morale is before setting that scene, because the morale level determines what scenes you can set.

When selecting a Back at Camp scene, focus on stories that reflect on the themes that have been occurring in the story so far. The scenes are intentionally designed to be broad so that they can tie into the events of your specific game. If your mission was abandoned halfway through, perhaps pick the story about a squad refusing to go into the field. If someone died on the mission, that could lead into a remembrance for the fallen. In the end, the choice of scene is yours.

Setting the scene is a matter of explaining the concept to the table and asking a few people to take on various parts during a scene. You might ask if anyone wants to play a particular character in the scene, or ask a specific player if they can portray the character that embodies their Role. If the Chosen is to be in the scene, ask the GM to take on that character.

These scenes are not meant to take overly long—perhaps 5 to 10 minutes, as the table desires—but they set the tone for the entire campaign. This is one of the few chances to get to know the characters and focus on their interactions outside of the tense air of missions. It's our insight into what day-to-day life is like, and what values the Legion holds. Ask the players to seize the opportunity to showcase the Legionnaires as more than just soldiers and weapons. If these scenes raise interesting questions, you can answer them either by framing a **free play** scene later, or in a future Back at Camp scene.

The full rules for the Back at Camp scenes are on page 250. The list of Back at Camp scenes are provided there.

## STORIES OF THE LEGION

After four Legionnaires have died, you must tell a story about the Legion. This occurs after the Back at Camp scene, at the start of the “time passes” step.

The first time you tell them, these stories are told in order, and each should answer the prompts provided. This is a moment to define what life is like in the Legion, what values the Legionnaires hold, and what adversities the Legion as a whole has seen before. Be bold, let your imagination roam, but remember the restrictions of the world—no elves, no dwarves, no wizards, no dragons. Keep to the tone of the game. Once you’ve told all the Tales once, after four more people die, feel free to pick them in any order.

After you tell your story, select one of three effects that apply to the Legion. These are both a narrative description and a mechanical effect. Feel free to explain a little bit about how the narrative change can be seen in the Legion, or ask the GM to do the same.

### TELL A TALE OF THE LEGION’S FOUNDING

*Let me tell you a tale of the Legion’s founding by the Seventh Emperor, as recorded 427 years ago in the first Annals...*

- ◆ Who was the first Commander? First Legionnaire? First Lorekeeper?
- ◆ How (or for what) is that person remembered?
- ◆ What dangerous threat was the Legion formed to face?

Choose one effect on the Legion:

- ◆ **THE LEGIONNAIRES LEARN A LESSON.** All Specialists may place 1 xp in any category.
- ◆ **THE LEGION SEEKS GLORY OF YESTERYEAR.** Your next set of missions will include a **special mission**.
- ◆ **THE HISTORIES RAISE MORALE.** The Legion gains +2 morale.

### TELL A TALE OF THE LEGION’S INDEPENDENCE

*After the Old Empire fell, the Legion became sellswords that hired out to causes they believed in. This is a tale of..*

- ◆ Where is the Legion’s original charter stored?
- ◆ What unusual restriction(s) are placed on Legionnaires?
- ◆ What cause has the Legion taken up previously?

Choose one effect on the Legion:

- ◆ **LEGIONNAIRES SHRUG OFF WOUNDS.** All Specialists may mark one free healing tick.
- ◆ **THE LEGION PURIFIES HEARTS AND MINDS.** All Legionnaires reduce **corruption** by 2.
- ◆ **SOLDIERS WORK EXTRA SHIFTS.** Add three ticks to a Long-Term Project.

## TELL A TALE OF HARDENING IN BATTLE

*These undead are not the greatest threat the Legion has faced. Let me tell you a tale of when we faced impossible odds...*

- ◆ What terrible power did this threat wield?
- ◆ How was this threat's unknown weakness found?
- ◆ At what cost did the Legion overcome this foe?

Choose one effect on the Legion:

- ◆ **THE LEGION DIGS IN.** Remove **1 pressure**, but the Commander may not advance in the next mission phase.
- ◆ **SOLDIERS PREPARE TO FIGHT SWIFTLY.** On your next mission, all Specialists gain **+1d** to **MANEUVER** rolls.
- ◆ **SOLDIERS PREPARE THEIR STRONGEST WEAPONS.** On your next mission, all Specialists gain **+1d** to **WRECK** rolls.

## TELL A TALE OF THE LEGION'S UNYIELDING WILL

*We have fought holy and unholy since our inception, even in the Godswar, when Chosen took arms against Chosen...*

- ◆ Which previous Chosen did the Legion fight beside?
- ◆ Against which supernatural threat did they fight?
- ◆ How many survived and how did they rebuild the Legion?

Choose one effect on the Legion:

- ◆ **YOUR CHOSEN IS MOVED.** Your Chosen gains **1 favor** as if they had completed a favored mission.
- ◆ **NEVER GIVE UP.** On your next mission, all Legionnaires gain **+1d** to all **resistance** rolls.
- ◆ **SOLDIERS PREPARE TO FACE THE UNHOLY.** On the next mission, all Legionnaires get **+2d** to **RESOLVE** resists.

## TELL A TALE OF THE LEGION'S MEANING

*The Legion is no longer just a military, but family forged in blood over a century. This is a tale...*

- ◆ How do civilians treat the Legion differently than other units?
- ◆ How are new recruits inducted into the Legion?
- ◆ What oath must all Legionnaires speak?

Choose one effect on the Legion:

- ◆ **THE LEGION PROMOTES AN EXEMPLAR.** Promote a Rookie to Soldier.
- ◆ **LEGIONNAIRES REMEMBER WHY THEY FIGHT.** One mission next session gains **+2d** to its **engagement** roll.
- ◆ **SOLDIERS PROTECT EACH OTHER.** On your next primary mission, each Specialist gets **1 special armor** to resist the consequences of any action.





# LEGION ROLE THE SPYMASTER

*My duty is to the secrets of the Legion, and I will use them to ensure our victory.*

*Your stock in trade are the secrets, plans, and movements of the enemy, from the lowest platoon of Burned to the Cinder King himself. If anyone can make sense of the whispered rumors or the blood-soaked notes of a dead Scout, it's you. The Legion may win a battle, but with you and your stable of spies working in the background, they can win the war. But choose the wrong priorities, and your squads will be unprepared for the horrors that await them. What secrets will you gather?*

**Play a Spymaster** if you want to influence each of the other Roles, serving a critical part when the timing is just right.

## INITIAL SETUP

- ◆ **DESCRIBE THE SPYMASTER.** Select traits from the list below.
- ◆ **INITIAL SPIES.** Select two spies to start. Mark one as Trained and the other as Master. You can gain one more as play progresses, up to three total.

## SPYMASTER TRAITS

Choose from the following traits to describe your Spymaster:

**HERITAGE (choose 1):** *Bartan. Orite. Zemyati. Panyar. Other.*

**REPUTATION (choose 1):** *Aloof. Deadly. Dangerous. Cold. Shrewd.*

**PERSONALITY (choose 1-2):** *Cold. Quiet. Calculating. Smug. Gracious.*

**LOOK (choose 1-3):** *Comely. Colorful. Nondescript. Gaunt. Tattooed.*

## DUTIES

- ◆ **DISPATCH SPIES.** Dispatch spies on assignments during campaign actions. Use simple assignments for short-term boosts or long-term assignments to enact your master plan.
- ◆ **GROW YOUR NETWORK.** Your true enemies are the Broken themselves. Prepare for them. Maximize your effectiveness.
- ◆ **WORK WITH OTHER ROLES.** Consult with the rest of the players to make the best decisions you can, but you have the final say in the duties you are tasked with. The fate of the Legion is in your hands. Good luck.

## SPY NETWORK

Training spies without the proper facilities, instruction staff, and field experience is no mean feat. The Legion asks a lot of you. Your network represents a mix of people, informants, bribe funds, resources, training facilities, and support staff that makes your job possible.

To grow your spy network, you have your spies work the **expand network long-term assignment** (see page 155).

## THE NETWORK

- ◆ **SPY NETWORK.** You start with this ability. This gives you the facilities and resources to keep two spies (see page 152).
- ◆ **ACQUISITION.** You can now support a third spy. **Requires:** Spy Network.
- ◆ **TRAINING.** Another one of your spies becomes a **Master** spy. You may take this network expansion twice. **Requires:** Acquisition.
- ◆ **ANALYSTS.** You gain a support staff to comb the Annals, and reports, cataloging useful rumors and hints about the local area. All spies sent on **research** long-term assignments roll +1d. **Requires:** Spy Network.
- ◆ **INVESTMENTS.** Investing in long-term alliances, trainers, and facilities pays off. All spies on **expand network** assignments roll +1d. **Requires:** Analysts.
- ◆ **ENTRAPMENT.** You provide special training on surviving deep in enemy territory, and catalog information on the undead. All spies on **lay trap** assignments roll +1d. **Requires:** Spy Network.
- ◆ **SOURCES.** Loyal contacts and informants that feed you tips on good missions, and local knowledge of what Legionnaires can bring back. All spies sent on **augment mission** assignments roll +1d. **Requires:** Spy Network.
- ◆ **HOLY ORDERS, MERCENARIES, MERCHANTS, AND RANGERS.** Various local groups you've bribed or have informants among that feed you intel on good missions. They provide extra mission rewards when you **augment** for missions of a specific type. **Requires:** Sources.

◆ ◆ **TRAINING**  
One of your **Trained** spies becomes a **Master** spy. May be taken twice.

◆ **INVESTMENTS**  
Spies roll +1d on **EXPAND NETWORK** assignments.

◆ **ACQUISITION**  
Gain another spy. Mark their **Trained** box.

◆ **ANALYSTS**  
Spies roll +1d on **RESEARCH** assignments.

◆ **SPY NETWORK**  
You are able to train, support and utilize spies. You start with 2 spies. One **Trained** and one **Master** spy.

◆ **FIELD ASSESSMENT**  
You may ask 1 additional question when you **INTERROGATE**.

◆ **ENTRAPMENT**  
Spies roll +1d on **LAY TRAP** missions.

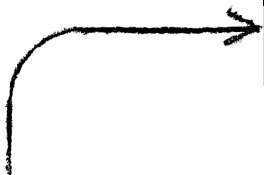
◆ **RANGERS**  
**AUGUMENTED** recon missions give +1 intel beyond the usual rewards.

◆ **SOURCES**  
You have loyal contacts & informants everywhere. Spies roll +1d on **AUGUMENT MISSION** assignments.

◆ **MERCENARIES**  
**AUGUMENTED** assault missions give +1 morale beyond the usual rewards.

◆ **MERCHANTS**  
**AUGUMENTED** supply missions give +1 supply beyond the usual rewards.

◆ **HOLY ORDERS**  
**AUGUMENTED** religious missions give +1 asset beyond the usual rewards.



## SPIES

You start with two spies—a **Trained** spy (who rolls 1d on long-term assignments) and a **Master** spy (who rolls 2d). Think about how you want to influence the game, and focus your spies' specialties in that direction. Want to fight the Broken? Take Crimson Vexing Gale and Antoinette. Want to know mission details before you engage? Try Igrid. Want to make sure the Legion has the best missions available? Try Liya and Onyetin as a duo.



### ANTOINETTE

Denied nobility by birth, this Orite seamstress found a better calling in life. She's broken countless hearts, poisoned nobles and warriors both, and has yet to fail a mission.

**SPECIALTY:** Antoinette automatically upgrades to a Master spy when selected.



### BORTIS

A grizzled Zemyati, Bortis is an asset on and off the field. Rumor is that if he lives, he'll become the next Spymaster. As a trainer he's considered tough but fair.

**SPECIALTY:** When Bortis rolls on **expand network** assignments, he generates +1 segment on his rolls.



### CRIMSON VEXING

Little is known about Crimson Vexing Gale, except that their eyes reflect silver. They come and go as they please. Many rumors surround their past, but their loyalty is absolute.

**SPECIALTY:** Does not **wound** on any mission.

Sometimes, spies die. See Long-Term Assignments on page 154 to learn more about losing spies. They can be replaced (see the Recruit action). If you expand your network to gain Acquisition, you can finance and support up to three spies. The spies below are possible recruits that can be found, acquired, or recruited in the nearby areas. Many have some experience in the field and only need a modicum of training before they can be deployed.



### IGRID

An Aldermarni local, Igrid blends into all the settlements nearby. She travels the area freely, taking note of news and rumors. A skilled mountaineer, terrain poses no obstacle to her.

**SPECIALTY:** When Igrid **interrogates** ask one additional intel question.



### LIYA

This Bartan bears none of the usual Bartan jewelry signifying kinship and prefers deep cover and long-term solo missions. She's also a master duelist, and a known Weaponmaster.

**SPECIALTY:** Liya rolls +1d on **research** assignments.



### ONYETIN

This friendly bear of a man is also one of the deadliest assassins in the Eastern Kingdoms. He knows exactly how to spot or uncover hidden targets and caches.

**SPECIALTY:** Onyetin rolls +1d on **augment mission** assignments.

## DISPATCH SPIES

You will task your spies with **assignments** at the same time the Quartermaster does their campaign actions. Assignments can either be short term or long term. Those that are short term complete immediately and do not require a roll (though interrogation questions occur during mission selection). Long-term assignments take time to finish, and different spies may take turns working on them.

The best Spymasters strike a balance between the simple and long-term assignments to maximize their impact on the campaign. Occasionally the Legion really needs an extra die to a campaign action, or you really need to ask a question about an upcoming mission. Always think about how best to leverage your crew of agents.

### SIMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

During campaign actions, spies can be given **simple assignments**. Spies on simple assignments cannot undertake long-term assignments in the same phase. None of the simple assignments require a roll, nor incur risk to the spy.

- ◆ **RECOVER:** The spy heals and recuperates. Remove their wounded condition.
- ◆ **INTERROGATE:** Look at the Commander's list of intel questions. Your spy is sent on a mission and can answer one question from any list (regardless of the Commander's intel total) whenever missions are presented by the GM.
- ◆ **BLACKMAIL:** Your spy bribes or threatens as needed. Add +1d to an **acquire assets** roll.
- ◆ **HELP:** Your spy facilitates or networks as needed. Add +1d to a Quartermaster's **long-term project** roll.

### LONG-TERM ASSIGNMENTS

During campaign actions, spies may be given **long-term assignments**. Each of these takes substantial time and attention, and requires a roll to determine how far the spy gets towards completing the assignment. Only one spy may be sent on each assignment during a single phase, so only one roll per assignment will ever be made. However, on the next phase, a different spy can be put on that assignment, picking up where the first left off. You can pause assignments and continue them later without penalty.

When rolling for the assignment, roll 1d for Trained spies, or 2d for Master spies. Advance the assignment clock according to the results. (1-3: One, and the spy is wounded. 4/5: Two. 6: Three. **CRITICAL:** Five.) If a spy that is already wounded is wounded again, they die, and are forever lost to the Spymaster. The Spymaster can replace them with a different spy by completing a recruit assignment.



## AUGUMENT MISSION

8-CLOCK

Your spy uses their contacts to bolster the Commander's mission selection.

**Complete:** When the GM next generates missions, tell them to add +1 to the rewards and mission penalty rolls on one mission of the Commander's focus type. That mission type must appear in the generated missions at least once.

## EXPAND NETWORK

8-CLOCK

Take the time to build contacts, informants, and local resources in the area, and expand and hone your spies' effectiveness.

**Complete:** Choose a new spy network advancement connected to any piece of the network you already have. You gain the bonuses of that advance immediately.

## LAY TRAP

8-CLOCK

The undead are canny and careful in their domination of humanity. They can, however, be goaded with a known weakness or desire into exposing themselves to attack. Sometimes you just have to take the fight to them.

**Complete:** The next mission list will include an assault mission to attack a specific Lieutenant or Infamous.

## RECRUIT

8-CLOCK

Spies lead dangerous lives, frequently ending in their demise. If a spy dies, you may recruit another to take their place.

**Complete:** If you've lost a spy, add a new one to the roster. You can only have two spies at a time (or three if you have Acquisition in your spy network).

## RESEARCH

8-CLOCK

Your spies travel ahead of the Legion to learn rumors, mysteries, and secrets found in a location.

**Complete:** Learn all the special missions in a location, and if the Commander spends an intel to acquire one, you may pick which to do. If you advance past that location, reset this clock.



# CHAPTER 4

# THE DIVINE

## THE CHOSEN AND BROKEN

*Sometimes late at night when my leg pains me, I walk to the walls and volunteer to stand guard, and often find the Chosen there, motionless, staring out into the darkness towards where our enemy is. At the start of our journey east, I would sketch her bold profile in charcoal, trying to capture some spark of what she is in my art.*

*I wasn't with the Legion five years ago when the Choosing happened. I remember climbing up to a rooftop with some friends and a few bottles of Orite Goldenwine to watch the Chosen mounted on their stallions, riding out amidst cheers and showers of colored grain thrown in celebration. We thought this whole Cinder King mess would be over by that winter. Nine Chosen rode out—surely nothing could stand against such power. We were so young, and I was so full of laughter.*

*So much has happened to me since. The Legion. Ettenmark. All the blood and screams and forced marches. Fighting in desperation to save the person next to you, hoping they could do the same. I wonder sometimes how much of the girl full of laughter from the rooftop is left in me.*

*I spent that night on the walls, sketching memories of Or and the person I remembered seeing before she was Chosen. I wondered how much of the person before the Choosing was left in her.*

*I awoke the next morning with our Chosen's face inches from mine. After a few moments she leaned in until her lips were by my ear. I remember that she smelled faintly of blood, sweet fruit, and summer heat. "Not much," she whispered, and in a smooth motion stood up and was gone from my tent.*

*When I stand watch, I don't stare at her anymore.*

*—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire*



## THE GODS

The gods of the world are inscrutable forces that operate on a grand scale. They don't answer prayers, and their blessings can be terrifying. Their influence is felt throughout the mortal world, from their connection to mythic creatures to the presence of miracles wrought through the actions of their avatars.

Importantly, the gods don't have humanity's best interests at heart. They are more primal forces than considerate actors. Asrika, the Goddess of Mercy, known by several names throughout the Eastern Kingdoms, is not merciful because she cares for people. She is the force of mercy, the face of sacrifice, and frequently delivers her mercy in the form of a swift death.

This however does not stop the humans of the world from believing that the gods are forces that care about their well-being; praying to and following such forces; or crafting complex and elaborate religions with warring factions, interpretations of divine action and will, and religious personnel and structures. Many people believe that the gods watch over and protect them, and they ascribe various good and bad circumstances in their lives to the direct happiness and displeasure of the gods.

## POWERS BEYOND

Perhaps humanity can be forgiven its superstitions, as the gods leave a wake in their passing. Their avatars' corpses retain miraculous powers, and their bones, blood, and viscera are refined into Reliquaries and sometimes even relics that shape the world.

All supernatural powers and items are derived from the physical manifestation of the gods in the mortal world. This includes relics (crafted by Chosen while they walk the earth), Reliquaries (made of the flesh and bone of dead Chosen), Mercies (infused with the essences of Asrika), and Alchemists (infused with the essences of the Crafter gods). For more information, see *The Larger World* on page 351.

The world is older than recorded history, and Chosen have manifested, battled, and died for quite some time. Many of the problems Chosen are created to deal with can eventually be traced to a previous intercession by the gods. Great Beast? Probably an animal that dug up and ate a piece of a Chosen. Curse? Probably a tomb robber bearing an artifact that's slowly corrupting them, or Alchemists meddling with formulae they shouldn't. Of course there is the occasional volcano or large scale disaster that the Chosen also arrive to clean up, often at the last minute.

## THE CHOSEN

Since time immemorial, when supernatural affairs plague the world the gods Choose a human to carry their divine grace, imbuing them with immense power and the ability to handle the problem. These Chosen are mighty forces and the only true font of supernatural power in the world.

Choosing varies from deity to deity, and the rituals for it are complex and vary based on religion. There are no absolute rules in Choosing except that the person accepting the essence must agree to it. Their reasons for agreeing can be misguided or not, but with their consent, the pact is sealed between human and god.

Those divinely-infused mortals inevitably change in both personality and demeanor, but it would be wrong to say that nothing remains of the petitioner. They often maintain personality traits or unconscious habits of the person they were, and in rare cases, specific memories or drives. Exactly which aspects are the divine and which are the original person are debated amongst scholars long after the Chosen is no longer alive.

Choosing frequently damages the host. While the human frame can bear the supernatural essence, it cannot do so for long. Aside from a rare few (often legendary) cases, a Chosen lasts at most a few years—assuming they did not die in the completion of their set task.

Bodies and artifacts crafted by the Chosen still hold the divine spark after their end. There is both a brisk trade in building temples or monasteries to protect those remains and in selling real and counterfeit versions thereof.

The gods do not Choose lightly. They are not concerned with politics, the laws of humanity, or other mortal concerns. When a Chosen is brought forth, it is a sign that the gods believe the cause in question to be outside the capabilities of humans to resolve—curses, powerful near-mythic beasts, or civilization-ending events. Traditionally one Chosen is all that's needed to end a threat, with serious problems eliciting two.

When the Cinder King rose in the West, nine were Chosen to deal with the threat—an unheard-of number that have even some skeptics wondering if this truly is the end of days.

Chosen are literal avatars of gods, and the Chosen traveling with the Legion is one of the reasons the Legion has a chance of making it to Skydagger Keep at all. Without their powers, the Legion would be overwhelmed either by the corrupting powers of the undead or simply their numbers.

## CHOSEN CREATION

Creating a Chosen is done in five steps:

1. **PICK A CHOSEN.** The GM chooses which Chosen is with the Legion.
2. **CHOOSE FAVOR.** Each Chosen comes with three options. The GM picks one they think will inspire interesting missions.
3. **CHOOSE ABILITY.** Your Chosen starts with one. They advance when you fill up their favor clock by doing missions tied to their favor type.
4. **CHOOSE DIVINE FEATURES.** Pick two that your Chosen manifests.

### PICKING A CHOSEN

The GM picks the Chosen, but they should read their motives, goals, and agendas and discuss it with their players. Everyone should be interested in the themes and stories that Chosen brings to the table. The final decision on the Chosen falls to the GM.

#### SHIREYA

*A warrior Chosen by the Bartan healer goddess.  
Focused on military actions and strategy.*

#### HORNED ONE

*A shapeshifting Chosen of the Panyar forest god.  
Focused on mysterious powers and clever ruses.*

#### ZORA

*An ancient Zemyati Chosen who tests her followers.  
Focused on mighty deeds and direct assaults.*

### CHOOSE FAVOR

Each Chosen has a drive imparted to them by the nature of the divine grace inside them. They're driven to pursue a **favor**, and draw strength both from doing so and being near groups of people who do so.

Certain missions will have a favor type related to them as part of mission generation—it's rolled randomly—while special missions always have favor assigned—sometimes multiple ones.

There are six types of favor to be found in missions. Two are found commonly among all Chosen. They are:

- ◆ **HOLY.** Favor concerned with the sacred traditions of their deity. **Example Missions:** Rescuing sacred texts or clergy. Guarding a shrine. Protecting pilgrims on the road.
- ◆ **MYSTIC.** Favor concerned with the inscrutable powers deities levy to change the world. **Example Missions:** Performing rituals. Recovering artifacts. Examining sites of power.



The remaining four favor types are unique to Chosen of specific gods.

- ◆ **GLORY.** Domain of the Living God. These are tests of strength, courage, and endurance. **Example Missions:** Fighting superior foes. Fighting impossible odds. Braving the odds on a daring rescue.
- ◆ **KNOWLEDGE.** Domain of the Orite gods. Traits of alchemy, mechanical wonders, history, and Old Empire technology. **Example Missions:** Recovering ancient knowledge. Finding Old Empire tech.
- ◆ **MERCY.** Domain of Asrika. Missions concerning saving innocents, or relics and holy sites specific to Asrika. **Example Missions:** Protecting innocents a Broken is planning to kill en masse. Saving a holy site with unarmed holy attendants. Escorting Mercies or doctors.
- ◆ **WILD.** Domain of the Horned One. Something concerning a mystic imbalance in weather, wild animals, or nature. **Example Missions:** Rescuing or hunting sacred beasts. Halting corruption of the weather.

## CHOOSE CHOSEN ABILITY

Chosen are imbued with the power of a god, which while powerful, is still limited by the rules of the world. A Chosen manifests different applications of divine power, and the longer they remain in the world, the stronger their connection to the divine becomes, until they burn out.

Their power is not infinite, though. A Chosen might be able to battle through a hundred troops and move with speed and force far beyond that of a mortal—but they can't fly, destroy continents with a gesture, or bring back the dead. Those that travel with them often receive some of the benefits of their gifts.

The GM picks an ability for your Chosen. If you are unsure which one to pick, take the first one. It's intentionally left there as a good default option.

Chosen gain more abilities over time as the Legion performs missions of their favor. It takes 4 favor for a Chosen to gain a new ability. If you're lucky, or carefully select special missions, you'll pick up on average one ability while traveling to Skydagger Keep.



## CHOOSE DIVINE FEATURES

Whenever a human is Chosen, the divine power manifests in them in sometimes subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle ways. Each Chosen bears traits that mark them as being more than human.

The GM should pick two features from the following list and detail how they manifest on the Chosen.

- ◆ **ALLURING:** Charisma that compels followers to fall to their knees and listen in rapt attention. **Example Features:** An aura of warmth and comfort that leaves you cold and empty when it leaves. A beauty that's painful to look upon. A voice that echoes in your mind.
- ◆ **FEROCIOUS:** A sense of destruction and ever-present force in everything the Chosen does. **Example Features:** Damage to common objects they hold or rest against. An anger that heats the room in their presence.
- ◆ **FEARSOME:** Terrifying in their outward manifestation. **Example Features:** An aura of menace that touches people on a primal level.



- ◆ **MONSTROUS:** Inhuman manifestations of the divine. **Example Features:** Hair made of fire. Razor talons. Wounds that never heal.

- ◆ **RADIANT:** Brimming with a divine light that can be seen even in the darkest of nights. **Example Features:** Skin that radiates moonlight. A circlet of fire that never extinguishes. Eyes that glow. Ambient light near them.

- ◆ **SERENE:** Instilling a calm in others that overrides all other concerns. **Example Features:** A touch that drains all fear or pain. A gaze that instills tranquil peace felt at the heart of ancient wood.

- ◆ **SINISTER:** Radiating danger that makes makes all around them feel like prey. **Example Features:** Casting unnatural shadows. The feeling in their presence that you are nothing more than a plaything. A gaze that looks right through you.

- ◆ **TRANSCENDENT:** Aware of subtle energies and higher purposes that mortals cannot see. **Example Features:** Speaking in riddles that seem important. Not reacting to dangerous situations as others do. Detachment from the world. A constant gaze into the distance.

## CHOSEN IN THE CAMPAIGN

The Chosen is akin to a battlecruiser—they are a powerful force and only used against major problems.

It's assumed that the Chosen usually stays at camp, helping guard the remnants of the Legion against the periodic deadly assaults the undead launch.

When the Chosen takes the field, the Legion takes a significant risk, so it's not done without great need. They deploy only when their lack of presence would guarantee mission failure and high casualties, or their motives and drives align with the mission.

Often we focus on a squad handling the main objective while the Chosen, represented by clocks, distracts and battles a powerful undead.

### SO WHAT CAN THE CHOSEN DO?

The Chosen can occasionally work miracles within the purview of their god. They don't do so frivolously or when they believe lesser actions would suffice.

*While Sniper Aurora Garossi was taking out some key troops for her squad, the Hag (a powerful Shadow Witch) snuck up on her and landed a nasty curse. Try as they might, the Legion hasn't been able to remove it. They made some risky **SWAY** rolls to get Shreya to try to cure her.*

*Shreya will attempt the miracle. The GM decides she will make a fortune roll using the Chosen's threat level. By default, Chosen act as threat 4. She considers what the result outcomes might mean. On a 1-3 Shreya cannot remove the curse. It's outside her purview, and she'll grant a swift death to the suffering Sniper. On a 4/5 she'll cure the curse, but it will take something out of the Legionnaire. The stalwart Sniper will have to mark a trauma. If she rolls a 6, she will break the Hex with no ill effects. With a **CRITICAL**, Shreya might find out additional information about Breaker and the Hag—how to protect the troops, or perhaps discover a way to end the threat of the Hag for good.*

*The GM picks up the dice...and rolls.*





# THE CHOSEN SHREYA

*Chosen of Asrika, the Barta goddess of mercy and healing.*

Shreya's tactical mind and near-supernatural understanding of strategy were the reason the Eastern Kingdoms pushed forth in this latest offensive. Counted by humanity as a major defeat, it is unclear if she has even registered the cost. Her demeanor can be inscrutable and intimidating. She is said to stand guard at odd hours, staring into the darkness for unseen signs of danger—a practice simultaneously comforting and unnerving.

**Select Shreya as your Chosen** if you want to run a more military-focused campaign, with offensive actions and strategy featuring centrally in your story.

## **FAVOR**

*Pick one of the following:*

**HOLY, MYSTIC, MERCY**

## **MOTIVES, GOALS, AND AGENDAS**

Intensely driven by Asrika's fury over the undead breach of the mercy of death, Shreya is aggressive in her pursuit of their destruction. She is willing to sacrifice much, including those in the Legion, if the reward is great enough. Her top priority is defeating the Broken in this theater of war while staging a tactical retreat.

The Chosen that became Blighter was once a lover of Shreya's and it seems that Shreya has a particular hatred for her. She won't speak of it, and it's unclear what, if any, emotions remain. She will not hesitate to join in a mission where Blighter is personally present.

Shreya is very sensitive to corruption and does not suffer the blighted to live around her. While she is merciful in her executions of those suffering from corruption, she cannot be swayed to stay her hand. As a result, if any of the Legionnaires become blighted, they must keep this corruption hidden or be killed.



## CHOSEN ABILITIES

### BOOK OF HOURS

All Specialists start with two extra ranks of actions.

*These ranks are assigned during creation when you assign the rest of the action ranks of your character. You may assign both ranks into the same action, as long as you do not go over the maximum starting rank of a skill. This applies to any Specialists you may pick up along the road as well (do this when you first set up their playbooks). Shreya teaches lessons from her many battles, and skills remembered from previous Chosen incarnations and her human life as a general.*

### ASRIKA'S MERCY

When the Legion recuperates, place one additional healing tick on all Legionnaires.

*Rest and Recuperation actions typically grant one healing tick to be placed. A Mercy can place one additional tick on one Legionnaire. With the full might of Asrika brought to bear, even an incapacitated Legionnaire can be walking again in short order.*

### ASRIKA'S BLESSING

Legionnaires always take 1 less **corruption**.

*The GM should call this out when corruption is applied, so it's clear that the reduction has been taken into account. As a rule of thumb, creatures do about as much corruption as their threat. How does Shreya grant her blessing to those about to take the field, and what does it feel like?*

### ASRIKA'S TEARS

When you mourn, you feel a profound sense of peace. Liberty campaign actions provide **+1 morale** and an additional **-1 stress**.

*When taking Liberty, those in the Legion remember the dead, hold rites of passing, and write names of the fallen in the Annals. These usual actions now grant extra morale and stress reduction.*



## ANOINTED

Holy, mystic, and mercy missions all grant **mission favor**. Start with **1 mission favor** already marked.

*The bond between the deity and this Chosen is stronger than normal. Normally, only one favor type grants mission favor for a Chosen. The infusion of the divine in this Chosen grants three available favor types instead. This is a good ability to take for longer games (particularly if you plan to play future campaigns).*

## BATTLE-SAINT

Shreya is threat 5 and has **potency** against all opponents.

*Normally, Shreya is threat 4. Filled with righteous fury, and imbued with rage against the undead within her god, Shreya is a match for a head-to-head fight with any Broken.*

## BLOOD OF THE CHOSEN

When you spend a Religious Supply, you also get a sanctified melee weapon on that mission. It is **potent** against undead. Start with 1 free Religious Supply.

*Each Religious Supply provides three uses. The weapons you produce with the blood of the Chosen do not immediately decay after they are used, unlike Black Shot weapons. However, they do not retain their potency for long, lasting only for one mission. How does Shreya use her divine blood to enchant these weapons?*

## WAR-SAINT

The Quartermaster may select a Training campaign action. Each Specialist may mark 3 **RESOLVE xp**.

*This new campaign action is called Training. The Legion dedicates time spent training with Shreya, who inspires them to her cause and bolsters their will. Each Specialist (Heavy, Medic, Scout, Sniper, and Officer) may mark three ticks on their **RESOLVE xp** clock.*

# STARTING MISSION

## THE SITUATION

With the crafting of Black Shot, the undead armies had been at a standstill in the Western Kingdoms—too well entrenched to attack directly, and held at bay by smaller but better-equipped forces. That changed at the Battle of Ettenmark Fields.

Now, the Legion has been shattered and the Cinder King's troops march east, bolstered with heretofore unseen horrors to fight humanity. You and your squad must secure a retreat for your comrades. To make it worse, Shreya has gone off on her own mission and left you to make do without her.

The Legion has marched across the Hozelbrucke Bridge—the only easy passage over the Tigeria River for miles—but the undead are ceaseless in their advance. Your mission is to blow the bridge with alchemical charges. The enemy must be delayed if the Legion is to gain enough time to advance and set up a defensive position closer to the mountains.

Can you stay alive long enough to blow the bridge? Who, if anyone, will make it back to camp? How will you deal with the advance forces the Broken have sent to stop you? We play to find out.

## THE FIRST SCENE

After they make characters, have your fellow players each pick a character to play for this assault mission—Rookies are acceptable—and tell them this:

*The Commander has issued orders, the Marshal handpicked you all, the Quartermaster left the last of the alchemicals, and the army continues its march into the distance. On the horizon, the dust of the undead army heads this way. If they are to be slowed at all, you must destroy this bridge. Do not let anything stop you.*

Create a 10-segment “Bridge Demolition” clock. The charges must be placed in several hard-to-reach locations about the bridge. The bridge is long and covered in makeshift fortifications—crates left behind by desperate escapees, and carts turned into temporary barricades. A few central pillars descend into the raging waters far below.

Start the mission in a **risky** position.

## OBSTACLES

**ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS:** It's night, visibility is low, and the recent rains have swollen the river and slicked the stones of the bridge. Placing charges will be dangerous, requiring climbing (**MANEUVER**) and demolitions (**WRECK** or **RIG**) expertise.

**UNDEAD:** The undead know their prey is close. They've sent advance raiding parties sporting some of their new monstrosities to ensure the Legion didn't leave them any nasty surprises. Expect company when you least want it.

## AFTER THE MISSION

Once the starting mission is completed, Legion players will select Roles to portray during the campaign phase. As part of creating those Roles, they will ask you questions, and you will answer with the information below.

### COMMANDER:

**Initial Pressure:** If successful, the undead won't be mounting a solid offensive against your camp and troops on the road any time soon. Pressure starts at zero. Otherwise, enemy troops are past the Tigeria in force. Enemies will be more numerous and aggressive. Pressure starts at 2.

**Initial Time:** If successful, the enemy is cut off. You've bought yourself more time to make it to Skydagger Keep. Start with two ticks on the "Time" clock. Otherwise, the undead have a perfect route to engage with the Legion. Start with four ticks on the "Time" clock.

**Initial Intel:** The Legion has had no chance to do recon. Start with 0 intel.

### MARSHAL:

**Initial Morale:** If successful, the troops will feel reassured that they have sufficient time to set up a fortified camp across the river. Starting morale is 8, minus 1 per death that occurred on the mission. Otherwise, morale starts at 7 minus any deaths, as rumblings of dissent can be heard in camp.

### QUARTERMASTER:

**Initial Supply:** Most Legion supplies were left behind. Start with 2 supply.

**Materiel:** In your haste to make it to the Western Front, you have not been able to scavenge any additional resources.

The **LOREKEEPER** and **SPYMASTER** have initial setups to perform, but do not require the GM to answer any questions.

After selecting Roles and answering their initial questions, proceed with the **bookkeeping** step of the mission phase.

The first **Back at Camp** scene (whether set by the GM or Lorekeeper) is not set as normal. Instead, set a specific scene of Shreya returning from a solo mission carrying the head of an Infamous. Cross off the Infamous of your choice from a Broken's playbook. It has been ended.

**Advancing** is mandatory, and the Legion arrives at the Western Front.

Continue with the other phases as normal. For a list of steps, see the mission and campaign phase summaries on page 11.



# THE CHOSEN HORNED ONE

## *Shapeshifting Chosen of the Panyar forest god.*

When the Panyar goddess of the moon Nyx was Broken, the moon in the sky shattered. Where others were filled with fear, the young girl known as Silver Dancing Moonlight had only rage at the loss of her Goddess. She found an ancient temple and the Horned One offered her the Choice. Her rage fuels the Horned One's; together they seek vengeance for their loss. They use shapeshifting to spy out enemy tactics before engaging and they guide with cunning rather than force.

**Select the Horned One as your Chosen** if you want to run a campaign focused more on mysterious powers and clever ruses.

**FAVOR** *Pick one of the following:*

**HOLY, MYSTIC, WILD**

## **MOTIVES, GOALS, AND AGENDAS**

Where some Chosen are military-minded and tactically focused, the Horned One functions on instinct. This is not a warrior clashing with an opponent. This is a predatory hunter, testing and learning about how to best kill their prey.

The Horned One spends a lot of time in animal forms, watching, observing, and learning. Known forms include a raven, bear, and giant hooded serpent, and each bears a set of antlers—Silver Dancing Moonlight's Panyar mark. The Chosen comes and goes without a word. Though this may be unnerving, many soldiers have stories of a bird leading a lost squad to a mountain path, or enormous fish mysteriously left in camp as a gift for starving troops.

The Horned One will join missions that offer an opportunity to observe and test a powerful undead. The tiny, robed figure amidst soldiers may seem out of place, but many Legionnaires are reassured by the Horned One's odd, animalistic presence.

## CHOSEN ABILITIES

### HORNED ONE'S BOUNTY

When time passes, ask if the Legion will advance. If it does, do not spend Food Stores.

*Normally in the time passes step, you must spend 1 Food. In this case, the Horned One can provide food on the way, if you're moving forward. How does the Horned One feed the Legion? By shapeshifting and hunting the nearby lands? By standing serenely at the edge of camp and summoning animals to the slaughter? What do they bring to the table?*

### HORNED ONE'S EYES

If there is a Panyar Specialist on a recon mission, add **+1d** to the **engagement** roll.

*This Specialist need not be a Scout, but may not be a Soldier or Rookie. Does the Horned One do anything special to encourage this assignment?*

### HORNED ONE'S THEWS

Legionnaires can spend **special armor** to **resist** physical consequences or to **push themselves** on any **PROWESS** action.

*When you use this ability, tick the special armor on your playbook. If you use this to reduce harm, you reduce the harm by one level. If you use this ability to push yourself, you get one of the benefits (+1d, +1 effect, act despite severe harm) but don't take 2 stress. Your special armor is restored when you select your load at the start of a mission.*

### SHAPESHIFTER

Gain **1 intel** after completing two primary missions.

*You gain this intel in the mission rewards step of the mission phase. This is from information that the Horned One provides from their explorations and observations. The GM should detail this information, explaining what the Horned One has observed.*

### ANOINTED

Holy, mystic, and wild missions all grant **mission favor**. Start with **1 mission favor** already marked.

*The bond between the deity and this Chosen is stronger than normal. Normally, only one favor type grants mission favor for a Chosen. The infusion of the divine in this Chosen grants three available favor types instead. This is a good ability to take for longer games (particularly if you plan to play future campaigns).*



## GREAT HUNTER

The Quartermaster may select a Training campaign action. Each Specialist may mark 3 **INSIGHT** xp.

*This new campaign action is called Training. The Legion dedicates time to train with the Horned One, who teaches them mysteries of the world, stalking prey and noticing being stalked.*

## FOREST'S WINGS

When you spend Religious Supply on a mission, squads bring up to three animals that can whisper messages to each other and to camp.

*Though the animals themselves are initially normal animals, the Horned One changes them to be able to supernaturally whisper messages to each other, and to the ear of whomever bears them. They are not, however, supernaturally resilient. Thrown weapons, hexes, alchemicals, bad air, or falls can easily become a complication that ends them.*

## HIDE OF THE WHITE HIND

All Specialists can speak to and understand wild beasts.

*You can speak to animals, which opens up many **RESOLVE** options, but whether those animals are willing to help you, and what their help might cost, is up to the GM. Trained animals are obedient, but focused on what they're trained to do.*

# STARTING MISSION

## THE SITUATION

With the crafting of Black Shot, the undead armies had been at a standstill in the Western kingdoms—too well entrenched to attack directly, and held at bay by smaller but better-equipped forces. That changed at the Battle of Ettenmark Fields.

Now, the Legion has been shattered and the Cinder King's troops march east, bolstered with heretofore unseen horrors to fight humanity. Critical supplies of Black Shot were left behind the lines as the retreat was organized. Now those caravans have been overrun by undead. If you're to have a fighting chance, you need that shot.

The Legion made it over the Hozelbrucke Bridge some miles south. Your mission is to assault and reclaim several carts of Black Shot—without these supplies, you will be unable to restock or hold out against the undead for long. Attack the convoy, liberate the supplies, and then make your way east to ford the Tigeria River.

Can you reclaim the Black Shot? How will you ford the river with crates of bullets? How will you deal with the undead camp and the horrors within? We play to find out.

## THE FIRST SCENE

After they make characters, have your fellow players each pick a character to play for this assault mission—Rookies are acceptable—and tell them this:

*The rain and thunder is punctuated by the howls of undead lurking about. In the near distance, the convoy awaits. This mission is critical. If the Legion is to have a chance, they need those supplies. You cannot fail them.*

The convoy is guarded by an Elite, an Infamous, and at least two full squads of undead. The Black Shot is distributed across several caravan wagons. If the players approach with stealth, make an 8-clock, and tick it once per wagon looted. Otherwise, make an 8-clock for the Elite, a 10-clock for the Horned One and Infamous, and handle the rest with combat. The Horned One will engage the Infamous to protect the Legion, but retreats when the clock is full. Remind them that the mission is to bring back the shot, not kill everything.

Start the mission in a **risky** position.

## OBSTACLES

**UNDEAD:** The undead here are entrenched, and their Elite minders have them patrolling the area. Killing the Elite will devolve the undead into a feral, unfocused horde, which is not much better. As consequences for failed rolls, you may introduce more packs of undead.

**ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS:** Even once the undead are vanquished and the crates liberated, the players still need to ford the rain-swollen Tigeria. Expect to make some **MANEUVER** or **RIG** rolls to float the shot and gear across and back to the Legion.

## AFTER THE MISSION

Once the starting mission is completed, Legion players will select Roles to portray during the campaign phase. As part of creating those Roles, they will ask you questions, and you will answer with the information below.

### COMMANDER:

**Initial Pressure:** If successful, the extra shot supplies will allow the Legion to more easily defend the base camp. Pressure starts at zero. Otherwise, pressure starts at 1, and they must make do with what few supplies they have left.

**Initial Time:** The Legion has made good time escaping from the undead army, but the undead never rest and continue to march even while the Legion sleeps. Start with three ticks on the “Time” clock.

**Initial Intel:** The Horned One has scouted for the Legion returning with enemy troop locations and terrain information. Start with 1 intel.

### MARSHAL:

**Initial Morale:** If successful, the troops will know they will have the weapons they need to make their retreat. Starting morale is 9, minus 1 per death that occurred on the mission. Otherwise, morale starts at 7 minus any deaths, despair visible in their faces.

### QUARTERMASTER:

**Initial Supply:** Most Legion supplies were left behind. Start with 2 supply.

**Materiel:** If successful, you reclaim several essential crates of Black Shot and can mark one additional box. Otherwise, you cannot acquire more Black Shot until you find a specific source. Create a 4-clock Long-Term Project to represent this shortage.

The **LOREKEEPER** and **SPYMASTER** have initial setups to perform, if present, but do not require the GM to answer any questions. Hand the Back at Camp scene list to the Lorekeeper, as they must remove some scenes from the list, and set the next such scene in a moment.

After selecting Roles and answering their initial questions, proceed with the **bookkeeping** step of the mission phase.

**Advancing** is mandatory, and the Legion arrives at the Western Front.

Continue with the other phases as normal. For a list of steps, see the mission and campaign phase summaries on page 11.



# THE CHOSEN ZORA

## *Chosen of the Living God of the Zemyati.*

The Living God of the Zemyati created nine Chosen long ago, and unlike the Chosen of other gods they've never burnt out or faded. Instead, they persist until after completing their task, though they can be killed. Zora has defied even this expectation. She broke Dar long ago, and ended the Godswar using terrifying magic to strike the god within a Chosen before walking off the battlefield and into rumor and legend. As the Legion was about to be shattered in this latest offensive, Zora reappeared to save them.

**Select Zora as your Chosen** if you want to run a campaign focused on mighty battles and clashing directly with terrifying powers.

### **FAVOR**

*Pick one of the following:*

**HOLY, MYSTIC, GLORY**

## **MOTIVES, GOALS, AND AGENDAS**

Zora is a challenging Chosen for the rank and file; on one hand, she's by far the most personable of the Chosen, seeming to genuinely like engaging with people. On the other hand, she is constantly testing those around her in little ways, honing them into a fine blade. There are stories of Legionnaires waking up in a tree in the woods, a single knife strapped to their chest and miles of territory to cross back to camp. Or warriors that wake to a battle cry as she strikes a blow to start morning training. She drinks with victors and shows sad disappointment to those that retreat from battle.

Zora has said it is her appointed task to kill the Cinder King, which is odd since she's claimed other tasks previously. Vlaisim—now called Render—also claimed this task before he was Broken. In battle, she bears a fiery circlet above her head, and holds an empty hilt that generates a blade of solid flame. The troops have taken to calling her the Fire, though none would risk such casualness with her directly.

## CHOSEN ABILITIES

### STAR OF THE DAWN

When you advance, roll **pressure** as if 1 lower.

*Zora rides and protects the troops when the Legion advances. This can reduce the pressure roll below 1. If you ever need to roll but you have zero (or negative) dice, roll two dice and take the single lowest result. You can't roll a **CRITICAL** when you have zero dice.*

### SACRED SEALS

All Legionnaires gain **special armor** vs. magical effects.

*How does Zora bless and protect the troops before battle? Is it a one-time thing, or a ritual all Legionnaires about to undertake missions undergo?*

### LIVING GOD'S FURY

The Quartermaster may spend a Religious Supply before an **assault** mission to add +1d to the **engagement roll**. Legionnaires equip both Reliquaries and Black Shot on this mission.

*This bonus stacks with other Quartermaster expenditures, such as spending Black Shot to add +1d to an assault mission engagement roll. When the Quartermaster spends both, Legionnaires may mark Black Shot twice (use an empty utility line). Zora doesn't perform alchemy, but somehow uses the power of the divine to bless bullets. How does the effect differ and how do the bullets blessed by her change?*

### LIVING GOD'S KISS

During a **rest and recuperation** action, each Legionnaire removes 2 **corruption** in addition to healing.

*There are no ordinary ways to remove corruption, but Zora has an understanding of it. How does she pull it from soldiers' bodies and how much does it hurt?*

### LIVING GOD'S VIGOR

Specialists can take an extra level 2 harm.

*This means a Specialist can take three different instances of level 2 harm. When you mark the last level 2 harm healing tick, clear all three.*



## HEART OF HEROES

All Legionnaires add the following xp trigger: *If you engaged a higher threat opponent by yourself.*

*The xp trigger is evaluated at the end of a mission, and may generate up to 2 xp.*

## ANOINTED

Holy, mystic, and glory missions all grant **mission favor**. Start with **1 mission favor** already marked.

*The bond between the deity and this Chosen is stronger than normal. Normally, only one favor type grants mission favor for a Chosen. The infusion of the divine in this Chosen grants three available favor types instead. This is a good ability to take for longer games (particularly if you plan to play future campaigns).*

## BLOOD OF FIRE

When Religious Supply is spent on a mission, all Legionnaires may also equip Fire Oil.

*For more on Fire Oil see page 366. The Legionnaires still equip Reliquaries on the mission as normal when spending Religious Supplies. How does Zora convert remnants of religious orders into a weapon? What does she mix them with?*

# STARTING MISSION

## THE SITUATION

With the crafting of Black Shot, the undead armies had been at a standstill in the Western kingdoms—too well entrenched to attack directly, and held at bay by smaller but better-equipped forces. That changed at the Battle of Ettenmark Fields.

Now, the Legion has been shattered and the Cinder King's troops march east, bolstered with heretofore unseen horrors to fight humanity. The Legion Commander was captured holding the retreat, and taken to an Aldermani mountain castle on the border of Dar.

The red banners of the Cinder King were sighted entering the keep, and Zora claims a special interrogator was sent to turn the Commander with his mind intact. The Legion's leaders have decided on one last-ditch rescue attempt. Castles are designed to keep people out, but there is a drainage pipe beneath the mountain that might provide a way in.

Can you rescue the Commander before he is turned and all Legion secrets extracted from him? Or can you take him out, before it's too late? Can you make it out alive? We play to find out.

## THE FIRST SCENE

After they make characters, have your fellow players each pick a character to play for this assault mission—Rookies are acceptable—and tell them this:

*Rain and thunder is punctuated by the howls of undead above. The rainwater exits the drainage pipe. Your Chosen, Zora, will lead an assault on the main gates as a distraction. This is a stealth and speed mission. Get in. Get the Commander. Get out. Whatever you do, don't let the undead learn the Legion's secrets. Do not fail.*

Set up an 8-clock for the castle alert and a 10-clock for the Commander breaking (they're very strong willed). Make a 10-clock for Zora (and use four dice for this clock) fighting the troops at the gates, which are being led by an Infamous. Roll for the battle whenever it seems like time has passed. The Legion and the Chosen retreat when the "Zora" clock is full, and all the undead can focus on searching the castle. The mission is to recover the Commander, not kill everything.

Start the mission in a **risky** position.

## OBSTACLES

Undead obstacles across three instances (sewers, grounds, and keep) stand in the way of success. Remember the night is dark and there is a storm, if folks try to climb or hide.

**UNDEAD:** There are feral undead prowling the sewers, not to mention plenty of grates and other obstacles. The grounds and keep have patrols of undead line troops under orders from a few Elites overseeing them. Suspicious or loud activity may raise the “Alert” clock, but they will usually look first where the activity occurred. The Commander is in the keep dungeon in a room with a red-hooded, pale Inquisitor (threat 2, *pale, hooded, unsettling*)—and two black-flame containing Cinder Guards (threat 3, *armored, brutal, potent*).

## AFTER THE MISSION

Once the starting mission is completed, Legion players will select Roles to portray during the campaign phase. As part of creating those Roles, they will ask you questions, and you will answer with the information below.

### COMMANDER:

**Initial Pressure:** If successful, the undead will take time to recoup and find the Legion again. Pressure starts at zero. Otherwise, pressure starts at 1, and the Legion must select a new Commander while on the move.

**Initial Time:** The Legion has made good time escaping from the undead army, but the undead never rest and continue to march even while the Legion sleeps. Start with three ticks on the “Time” clock.

**Initial Intel:** The Legion has had no chance to do recon. Start with 0 intel.

### MARSHAL:

**Initial Morale:** If successful, the troops will rest easier that the undead have not gained any special insight into the Legion’s weaknesses or plans. Starting morale is 9. Otherwise, morale starts at 7. Remember to subtract 1 per Legionnaire death, and that the Commander is a Legionnaire.

### QUARTERMASTER:

**Initial Supply:** Most Legion supplies were left behind. Start with 2 supply.

**Materiel:** In your haste to make it to the Western Front, you have not been able to scavenge any additional resources.

The **LOREKEEPER** and **SPYMASTER** have initial setups to perform, if present, but do not require the GM to answer any questions.

**GM:** This mission is particularly glorious, and Zora will mark one mission **favor** as a result.

After selecting Roles and answering their initial questions, proceed with the **bookkeeping** step of the mission phase.

**Advancing** is mandatory, and the Legion arrives at the Western Front.

Continue with the other phases as normal. For a list of steps, see the mission and campaign phase summaries on page 11.

## THE UNDEAD

This isn't the first time undead have been seen in the world. Occasionally, those buried with powerful Chosen or relics will rise and become tomb guardians. There are rumors that powerful blood oaths to ancient emperors and appropriate alchemy could create mindless guardians of bodies. And of course, campfire stories abound of vengeful dead swearing their souls to the gods in order to return and devour those who wronged them (though largely without any actual examples noted in history or the Annals to speak of). These facts were mostly considered a novelty—used to scare children, but not considered real threats.

Then the Cinder King appeared. He's demonstrated the ability to create thousands of undead—numbers heretofore unheard of—and marshal them in battle. Wearing a nine-pointed crown of True Fire, and laying waste to all that oppose him, the Cinder King has transformed undead from a campfire tale to a threat to humanity's existence as a whole. A struggle which, recently, has shifted against the armies of the living.



The undead are an unusual force. On the one hand, they defy the rules of the mortal world and their actions twist the living into an unrecognizable parody of their former selves. But they do obey their own rules. Knowing those rules can mean the difference between life or death in the field.

Without orders, simple undead are feral. They lack the intelligence to make choices and act on pure instinct instead. Depending on the Broken who created them, they may stand about, devour fresh corpses, or lash out and attack with hatred. They may follow their last instructions with mindless repetition or devolve into predatory, ruthless monsters. Most of the line troops are not infinitely sustainable, their bodies rotting or wearing out over time. Moreover, while they do seem to be tougher than the people they once were, they need joints, muscles and ligaments to move. The undead cannot create pure skeletons, for example.

The line troops are usually dim-witted. They will try to execute orders to the best of their ability, but work better with simple directives rather than complex puzzles or orders. They can be tricked or outwitted.

More powerful or intelligent undead possess the capacity to improvise or act independently. In the absence of clear orders, they may follow their own personal agenda instead of what would be best for the Cinder King. That said, obedience in the undead is unquestionable. Those of higher threat rating command those of lower stature categorically. Even if the undead in question does not want to obey, they must act to accomplish the direct tasks they are set.

Undead will is imposed by word or given by hand signals, even when the bodies being commanded are so badly damaged that it's unclear how they could see or hear the command. No soldier has ever seen an undead receive orders from vast distance. Because of this, even the Cinder King was limited in the size of army he could initially raise. The Breaking of the Chosen gives him the ability to multiply his force substantially, as each Broken can both create undead and direct them to the cause.

In the same way, more powerful undead delegate direct control, focusing their influence on a few powerful subordinates, who then control a number of less powerful lackies. The undead armies have a command structure not too dissimilar from the Legion. While most undead line troops have little cognizance or personal drive, Elites have cunning and are capable of executing general orders (patrol the perimeter, kill any living who enter here) and are thus often deployed with a squad to keep it on task. Infamous are cunning or clever enough to execute entire plans, while Lieutenants are trusted with broad objectives (take over this city) and large troop contingents and are expected to solve any difficulties in their way.

Commands fade after enough time, depending on the power of the undead giving them. A powerful undead might command an underling to stand where it is forever, but if the one giving the orders leaves the area or is killed, that command will eventually fade. The more powerful the undead, the longer such commands will persist.

Some wonder how often the Cinder King must summon the Broken to his side to renew their orders and vows.



## THE CINDER KING

At the other end of the spectrum from common undead troops sits the Cinder King. Coming from obscurity only five years ago, he rose to power quickly. So called because of the smouldering power within him, the fissures in his skin, and the nine-pointed crown of True Fire that sits atop his head, the Cinder King is a force that humanity has learned to fear.

A few years after the Cinder King appeared, a Chosen of the Western Kingdoms was created to fight this monstrous power. He was Broken, and turned against the people of that land—something that had never happened before. The Cinder King conquered, slaughtered, and then raised the dead to fill the ranks of his undead army. When the Cinder King invaded Royin, their single god refused to Choose and fight the threat—a testament to the fear the ability to Break has inspired in the gods. Nine more Chosen have since been called to fight, five of whom were Broken.

Now, the undead armies number in the dozens of thousands, and are continually growing.



## THE BROKEN

The way in which Breaking happens is unclear to humanity, and those few Chosen who have witnessed the process do not elaborate on how it works, if they know. It is known to be sudden, horrific, and always in the Cinder King's personal presence. This process warps the Chosen it affects, and it seems as if they retain some aspects of their former existence—the Orite Chosen retaining her abilities regarding alchemy, for example.

Each Broken represents a different genre and flavor of horror. The GM will choose two Broken to involve in the campaign, and that choice determines the themes and difficulties the Legion will face. They are not a unified force, and the Broken will work together only because of the incontrovertible will of the Cinder King. It is not uncommon for them to fight amongst each other for reasons of power or rivalry. Their petty squabbles and rivalries might snatch victory away from another Broken when it should be certain.



## INITIAL SETUP

Getting the Broken ready for your campaign is a three step process for the GM before the start of game:

- ◆ **CHOOSE BROKEN.** Pick two Broken to be in your campaign.
- ◆ **CHOOSE BROKEN ABILITIES.** Each starts with one. Pick one more for each.
- ◆ **REVIEW BROKEN DETAILS.** Read over the troops and the standard troop deployments for each Broken.

### CHOOSE BROKEN

Each Broken comes with some history, a list of troops they already have or will learn how to create, and a list of terrifying powers to make the Legion's life more difficult.

#### BLIGHTER

*A warper of flesh and corrupt alchemist. Involves themes of body horror and toxic science.*

#### BREAKER

*A storm witch and hex carver. Involves themes of tension, uncertainty, and psychological horror.*

#### RENDER

*A smith of armored troops. Involves themes of the depersonalization of war and totalitarianism.*

### CHOOSE BROKEN ABILITY

Each Broken comes with an ability already selected—it grants them one type of Elite troop they can create. Several abilities will extend their armies by allowing them to make horrifying new Elites. **If the Broken does not know how to make a type of Elite, they cannot deploy Infamous and Lieutenants of that type.** Troops that are not created are not subject to this restriction, such as the Cinder Guard assigned to Breaker, or the living allies Blighter keeps.

Broken gain a new ability whenever a “Time” clock on the Commander's sheet fills. Think about what abilities they'll get so that you can hint at the horrific research being done by the Broken to learn such things.

### REVIEW DETAILS

Read over the relevant details of the Broken and think about the scary scenarios you can build using their troops and particular flavor of horror. Especially note what their standard unit deployment is. Most Legion missions involving undead will see units deployed in those arrangements, akin to how the Legion deploys squads.



# THE BROKEN BLIGHTER

*Flesh Blighter, Broken servant of the Cinder King.*

Blighter was once Elenessa, a high engineer-priestess of the Orite triumvirate of crafter gods—the Builder, the Maker, and the Crafter. When Shreya—then a famous Bartan warrior—won her favor during a knights tournament, their romance became the stuff of poems and song. The Cinder King rose in the West and began his march, and Elenessa was Chosen by the Crafter, whose worshipers practice the great craft of alchemy. Once she was Broken, the craft itself became tainted. Now its practitioners eventually corrupt and become monsters themselves.

Blighter is a pale, hooded, leather-clad figure with dark hair and green eyes. She bears alchemical seals on her gloves and bandoliers of chemicals about her body. Blighter tends to have a macabre sense of humor, for example sending congratulatory notes to the Legion after missions, using undead former Legionnaires as couriers. Where she lacks raw power, she substitutes a deadly intellect, divine understanding of Craft, and a brutal cunning. Her full title is Flesh Blighter, also called the Foul, Corruptor of Flesh, and Plaguebringer. The troops tend to just call her Blighter.

## HORROR THEMES

Body horror. Surgery and science gone wrong. Toxic gasses and the horrors of trench warfare. Troops oozing pus and disease. Bodies knitted together in disturbing ways. Limbs and organs where they shouldn't be. Open sores. Bolted-on parts.

*I'm fortunate that I've never actually seen a Broken in person. I sit here sketching from notes passed on by spies, and glimpses described to me by scouts. They say Blighter looks just like she used to. I do have some old drawings of Elenessa the Chosen I made when we marched west. I wonder if she still has that grin the Chosen of the Crafter had.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## STARTING ABILITY

Each Broken has an ability they start with. Blighter starts being able to add, create, and deploy Horrors.

### ABOMINABLE SCIENCE

Blighter's surgeons learn to stitch writhing undead together. Horrors can appear in any mission.

*Each form of Elite can only appear in a mission if the Broken has the appropriate Broken ability. Every Broken starts with an ability that gives them access to one type of Elite.*

## BROKEN ABILITIES

Pick one of these for Blighter to start with. She will gain a new ability any time a "Time" clock fills on the Commander's rolebook (see page 117). By the end of the campaign, she will likely have two more abilities.

### ATTRITION STRATEGIES

Blighter attacks and poisons supply lines. **Supply mission engagement rolls take -1d.**

*This penalty is applied at the same time as all other penalties for the engagement roll.*

### CRUEL GLUTTONY

Blighter crafts fluids that brew acid inside undead. Gut-Sacks can appear in any mission.

*Each form of Elite can only appear in a mission if the Broken has the appropriate Broken ability. Gut-Sacks are failed attempts at making Spitters. Where are the labs and surgery tables to make these found, and where are other remnants of failed experiments kept?*

### TOXIC BILE

Gut-Sacks and Spitters cause corrupting wounds. At the end of a mission, untreated corrupting wounds cause **+1 corruption** each.

*The caustic liquid is particularly potent, and won't stop burning until long after the initial harm is done. The GM should call out when corruption is applied.*

## MODERN WARFARE

Blighter's troops carry appropriate **fine** arms and armor.

*This elevates the threat of troops that use arms and armor by 1—all of Blighter's troops except Elites.*

## SCARS OF WAR

Blighter's troops can corrupt the land. Poison mists erupt and plague the countryside. While not always present, they may rise up suddenly, as consequences of a roll.

*The GM may introduce these mists as obstacles on any Blighter mission, or have them emerge as consequences for failed rolls. These mists damage and corrupt, though they are not immediately lethal. Treat them as if they were threat 1.*

## TOXIC MUTAGEN

Blighter's troops coat their weapons in an alchemical oil, causing **+1 corruption** when they wound someone.

*The GM should call this out when corruption is applied, so it's clear that the increase has been taken into account. As a rule of thumb, creatures do about as much corruption as their threat.*

## VIOLENT EMULSION

Blighter crafts undead to overdrive bile production. Spitters can appear in any mission.

*Each form of Elite can only appear in a mission if the Broken has the appropriate Broken ability. Where are the labs and surgery tables to make these found?*

## UNDEAD ARMIES

### LINE TROOPS

*A well-equipped Legionnaire can fight a few.*

Blighter's troops are packs of Rotters (6 to 12) controlled by a few Crows or an Elite. Without supervision, Rotters are feral and unfocused, showcasing a bestial desire to chew apart enemies without discipline or tactics. Supplementing her troops are engineered weapons used to deliver acids, toxic mists, and poisons. Line troops are considered **threat 1** opponents.



**CROWS:** A striking sight on the field of battle, these undead make no sound, but wear plague masks and cloaks. The troops nicknamed them after watching them walk amongst the dead, marking corpses to be taken and raised. Their very presence focuses and organizes the undead. The process of their creation is unclear, but their movements are incredibly fluid, and their bodies rapidly decay if killed.

**ROTTERS:** Undead burning with a hate for the living. These corpses continue to rot, even as dark sorcery compels them into battle. To make Rotters, corpses have an alchemical liquid forced through their veins. Carts with canisters of this liquid make good mission targets. Blighter is always tinkering with plagues and toxins which, if injected into a person before death, can raise Rotters.



### ARMY TACTICS

Blighter tolerates living among her ranks, and treats them better than the other Broken do. Not physically potent, she mixes human ingenuity with her own powerful alchemy, creating siege weapons, and equipping her undead with arms and armor. When possible, she prefers guile and cunning to open battle. Blighter herself is a **threat 5** opponent.



## ELITES

*A dangerous fight. Bring friends.*

Elite troops take a lot more resources and time to create, so they aren't as common. They tend to be significantly more dangerous, and are usually deployed with a contingent of line troops. They count as **threat 2** opponents.



**HORRORS:** Freakish amalgamations of parts of different people, stitched together into a towering beast of festering anger. These 8-to-14-foot-tall giants fall only to concentrated fire or heavy weaponry—Black Shot does not kill them outright. Many are augmented by metal or machined parts or armor screwed directly into flesh. Some have multiple bodies stitched together, and fight at **scale**.

**GUT-SACKS:** Failed attempts at creating Spitters, Gut-Sacks are more numerous than other Elites. Their pendulous and corpulent bodies might be almost comical if it weren't for their terrifying effect. When killed, their bodies explode in a shower of poison and flesh-melting acid. Gut-sacks are usually deployed in units of three, with a Crow minder, or occasionally attached to other Elites.



**SPITTERS:** Blighter captures and transports cages of people to make Spitters. They must be injected alive, and their mouths sewn shut while their insides transform. If the formula is off, or they die before transforming, they become Gut-Sacks. Spitters constantly dribble flesh-melting acid, and can projectile vomit it at surprising distances. They are used for area denial and mid-range engagements.

## **INFAMOUS**      *You need a plan, friends, and some good equipment.*

Infamous are line troops and Elites that have survived multiple battles and gained some notoriety. The Broken trust them with more complex plans and objectives. They often have a few squads under their command. They count as **threat 3** opponents.

### **RED HOOK (INFAMOUS HORROR)**

After a nasty encounter with a fortified position, this Horror lost a “hand,” which was replaced by a hook on a chain. It uses this hook to scale walls and drag soldiers about while they scream so it can lure out their friends.

### **THE DOCTOR (INFAMOUS CROW)**

Once in a while, Crows regain their former intellect. Wearing a bone-white mask with a bloody handprint, he can be found improvising modifications on Rotters and Horrors, often with parts carved from still-dying Legionnaires.

### **WAILER (INFAMOUS HORROR)**

Most Horrors have one head. Wailer has nine embedded about its body, all crying and screaming in horrific dissonance. The creature also has half a dozen spikes inset into it that it uses to carry back bodies for “repairs.”

## **LIEUTENANTS**      *Some of you will die. Good luck.*

Lieutenants are not simply promoted due to their physical prowess. These are powerful opponents deploying with multiple squads, and are usually trusted to come up with their own plans and overcome obstacles as necessary. Whether through power or plans and cunning, they count as **threat 4** opponents.

### **VIKTORIA KARHOWL, THE MACABRE SCIENTIST**

A corrupted engineer that, while not dead, has long since traded in her humanity for a seat at the Cinder King’s table. Blighter uses her clever designs for siege weapons and advanced clockworks to build up her army.

### **BLACK ROTTING GALE, THE ABOMINATION (HORROR LIEUTENANT)**

A joint venture of Viktoria and Blighter, this Horror exchanged raw size for tubes and tanks of alchemicals. As it walks, it vents a cloud that’s toxic to all organic matter. It yearns to deprive the land of all natural life.

### **LUGOS, THE CLOCKWORK ASSASSIN (CROW LIEUTENANT)**

This Crow has much of its body replaced with advanced clockworks, enhancing strength and vision. Its armor makes it immune to Black Shot and most blades. It habitually winds itself. Lugos feels only when surrounded by fear.

# RELATIONSHIPS

## THE CHOSEN

- ◆ **SHREYA.** Whether because of who she once was or because her Breaking somehow enhanced feelings she once had, Blighter is fixated on Shreya. She's obsessed over why Shreya wasn't Broken, and believes she can help Break her and bring her to her side once again. She's trying to lure her out and capture her rather than outright destroy her.
- ◆ **THE HORNED ONE.** Blighter considers the forces of nature both outdated and inferior to her mad science, and looks to ruin the wild as a refuge for humans. She's created Black Rotting Gale specifically to pursue the deforestation of Aldermark.
- ◆ **ZORA.** Blighter has identified that Zora is of particular interest to the Cinder King. Hoping to curry favor with the lord of undeath, she wants to capture Zora alive and bring her to him, and in so doing, prove herself the most useful of the Broken.

## THE BROKEN

- ◆ **BREAKER.** A necessary evil, Breaker provides a stream of living bodies on which Blighter can experiment. In exchange, Blighter has promised to deliver relics found during the war. She has no intention of keeping this agreement, but the Weather Witch occasionally brings troops to sites Blighter is digging at.
- ◆ **RENDER.** The Hollow Knight has been a useful tool, though if he ever found out Blighter was manipulating him, Render would surely come for her. Blighter was the one that forged his black plate and repaired his wounds after his Breaking, whispering sweet revenge into his ears. Until her manipulations come to fruition, she provides him weapons and materiel for his armies, and he vouches for her to the Cinder King, granting her more autonomy than most.

## THE CINDER KING

- ◆ Unable to defy his rule, Blighter is biding her time, building up the Cinder King's trust and constructing a plan to dispose of her liege. She's convinced she can derive the nature of his control over the undead using alchemy, if she could just get a hold of some cinderblood. Until then, she puts on a facade of the perfect follower, and looks for ways to direct his ire at the other Broken.



# THE BROKEN BREAKER

*Stormbreaker, Broken servant of the Cinder King.*

Breaker was once Minika Arya, a priestess of the Bartan goddess Vazara. Unlike many of her fellow Chosen, she was not world-famous or of high birth. An orphan adopted by a priestess, she dedicated her life to traveling the Bartan coast—the way of her order—praying to alleviate the worst of storms, warding boats, and living a quiet life of meditation on coastal islands. A mystic powerhouse among the Chosen, she rode in the vanguard of the assault on the Cinder King. Her Breaking site remains scorched from lightning that continued to strike the same spot for a week after.

Breaker is a gaunt, pale figure, using illusion to disguise the marks of death. In mockery of Bartan tradition, she has replaced the jewelry family and friends had given with the bones of family and friends she's murdered. The rattling of this garb precedes her and Legionnaires fear it. Her full title is Stormbreaker, also called the Bringer of Thunder or the Weather Witch. Her ability to weave hexes and dark magic impressed even the Cinder King. With Breaker on the field, the natural order cannot be trusted.

## HORROR THEMES

Long blood rituals. Tension, uncertainty, and psychological horror. Perversion of natural order. Wind, thunder, lightning, and wailing. Monstrous transformations of beautiful things. Hexes that bind the bones, and make you doubt what you see.

*Kadrin “Bone Spear” was lost on a mission. I spotted him, badly wounded returning to camp late at night. He was delirious when we brought him inside the walls—we assumed from wounds. He killed two people in the Medic’s tent and wounded our Medic before she put him down with a scalpel through the eye. We found Breaker’s hex carved into his flesh the next day. I have to admit—undeath itself terrifies me, but this living death somehow scares me more.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## STARTING ABILITY

Each Broken has an ability they start with. Breaker starts being able to add, create, and deploy Shadow Witches.

### THE COVEN

Breaker imbues still-living bodies with pieces of herself to craft acolytes. Shadow Witches can appear in any mission.

*Each form of Elite can only appear in a mission if the Broken has the appropriate Broken ability. Every Broken starts with an ability that gives them access to one type of Elite.*

## BROKEN ABILITIES

Pick one of these for Breaker to start with. She will gain a new ability any time a “Time” clock fills on the Commander’s rolebook (see page 117). By the end of the campaign, she will likely have two more abilities.

### THE CHANGING CURSE

Shadow Witches twist the living. Transformed can appear in any mission.

*Each form of Elite can only appear in a mission if the Broken has the appropriate Broken ability. What kinds of Transformed does Breaker prefer?*

### PILLAR OF SKULLS

Breaker makes a pillar of wailing bodies to summon and corrupt sacred beasts. Devourers can appear in any mission.

*Each form of Elite can only appear in a mission if the Broken has the appropriate Broken ability.*

### NATURE’S FURY

Breaker and Shadow Witches can hex nature, covering troops with fog and storms, and animating trees in combat.

*The GM may introduce these fogs, storms, or trees as obstacles on any Breaker mission, or have them emerge as consequences for failed rolls. Animated trees are threat 1, though they may have potency in strength or scale depending on reach and size. Though they do not walk, their branches, roots, and vines are animated.*



## STORM RIDING

Shadow Witches learn to use the lightning forces inside Burned to jump from body to body, allowing them to escape death.

*As long as there are Burned in line of sight, killing a Shadow Witch displaces the Witch to the body of a Burned instead of removing them as a threat.*

## WILD AWAKENING

Shadow Witches and Breaker hex animals into spies and packs for the Transformed to run with.

*Animals cannot be raised from the dead, but they can be corrupted and compelled to service by Breaker's hexes. Such creatures may be in the underbrush, or simply as additional animals of appropriate threat that fight alongside Transformed.*

## DARK VISIONS

Breaker hexes the Legion with screaming nightmares. Liberty restores 1 less stress.

*Not every Legionnaire gets nightmares every night, but every night, many Legionnaires do get horrible visions.*

## DEFILEMENT

Breaker's defilement of religious sites has diminished the holy influences in this region. **Religious mission engagement rolls** take -1d.

*This penalty is applied at the same time as all other penalties for the engagement roll.*

## UNDEAD ARMIES

### LINE TROOPS

*A well-equipped Legionnaire can fight a few.*

Breaker's troops are mixes of Burned and Hexed (12 to 18), guarding and supporting a single Shadow Witch. Without supervision, Burned are feral and Hexed dull and unfocused unless provoked. Her troops often attempt ambushes, using hexes and magic to weaken their foes before striking, but are not afraid to engage if needed. Line troops are considered **threat 1** opponents.



**BURNED:** These are made by taking freshly killed or still-living people and impaling them on specially prepared trees with sharpened branches. Near-perpetual summoned storms blast them with lightning, animating those impaled. Burned often give off sparks and minor shocks when struck, and unlike other undead, are still warm inside. Destroying such trees should be a priority for the Legion.

**HEXED:** Breaker and her Shadow Witch acolytes carve sigils into flesh that can dominate the minds of victims, breaking their soul down directly without killing their bodies first. While under the supervision of one of her Shadow Witches, a Hexed can pass a casual inspection as a normal person. With these in her arsenal, even the most docile of villages can be converted into a threat.



### ARMY TACTICS

Breaker likes to inspire fear in her targets, toying with people as she confuses their senses, instills doubt, and takes away their choices. She relies on her inherent control of lightning and monstrous things bound to her when it's time to deploy force and engage on the field directly. Breaker herself fights as a **threat 5** opponent.

## ELITES

*A dangerous fight. Bring friends.*

Elite troops take a lot more resources and time to create, so they aren't as common. They tend to be significantly more dangerous, and are usually deployed with a contingent of line troops. They count as **threat 2** opponents.



**SHADOW WITCHES:** Infused with a piece of Breaker stitched into their body, these former people beg for forgiveness in combat, but are controlled from within. No longer human, Shadow Witches use hexes to twist the world around them to their whim, binding limbs, corrupting animals, befouling supplies, and weakening troops before setting rank and file undead on them.

**DEVOURERS:** Once the sacred, rainbow-feathered beasts of Vazara, Breaker summons these large, bat-like creatures and shares her corruption with them, making Devourers. Now covered in black feathers and mange-ridden fur, they strike from the skies with razor sharp teeth, dragging off fully armored soldiers. Their shrieking caw can strike fear into the heart of any Legionnaire.



**TRANSFORMED:** The same sigils carved into Hexed can also warp bodies, changing pieces of people into animal parts. These transformations are never clean, some limbs never making the full transformation, and others becoming twisted or enlarged. Always consumed by the pain of their transformation, they are a terrifyingly effective shock troop in Breaker's forces.

## **INFAMOUS**      *You need a plan, friends, and some good equipment.*

Infamous are line troops and Elites that have survived multiple battles and gained some notoriety. The Broken trust them with more complex plans and objectives. They often have a few squads under their command. They count as **threat 3** opponents.

### **CHIMERA (INFAMOUS TRANSFORMED)**

An early Changing Curse experiment, the Chimera somehow survived. Unlike most Transformed, he's a mix of several animal parts, and the heads of a few constantly try to bite and chew apart his body.

### **SILVER (INFAMOUS DEVOURER)**

Breaker's personal steed, Silver, is named for his color. With a 14-foot wingspan and **potent** strength, he's a terror on the battlefield. He's known for riding storms and dropping soldiers on their friends from vast heights.

### **ELIA, THE PASSING CURSE (INFAMOUS HEXED)**

A Hexed that carves her sigils on others, and has learned to transfer her essence, Elia works alone. Many Legionnaire squads have realized far too late that one of their members was not who they seemed.

## **LIEUTENANTS**

*Some of you will die. Good luck.*

Lieutenants are not simply promoted due to their physical prowess. These are powerful opponents deploying with multiple squads, and are usually trusted to come up with their own plans and overcome obstacles as necessary. Whether through power or plans and cunning, they count as **threat 4** opponents.

### **BHED, THE WOLF (TRANSFORMED LIEUTENANT)**

A Transformed who shrugs off most wounds, this nine-foot-tall, wolf-headed beast-man is always surrounded by a circle of five Shadow Witches, who make sure his mental bindings never slip, lest his rage turn instead on Breaker.

### **THE HAG (SHADOW WITCH LIEUTENANT)**

The Hag killed and devoured her coven and decorates herself with their skulls. She's warped into a far more powerful force, capable of sustaining multiple hexes at once. She looks for opportunities to devour more of Breaker's essence at every turn.

### **OGIYER, THE CINDER GUARD**

Clad in red armor, this decayed body is hollow and filled with black flame. The Cinder King wants oversight on Breaker, and this potent, armored monstrosity is rarely far from her side.

# RELATIONSHIPS

## THE CHOSEN

- ◆ **SHREYA.** Breaker seeks to tear down and sully the pristine image of Asrika's Chosen. Her plan is to corrupt and blight all those around Shreya, forcing her to slay her allies and showing her to be a monster of equivalent stature in the eyes of others. To that effect, she's using Hexed to spy and looking for opportunities to corrupt Shreya's strongest allies.
- ◆ **THE HORNED ONE.** Once the Chosen of a storm goddess, Breaker's changed from working with the natural order to wanting to control it. The Horned One is a symbol of that order, and the biggest challenge to her control over nature for now. Until she can destroy the Horned One, she's warping animals and forest people alike to her whims.
- ◆ **ZORA.** The Living God's crown and sword are relics of a different order, and Breaker knows their true power. She's hoping to steal or control them, hopefully by carving her own hexes directly into Zora's flesh.

## THE BROKEN

- ◆ **BLIGHTER.** The Plaguebringer has latitude with the Cinder King that Breaker wants for herself. The two engage in what amounts to a shadow war in the middle of their fight with the Eastern Kingdoms. Neither would make a move against the other where the Cinder King could see, but Breaker pretends to be allies, while at the same time trying to expose Blighter's plotting and disloyalty to the Cinder King.
- ◆ **RENDER.** Breaker has convinced the Burned One to provide her with cinderblood—"to unlock its potential and grow your might even further," she told him. If the Cinder King found out about this, one or both of them would suffer terribly. She's missing key alchemical knowledge to unlock the true power of the stuff, but her studies prove there are a number of things about the Cinder King that the Broken do not understand. In trade, Breaker provides Render with the intel provided by augury and Breaker's network of Hexed.

## THE CINDER KING

- ◆ When Breaker started researching rituals to bind Dar Shadows, she defied the Cinder King's order to stop. He's put special oversight on her in the form of one of his personal Cinder Guard. Blighter deeply resents this. Were it not for this oversight she believes she might already have amassed enough power to challenge his authority. He trusts her the least and she hates feeling obligated to act in the shadows like a weaker being.





# THE BROKEN RENDER

## *Bonerender, Broken servant of the Cinder King.*

Long ago, the Living God of the Zemyati created nine Chosen that do not burn out until after they complete their task. Legends of figures in the forests and mountains performing miracles or saving the lost are common in Zemya. Vlaisim—the Shining One—stepped out of the mountains three years ago, saying he was called to end the war. When Breaking him, the Cinder King burned Vlaisim's face, and commands him never to hide it. Now clad in black armor, he's only filled with hate, which he infects his ranks with.

Render is seven feet tall and clad in solid black armor, wielding a massive metal sword. His echoing voice sounds like grinding iron. The few that have seen him say he is pale, with a palmprint burned onto his face that still smolders. His full title is Bonerender, also called the Hollow Knight, or the Burned One—but never to his face. His physical prowess is unmatched among the Broken and the Cinder King has granted him the secret of cinderblood to warp his armies further. A precious resource, it has powers beyond that of alchemy.

### **HORROR THEMES**

Brutal simplicity. Overwhelming force. Hunger for blood. The unstoppable tide of undead. Metal and smoke and fire and soot. The depersonalization of war. Totalitarianism and rigidity. Piles of dead bodies. Rivers running red with blood. War as hell.

*When Karlsburg fell, Bonerender was Broken. They say his Breaking site still echoes with screams, and black soot covers everything except for the outline of a tall man, curled up like a child having a nightmare. The Ember Wolves were on Render's flank during Ettenmark, and they tell stories of a black-clad figure who could cleave through armor, knight, and mount without slowing. His armies are moving up from the south. I guess we'll see if the stories are true.*

*—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire*

## STARTING ABILITY

Each Broken has an ability they start with. Render starts with a unit of Elite knights who once followed him as a Chosen and chose to remain at his side.

### THE SWORN

Some oaths transcend death. Knights of the Black Oak can appear in any mission.

*Each form of Elite can only appear in a mission if the Broken has the appropriate Broken ability. Every Broken starts with an ability that gives them access to one type of Elite.*

## BROKEN ABILITIES

Pick one of these for Render to start with. He will gain a new ability any time a “Time” clock fills on the Commander’s rolebook (see page 117). By the end of the campaign, he will likely have two more abilities.

### THE FORGE

Render forges blades of the fallen and cinderblood into Elites. Thorns can appear in any mission.

*Each form of Elite can only appear in a mission if the Broken has the appropriate Broken ability. Where are the smithies and cinderblood chambers to make these found?*

### HEARTLESS

Render grants strength to those that carve out their own hearts. Heartless can appear in any mission.

*Each form of Elite can only appear in a mission if the Broken has the appropriate Broken ability. Where are the training grounds and cinderblood chambers to make these found?*

### SPEARFORGE

Render smiths massive, bladed, corrupting, black-iron spears that Heartless carry and Knights fire from ballistae.

*The GM should call this out when corruption is applied, so it’s clear that this ability has been taken into account. This ability allows Heartless and Knights to deal corruption as part of their attacks (whenever spears and bolts are fictionally appropriate).*

## FURY

Render learns to spread his hate to his line troops. Gaunt now move swiftly and can act with cunning if their Elite dies.

*Normally, when the Elite commanding a line troop dies, the line troop reverts to its instincts. With this ability, Gaunt now continue to act in a coordinated fashion, and do not become feral.*

## SHREDDERS

Remnants of Thorns, these balls of blades and Render's blood explode when near troops. Often buried in the ground, or thrown into squads.

*The GM may introduce these as obstacles on any Render mission, or have them emerge as consequences for failed rolls. These explosives are threat 2 and cause corruption.*

## FORCED MARCH

Render's troops, fueled by rage, push forward. The Commander adds three ticks to the "Time" clock.

*Ask the Commander to fill in these ticks immediately when you take the ability. This shortens the campaign by roughly ten percent (and can add urgency to the Legion's decisions).*

## MASSACRE

Render's savage tactics and defiling use of the dead instills fear in all soldiers. **Assault** mission **engagement rolls** take -1d.

*This penalty is applied at the same time as all other penalties for the engagement roll.*

## UNDEAD ARMIES

### LINE TROOPS

*A well-equipped Legionnaire can fight a few.*

Render's troops are Gaunt (6 to 12) supporting a Heartless, or units of Knights of the Black Oak (6 to 8) on foot or horseback. Both will usually have a few Hounds chained for tracking or a single Thorn as a shock troop. Without supervision, Gaunt are destructive and Hounds vicious, but each Knight is an intelligent and trained soldier. Line troops are considered **threat 1** opponents.



**THE GAUNT:** As humans, they were drained over the course of months, their blood infused with cinderblood and reinjected into them. These monsters have had armor and plates bolted and fused directly onto their flesh. None survive the process, reanimating after they are so equipped. They are slower than most undead but the armor can make landing shots particularly tricky at any sort of range.

**HOUNDS:** Hounds were once people, now with eyes sewn shut, lips ripped off, teeth filed to points, and chains attached to their ribs, spines, or collar bones. They smell the breath of the living—holding your breath can help you hide from them. Most Elites in Render's army hold a few on a leash to find any escaped enemies, rewarding a good hunt with a limb of the hunted to feast on.



### ARMY TACTICS

Render himself fights as a **threat 5** enemy and is **potent** in melee. He booms his edicts categorically, brooking neither indecision nor compromise. He is knowledgeable in military strategy, and knows how to delegate to his knights, but often prefers direct approaches that utilize his troops' brutal strength and toughness.

## ELITES

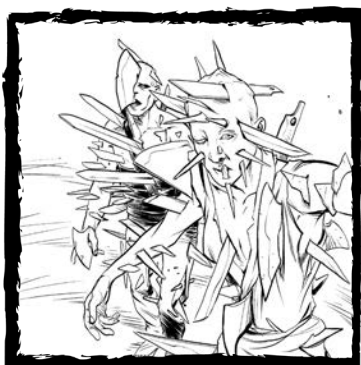
*A dangerous fight. Bring friends.*

Elite troops take a lot more resources and time to create, so they aren't as common. They tend to be significantly more dangerous, and are usually deployed with a contingent of line troops. They count as **threat 2** opponents.



**KNIGHTS OF THE BLACK OAK:** A holy order sworn to Vlaisim who have chosen to remain loyal after his Breaking. They are a mix of pikemen and heavy cavalry, but their time with Render has changed them. Many bear grisly trophies, and carve their flesh as gestures of loyalty. Many use hooks on chains to drag back the living to be converted. Because they are still alive, Black Shot has reduced effect.

**HEARTLESS:** Often taken from the ranks of the Knights, these giants are pumped full of cinderblood, giving them immense strength and size. They wear ornate metal armor, except on their torsos. There, they bare their flesh, to show the hole where their heart was brutally removed, always on proud display for Render's inspection. They wield oversized metal weapons used to sever limbs and rend armor.



**THORNS:** Made by skewering the fallen killed by Render's troops with metal blades treated with cinderblood. The process leaves the body damaged, and only by mixing blood with cinderblood can they stay active. In combat they often grip people to themselves and shred them apart, to absorb the blood they need. When alone, they might capture people and slowly amputate parts over days to sustain themselves.

## **INFAMOUS**      *You need a plan, friends, and some good equipment.*

Infamous are line troops and Elites that have survived multiple battles and gained some notoriety. The Broken trust them with more complex plans and objectives. They often have a few squads under their command. They count as **threat 3** opponents.

### **ACHE (INFAMOUS HEARTLESS)**

Born with his heart on the right, Ache has two holes in his chest. His heart-hole stays empty, but he places the head of his most recent conquest in the other. This dessicated head tells him secrets that only the dead know.

### **EATER (INFAMOUS HOUND)**

This pale-skinned Hound feasts on the last breath of the dying, stealing a touch of their essence. The voices of many dead echo through its baying and cause physical pain or hallucinations in the minds of its prey.

### **SHATTER (INFAMOUS THORN)**

A Thorn forged by including blades of two dead Chosen, its movements are precise and the metal sounds of its movements exude malice. It's said Chosen blood is mixed inside it, and it seems to seek any remnant of more.

## **LIEUTENANTS**

*Some of you will die. Good luck.*

Lieutenants are not simply promoted due to their physical prowess. These are powerful opponents deploying with multiple squads, and are usually trusted to come up with their own plans and overcome obstacles as necessary. Whether through power or plans and cunning, they count as **threat 4** opponents.

### **IRAG, THE FLAYED (BLACK OAK KNIGHT LIEUTENANT)**

A Knight renowned as a Weaponmaster, Irag has removed all his skin as a show of loyalty to Render. Arrows and bullets are lodged in his flesh, but he feels no pain. Render feeds him pure cinderblood, giving him immense strength.

### **MIHKIN, THE DARK GENERAL (BLACK OAK KNIGHT LIEUTENANT)**

Astride on an armored steed, Mihkin bears a holy lance, cut from his family tree, now blackened and twisted. On his shoulders are the skulls of those that disagreed with his choice to keep the Knights loyal to Render.

### **ZENYA, THE SABLE ARROW (BLACK OAK KNIGHT LIEUTENANT)**

A raven-haired archer, Zenya is the primary scout for the Black Oak. Her quiver is filled with arrows Render has gifted her with, each causing corruption and disease that can burn a Legionnaire from inside.



# RELATIONSHIPS

## THE CHOSEN

- ◆ **SHREYA.** The most worthy challenge amongst the Chosen, Render looks to cross weapons with Shreya and defeat her utterly. He hopes to force her into the field of battle by attacking civilian targets, with the intention of preying on her sense of Mercy.
- ◆ **THE HORNED ONE.** Render considers the Horned One weak because of their lack of direct combat prowess, and greatly underestimates them. He plans to destroy any vestiges of hope for the Horned One by burning Talgon to the ground and transforming this Chosen into his personal Hound.
- ◆ **ZORA.** Zora reminds Render of his failure, and her presence makes him feel abandoned by his god. To Render, her presence is an affront. He seeks to kill her and take her sword and crown for himself, perhaps then having enough power to challenge the Cinder King.

## THE BROKEN

- ◆ **BLIGHTER.** Render sees Blighter as weak, but a useful follower. Because of this, he's vouched for her to the Cinder King. She enhances his troops' arms and armor, and often credits his aid for her victories. He hasn't given her cinderblood because he suspects she would immediately use it to attack the Cinder King, an action he thinks she would fail at, revealing them both.
- ◆ **BREAKER.** Render secretly gave Breaker some cinderblood, and she's already enhanced the power of what runs in his veins. With that and the information she grants him, Render's been able to be the most successful of the Cinder King's Broken. If she ever discovered he convinced the Cinder King she needed to be watched in order to maintain his favored status, she would deal with him in a very different manner.

## THE CINDER KING

- ◆ The Cinder King is both a living sign of Render's failure, and the only person in the undead armies Render truly respects. After his Breaking, the Cinder King forced Render to attack him repeatedly, until Render gave up hope. That's when the Cinder King marked his face—a gesture Render repeats in his own Heartless. Believing his spirit to be as broken as his body, the Cinder King whispered to Render the truth of the crusade, and created a being of wrath and rage who would continue the war even if the Cinder King himself died. Somewhere deep in his still, undead heart, Render believes he will someday get not only justice against a world he feels wronged him, but finish his task against the Cinder King. A master strategist, he watches for any sign of weakness, and plays the long game now. Until then, he covers any insecurities with his wrath, and gives himself over to his rage.

## SO YOU WANT TO KILL A BROKEN...

Broken and Chosen are incredibly hard to kill. They are powerful enough that no single individual has much chance of seriously harming them. It takes squads of soldiers or fearsome weapons to truly threaten them.

Both Broken and Chosen are limited by their choice of vessel, however. The powerful forces they are imbued with will generally sustain them well past wounds that would be lethal to a normal person. They are, however, limited by the human form. Collapsing a building on them likely won't kill them, but it will leave them pinned under rubble until their troops dig them out. If they fall some vast distance, it may be a considerable time before they are recovered and they can repair their forms. Most of the time, you simply want to incapacitate or remove a Broken from the scope of the campaign.

As a rule, the Legion prefers to not engage powerful opponents like the Broken directly. They may use siege weapons (which aren't terribly accurate), or simply allow their Chosen to engage, hoping that they hurt the Broken enough to drive them from the field.

If you manage to harm a Broken to the point that they become unable to move and wish to finish them off, there is a whole secondary set of problems. This is not a situation that should be common in any game, but if it does come up, talk amongst the players. There is no known solution to the problem. If they're anything like Chosen, their ability to cling to life is substantial—there are stories of blades dulling before they chop through Chosen limbs, heads still remaining alive past decapitation, and bodies remaining untouched by flame.

Perhaps you need a Long-Term Project to create flame hot enough to burn a Broken corpse. Maybe you need to find an artifact that can slay a god, or one that strips them of power long enough for a Crimson Seeker shell to end them. Whatever the task is, it should not be simple, and in the meantime, every undead in the area will want to get hold of a damaged Broken—some to save their leader and others to claim their power or assert their control over other undead. This could add extra pressure as a failure penalty to all missions.

If a Broken is killed or incapacitated to the point that they remain outside the scope of the campaign, focus on the second Broken as a primary enemy for a bit. Later, feel free to bring in the Broken not selected initially, as a replacement from the Cinder King. Make a note of this on your final score sheet, as this will become relevant in later campaigns.

## HOW DO YOU FIGHT A BROKEN?

Generally you don't. Their threat is so high that entire squads can get eliminated outright, and the Legion doesn't have resources to drown them in bodies.

Fighting such a powerful opponent is an incredibly risky task requiring a good position, significant advantages, and some luck. The game isn't designed for this to be the primary objective.

If you do make it a Legion goal, you may want to investigate relics, figure out the Broken advantages and weaknesses, and try to lure them out and somehow separate them from their troops. This translates into long-term setups, including looking for and running special missions that might provide tools and artifacts that could be used in that scenario, and researching possible locations and battlefields.

This may be a task outside the scope of a single campaign, but discuss it with your GM and figure out concrete steps the Legion can take (often just to understand the steps or tools necessary may take intel questions, or Spymaster assignments).





# CHAPTER 5

## THE MISSION PHASE

*The Ghost Owls returned from the field this morning. Having finished my own duties, I followed the Lorekeeper as she headed towards them.*

*The four Owls outside the Medic's tent all had different accounts of the mission. One rookie stayed with the horses and saw little. Another was badly shaken, mumbling about a winged monster. One wept openly, speaking about the Chosen's wounds. Their squad leader put on a brave front, and talked about how proud she was of the squad's performance. The Sniper and one rookie were in the Medic's tent, and even the Lorekeeper isn't bold enough to argue with our Medic when she says her patients need rest.*

*The Heavy assigned to the mission was a fellow Orite, and we're friends. We have cousins that had married, and our families are on good terms. Her armor was hung up on a stand in her tent, ragged with monstrous claw marks. It would take precious metal and many hours of hard work by our smiths to repair it in time for her next outing. She told us of a new winged monster that the Chosen had engaged, and how the Chosen got so badly wounded the squad had to finish the fight and carry them back.*

*"Would you consider the mission a success with the kinds of wounds and damage we took?" asked the Lorekeeper.*

*Our Heavy looked at her as if she'd asked something ridiculous. "We accomplished all objectives, and everyone made it back. Resources are the Quartermaster's problem. Wounds the Medic's. The Chosen? I guess the gods'."*

*As we walked away I asked the Lorekeeper what she would write in the Annals. With such differing stories there was no clarity of what had happened. She smiled enigmatically at me and simply said "The truth. Or at least, what the Legion will remember as such."*

*—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire*

## THE MISSION PHASE

In **Band of Blades**, we play to find out if the Legion survives the undead hunting them. The Legion is a fighting force, and resists the undead with military actions called **missions**.

A mission is a single operation with a particular goal: raid a weapons cache to resupply, assault a camp to rescue captured soldiers, scout a facility to learn what's being created there, etc.

A mission will fall into one of two categories and one of four types. The categories are:

- ◆ **REGULAR MISSION:** Created from the fiction and some random rolls by the GM.
- ◆ **SPECIAL MISSION:** A special mission available in the particular location the Legion finds itself in. It also falls into one of the four basic types, but grants favor and is uniquely tied to the location.

The four types of missions are:

- ◆ **ASSAULT:** Conflicts. Typically head-on.
- ◆ **RECON:** Gathering intelligence about a person, place, or thing.
- ◆ **RELIGIOUS:** Cultural or humanitarian missions.
- ◆ **SUPPLY:** Sourcing materiel or occasionally mercenary work.

A mission can be a multiple-day offensive or a half-day outing. There might be lots of rolls and trouble, or just a few actions to resolve it. Play to find out what happens! A mission doesn't need to fill an entire evening of play. Let it be however long it needs to be, and conclude it when the obstacles are overcome and the objectives are accomplished or the squad decides to retreat.

At the beginning of each mission phase, the GM will present the Legion players with a set of missions to choose from. Sometimes, these missions might come from Long-Term Projects, or might be generated from their Roles. They might come from the fallout of previous missions. Regardless, it's on the players to decide which missions are important to the Legion and what they're willing to pursue.

The mission phase includes mission selection, mission execution, and Back at Camp scenes. Mission selection involves mission briefings, the Commander picking the primary and secondary mission, and the Marshal assigning which squads and Specialists will go on each. Mission execution involves the **engagement roll**, **flashbacks**, and **teamwork**. All are detailed in this chapter.



## SPECIAL MISSIONS

In addition to regular missions, you may encounter a **special mission**. These missions have better rewards. They also always grant favor, which may help advance your Chosen. Each special mission you complete will improve your final score. (For more information about scoring your game, see page 430.)

Otherwise, special missions are very similar to regular missions. They fall into one of the four mission types. They have objectives. They apply rewards or penalties, based on the mission.

Each location has three special missions you might encounter. If the Commander spends an intel, you replace one regular mission with a special mission of the GM's choice. (See page 314 for more about generating missions.)

Special missions may have additional requirements that need to be met. If you do not meet these requirements, you take -1d to your engagement roll. (see the engagement roll questions, page 130.) These missions may require:

- ◆ A particular kind of Specialist.
- ◆ A particular number of Specialists, more or fewer than the two normally allowed.
- ◆ A squad to be composed of all Specialists, or all Rookies. In this case, each Legion player plays one character of an appropriate type.
- ◆ Your Chosen to take the field with your troops.
- ◆ The use of an expendable resource, such as Horses.
- ◆ Bringing a material asset, such as Supply Carts, a Siege Weapon, or non-Legion personnel such as an Alchemist on the mission.

These extend the requirements that come from the type of mission. If a recon mission requires a Medic (as a special mission requirement), you should also bring either a Scout or a Sniper (as a Specialist for that mission type). If a requirement overlaps with a standard mission requirement, a single Specialist can satisfy both.

In addition, a special mission may be **vital**. Such missions must be selected as the primary mission.

## WHAT ABOUT A THIRD MISSION?

The Legion base camp is frequently tested by the undead. Part of the premise and buy-in of **Band of Blades** is that a squad and the Chosen stay behind to protect the Annals and key supplies. The two squads that deploy are all the Legion can spare to go out. Some Special missions warrant the risk of deploying more, but it's a rare and risky exception.

## MISSION SELECTION

At the start of the mission phase, the GM presents the Legion players with at least two—though typically, three—available missions. The GM will generate the details of these missions (see page 314) at the end of the campaign phase (though generally, it's expected that these are detailed between sessions of play).

Every mission falls into one of four types. Not every mission type will be available at every location. The types of missions that are available in each location are described in the Locations chapter, starting on page 369.

### ASSAULT

*Raids. Ambushes. Attacks.*



#### MISSION REWARDS:

- ◆ Morale. *Appears always.*
- ◆ Supply.
- ◆ Time.

#### MISSION PENALTIES:

- ◆ Pressure. *Frequent.*
- ◆ Time. *Sometimes.*
- ◆ Supply.

### RECON

*Infiltrations. Patrols. Surveys.*



#### MISSION REWARDS:

- ◆ Intel. *Appears always.*
- ◆ Assets.
- ◆ Time. ◆ Troops.

#### MISSION PENALTIES:

- ◆ Pressure. *Frequent.*
- ◆ Time. *Sometimes.*
- ◆ Supply.

### RELIGIOUS

*Pilgrimages. Rituals*



#### MISSION REWARDS:

- ◆ Assets. *Frequent.*
- ◆ Morale. *Sometimes.*
- ◆ Intel. ◆ Time.

#### MISSION PENALTIES:

- ◆ Pressure. *Sometimes.*
- ◆ Morale. *Sometimes.*

### SUPPLY

*Scrounging. Mercenary work.*



#### MISSION REWARDS:

- ◆ Supply. *Appears always.*
- ◆ Assets. *Frequent.*

#### MISSION PENALTIES:

- ◆ Morale. *Sometimes.*
- ◆ Supply. *Sometimes.*

It is the Commander's responsibility to pick the **primary mission**. The players will play through this mission in the mission phase. The Commander also picks the **secondary mission**, whose fate is determined by the Marshal's engagement roll. For more details, see the Commander on page 117.

## CHOOSING CHARACTERS AND LOAD

After the Commander has chosen which mission will be played through, the Marshal will assign a squad and up to two Specialists to each mission. (For more information about assigning personnel to a mission, see the Marshal on page 125.) Each mission must have at least one Specialist of an appropriate type, or the mission's engagement roll will suffer -1d. (See the engagement roll, page 130.)

- ◆ **ASSAULT:** Heavy, Medic, or Sniper
- ◆ **RELIGIOUS:** Medic or Officer
- ◆ **RECON:** Scout or Sniper
- ◆ **SUPPLY:** Heavy, Officer, or Scout

The Marshal can use whatever means they choose to assign characters, though usually there's some discussion among the players beforehand. It's not essential that the same character be played by the same player each time, though that may be how your table prefers to do it. Other players will play available Rookies or Soldiers in the squad the Specialists are sent alongside of. Grab a blank Rookie or Soldier playbook if you need to detail someone new.

Each of these characters then resets their armor and Specialist skill uses, and chooses their load. Each load level comes with specific items or the choice of several items based on your playbook. In addition, utility load may be spent to bring something from a selection of extra items on the mission.

The Legion players should choose items carefully, because once they're on the mission, they have what they've brought. Each player should make a note of the amount of armor their character has.



## ENGAGEMENT ROLL

Once the Marshal selects a primary mission, we cut to the action—describing the scene as the squad engages their first obstacle. The starting situation impacts how complicated the mission turns out to be. Rather than expecting the GM to simply “get it right” each time, we use a dice roll instead. This is established with an **engagement roll**. It is the Marshal’s responsibility to assemble the engagement roll dice pool (see page 130 for more information).

The engagement roll assumes the PCs are approaching the mission objective as intelligently as they can. We don’t need to play out probing maneuvers, special precautions, or other ponderous non-action. The engagement roll covers it all. The PCs are already in action, facing the first obstacle—in the sewers under the castle, setting the explosives on the bridge, or sneaking through the enemy camp.

Don’t make the engagement roll and then describe the PCs approaching the target. The engagement roll resolves the approach. Cut to the action resulting from that initial approach—to the first serious obstacle in their path.

*The first obstacle of the rescue mission is getting past the perimeter. The engagement roll puts the squad sneaking from tent to tent as the PCs dispatch lone lookouts.*

*The Legionnaires have blown open the door to an undead alchemy lab and are sweeping into the front room, weapons firing. The undead surge forward and the Infamous behind them flips a switch, escaping via a hidden tunnel.*

If the players want a special preparation or clever setup, they can use flashbacks during the mission. This takes some getting used to. Players may balk, worried that you’re skipping over important things they want to do. But jumping straight to the action is much more effective once you get used to it. When they see the situation they’re in, their “planning” in flashbacks will be focused and useful, rather than speculations on circumstances that might not even happen.

## OUTCOMES

The outcome of the engagement roll determines the position for the PCs’ initial actions when we cut to the mission in progress. A **1-3** means a desperate position. A **4/5** is a risky position. A **6** is a controlled position. A **CRITICAL** carries the action past the initial obstacle, deeper into the action of the mission.

No matter how outmatched you are, a desperate position is the worst that can result from this roll. This does not imply the effect the PCs will have in that first roll. Perhaps they stumble into trap, but they have potency in those situations from their Infiltrator ability. Some of those times it may be appropriate to trade that potency for a better position.

A flashback during the opening scene can pre-empt and recontextualize that position. Perhaps the Sniper is actually elsewhere, sighting down on the Horror that has just cornered the squad in the alley. What matters is that the initial situation, before flashbacks, before abilities, and before approaches, is desperate.

## HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?

The engagement roll determines the starting position for the PCs' actions. How long does that hold? Does the situation stay desperate? No. Once the initial actions have been resolved, you follow the normal process for establishing position for the rest of the rolls during the mission. The engagement roll is a quick shorthand to kick things off and get the action started—it doesn't have any impact after that.

## ENGAGEMENT ROLL EXAMPLE

*The Ghost Owls are attempting to enter the undead-filled city of Karlsburg and locate a Scout that has been spying on Breaker for weeks. The Marshal assembles the engagement roll, and with the Quartermaster spending a use of Horses, the pool is 2d. The Marshal rolls a 3. It's a desperate position to start.*

*The GM considers how to pose a desperate threat and goes for the simple answer—the squad has been discovered by an enemy patrol while looking to find shelter for the evening. The squad has turned down an alley with undead on one side, while another patrol comes up from behind.*

*“You’ve scouted out the best route and mapped some patrols, but a departing unit of undead crosses your path. As you duck into an alley, you realize you’re pincered, as a second unit crosses the exit. Everyone holds their breath for a moment, but a Rotter looks right at the squad and points. With a roar, the undead rush towards you. The noise attracts the departing unit behind you, plus their lumbering Horror. They’ll be on your position in seconds. You might be able to get one desperate salvo off before it becomes hand-to-hand. What do you do, Officer? Do you order everyone to engage, or do you want to try scaling the buildings on either side here? Those drain-pipes you’d be climbing don’t seem exceptionally secure.”*

*This skips over finding the best route, mapping out the patrol routes of the undead, even finding a place to stay for the evening, and jumps straight to the action. The players can’t “back out” and try a different alley—the engagement roll has placed them here. If they want to have prepared something against an ambush, it’s just a flashback away.*

## FLASHBACKS

The rules don't distinguish between actions performed in the present and those performed in the past. When a mission is underway, you can invoke a flashback to take an action in the past that impacts your current situation.

The GM sets a stress cost when you activate a flashback action.

- ◆ **0 STRESS:** An ordinary action for which you had easy opportunity. *Last night, the Soldier **RIGGED** all the doors with traps in case the undead broke in while we were sleeping.*
- ◆ **1 STRESS:** A complex action or unlikely opportunity. *The Medic **RESEARCHED** this kind of undead from earlier recon reports and knows something useful about them.*
- ◆ **2 (OR MORE) STRESS:** An elaborate action that involved special opportunities or contingencies. *The Scout was stationed in this village before the battle at Ettenmark, allowing them to **CONSORT** with the otherwise insular people.*

After the stress cost is paid, a flashback action is handled like any other action. Sometimes it entails an action roll, because there's danger or trouble involved. Sometimes a flashback entails a fortune roll, because we need to find out how well it went (or much, or long, etc.) Sometimes a flashback won't require a roll at all.

*"It makes perfect sense that your squad set up a communication protocol prior to the mission. Zero stress. No roll required."*

*"Of course you would have researched this cult whose temple you're going into. Zero stress, but let's do a fortune roll using your **RESEARCH** to see how good the information you got was."*

One of the best uses for a flashback is when the engagement roll goes badly. After the GM describes the trouble you're in, call for a flashback to a special preparation you made, "just in case" something went wrong. This way, your "flashback planning" will be focused on the problems that do happen, not the problems that might happen.

## LIMITS OF FLASHBACKS

A flashback isn't time travel. It can't "undo" something that just occurred. For instance, if a Horse Lord has sold you out to the enemy, you can't call for a flashback to kill him the previous evening. He's here now, and so are the undead. But you could call for a flashback to have foreseen this betrayal and to have told the camp guards to be ready for your signal to ambush them, using this opportunity to dispatch traitor and undead alike.



## FLASHBACK EXAMPLES

*"I want to have a flashback to earlier this morning, when I timed the undead patrol routes ahead of the squad, so it's less risky to move the Heavy and their armor through."*

*"That sounds like something you would do as a Scout, but it also sounds somewhat involved. I think this is 1 stress."*

*"Should I roll **SCOUT** to gather the information?"*

*"No, you're already paying the stress cost. The squad will have to roll when you actually try to sneak by but you'll have a controlled position."*

*"The engagement roll is a **3**. A desperate position! Okay, you've gotten to the enemy lines but before you can slip through, a Hound catches your scent, and their patrols shift. You're caught out, and surrounded on three sides by squads of undead. They're collapsing rapidly on your position, and your Rookies are free firing to keep from being overrun."*

*"Hang on, can we have a flashback? Maybe some of the squad are actually with one of our siege weapons and are going to cover our advance."*

*"Well, your Legion does have a siege weapon, and it's possible you could have arranged this, but it's pretty involved. I think that's 2 stress. The team on the siege weapon is going to have to do a risky **WRECK** to set you up and improve your position. Who did you assign to the siege weapon?"*

*"Could I have grabbed an extra load of ammo back at base?"*

*"Well, you're only issued so much gear, and that was selected at the start of the mission. How did you get more ammo? Is it something you stole?"*

*"Oh, that's fine. Better a thief than a Rotter. Besides, who's going to notice a few bullets missing?"*

*"That would be the Quartermaster. What's your approach there? Do you talk with the armory guards or cause a distraction and sneak in?"*

*"I think I'm friends with the guards on duty and they let me in."*

*"That sounds like a 1 stress flashback. Here's what we can do: You get the ammo, but we'll make a fortune roll with your **CONSORT** rating. On a **6**, you have the extra ammo, no strings. On a **4/5**, I'll start a 6-clock for "Erosion of Legion Discipline." If it fills, you may not get all the supplies you expect at the start of a mission, because of theft. On a **1-3**, the Quartermaster knows and you'll be punished. That's Dwayne's duty, but I think appropriate punishment would be enough physical labor to leave you level 2 harm Bone weary."*

# TEAMWORK

## SQUAD TEAMWORK ACTIONS

When the Legionnaires work together, the characters have access to four special teamwork maneuvers:

- ◆ **Assist** another PC who is rolling an action.
- ◆ Lead a **group action**.
- ◆ **Set up** a character who will follow through on your action.
- ◆ **Protect** a squadmate.

## ASSIST

When you **assist** another player who's rolling, describe what your character does to help. Take **1 stress** and give them **+1d** to their roll. You might also suffer any consequences that occur because of the roll, depending on the circumstances. Only one character may assist a given roll. *If you really want to help and someone else is already assisting, consider performing a setup action instead.*

A character may assist a group action, but only if they aren't taking part in it directly. You decide which character in the group action gets the bonus die.

## LEAD A GROUP ACTION

When you lead a **group action**, you coordinate multiple members of the squad to tackle a problem together. Describe how your character leads the team in a coordinated effort. Do you bark orders, give subtle hand signals, or provide charismatic inspiration?

Everyone participating in the action, including the leader, makes an **action roll (using the same action)** and the **team counts the single best result** for everyone who rolled. However, the character leading the group action takes **1 stress** for each member that rolled **1-3** as their best result.

*This is how you do the “We all sneak past the guard” scene. Everyone who wants to sneak by rolls their **SCOUT** action, and the best result counts for the whole squad. The leader suffers stress for everyone who does poorly.*

The group action result covers everyone who rolled. If you don't roll, your character doesn't get the effects of the action. Your character doesn't have to be especially skilled at the action being rolled in order to lead a group action. This maneuver is about leadership, not necessarily about ability.

Anyone who participates in a group action is subject to any consequences from the action. For example, everyone in the group could be harmed. Depending on how the consequences are described, some may avoid this fate. Always follow the fiction.

You can also lead a group of NPCs. Let's say you need to organize some villagers into a hasty defense. Roll **MARSHAL** if you direct their efforts, or roll the appropriate action rating if you participate alongside them. You don't need to roll for each NPC individually: the group rolls its threat level—from 0d for untrained, under-equipped villagers to 2d for elite groups of well-trained, finely equipped mercenaries. Whoever leads this group action will suffer stress from covering for the NPCs.

Note that group actions also have other benefits. Working together increases the number of people you are tackling a problem with—which may change your effective **scale** in the fiction. If you're fighting a large opponent, or you're outnumbering a single skilled opponent, you may be able to either gain a level of effect, or reduce their effect to make it a more fair fight.

This can also backfire. A whole squad trying to sneak can be less effective, than a single, light-gear Scout—and consequently the position may change.

## SETUP

When you perform a **setup action**, you have an indirect effect on an obstacle. If your action has its intended result, any member of the team who follows through on your maneuver gets **+1 effect level** or **improved position** for their roll. You choose the benefit, based on the nature of your setup action.

*This is how you do the “I’ll cover you” scene. You can roll **SHOOT** to pin down a group of enemies, then any squadmate who follows through with a **MANEUVER** action can get improved position. It’s less risky since you’re keeping the threats to your friends at bay while they act.*

This is a good way to contribute to an operation when you don't have a good rating in the action being rolled. A clever setup action lets you help the squad indirectly. Multiple follow-up actions may take advantage of your setup (including someone leading a group action) as long as it makes sense in the fiction.

Since a setup action can increase the effect of follow-up actions, it's also useful when the team is facing tough opposition that has advantages in threat, scale, and/or potency. Even if the PCs are reduced to zero effect due to disadvantages in a situation, the setup action provides a bonus that allows for limited effect.

*Marchioness Rodano is fighting a Black Oak Knight clad in full plate. Knowing her squad can't damage him with small arms, she decides to **WRECK** his armor with her warhammer to open a weak spot for everyone else to target. She rolls and gets a 4. She marks harm, but now anyone shooting at that spot can take advantage of her setup action for +1 effect. That Elite is going down!*

## PROTECT

You step in to face a consequence that one of your squadmates would otherwise face. **You suffer it instead of them. You may roll to resist it as normal.** Describe how you intervene.

When you protect someone, interposing yourself against the consequence leads to a new result in the fiction. As such, you should re-evaluate how that new fiction changes the consequence that is applied. It looks very different when a Heavy takes harm from a risky consequence, than when the unarmored Scout does.

This is how you do the “I’ll dive in front of the bullet” move. You cover for a squadmate, suffering any harm or consequences that still linger after you’ve rolled to resist. It hurts, costs stress, and may leave you in a bad spot. But hey, you’re a hero.

*A single Rookie fires into a squad of Blighter’s troops—a risky action with standard effect. (The undead’s scale is matched by the use of Black Shot, granting potency.) On a 4/5 she takes out a fair number of undead, but also hits the Gut-Sack in the middle. It blows up, splashing corrupting and corrosive bile all over her. She would take level 3 harm “Corrosive Burns”—moderate harm, increased because of the Gut-Sack’s threat 2 attack.*

*Marchioness Rodano, the Orite Heavy, decides to save the day! With a war-cry she dives in front of the deadly wave, and interposes her massive tower shield, letting the bile devour her shield and armor instead of the Rookie. Rodano will take the harm instead, but the Gut-Sack’s moderate harm for her is only level 2, because her fine armor matches the Gut-Sack’s threat. Rodano can reduce and/or resist this harm, but regardless, she’s saved her fellow squad member.*

## DO WE HAVE TO USE TEAMWORK?

Teamwork maneuvers are options, not requirements. Each character can still perform solo actions as normal during a mission. If your character can’t communicate or somehow coordinate with the rest of the team, you can’t use or benefit from any teamwork maneuvers.



## SQUADS

The military tone and brutality of **Band of Blades** mean that death is always on the table. One of the biggest ways this is portrayed in the game is with how squads are treated. Their influence on the course of battle is significant, but their lives are always at risk.

### MARSHALING AND GROUP ACTIONS

There are plenty of times when having five more people to throw at a problem will be a significant help. In those moments, determine what the most important aspect of the problem at hand is. If it's focusing the attention of the squad and keeping everyone working in concert, then a simple **MARSHAL** roll should be made. This is appropriate for volleying at a group of charging undead or exchanging fire with enemies. It is also appropriate for wheeling about to reposition as a squad.

On the other hand, there are times for which simple orchestration is not sufficient, and we need to see how well the squad does at the action at hand. For example, when the charging undead slam into the line and swords are drawn, how many Legionnaires are hurt, and how well do they fend off the undead? In these moments, a group action using the appropriate action rating is best. As part of a group action, the PC squad member with the best rating for that action rolls on behalf of the squad. If there is no such player, perhaps because all players are playing Specialists, or the player Rookies are separated from the squad—the squad gets one die, or two if they all Soldiers.

### INJURY

When harm befalls the squad, pick a number of Legionnaires up to the level of harm inflicted to suffer that harm. NPC Legionnaires assigned harm die, while played squad members suffer the harm. That is, if the squad participates in a group **SKIRMISH**, and receives level 3 harm as a result, the harm could be assigned to two NPC squad members and one played Rookie. The NPCs die, and the PC squad member takes level 3 harm.

Sometimes a Specialist can protect the squad. If Blighter's troops toss an alchemical grenade into the squad, and the Heavy dives on the explosion with her helmet, she might be able to take the entire damage and resist it down herself. When she does, she suffers the level 3 harm that would be applied instead of it falling on the Rookies. The fiction always takes priority.

If, however, the damage is very dispersed, a Specialist might only protect a single squad member. When a massive blow from a Horror's fist comes swinging towards the line, a Specialist can tackle a Rookie out of the way, saving only their life. If it makes fictional sense, it's fine for multiple Specialists to save different members of the squad.



## DISCIPLINE AND MARSHAL

Squads are made up of mostly non-player characters (any Rookies or Soldiers not being currently played in a mission are also considered NPCs), and as such, the player who has the most authorship over the squad's reactions is the GM. However, the GM is there to portray the Legion authentically, as a group of characters we would be interested in hearing a story about. They aren't going to fold at the first sign of resistance. However, they may not be invested in laying down their lives simply because an Officer orders them to.

As a rule of thumb, you can **DISCIPLINE** a squad to keep it from doing something you don't want it to do—such as rout—or you can **MARSHAL** a squad to get it to do something you want it to do—such as charge an eight-foot-tall monstrosity made of the corpses of their former comrades-in-arms.

For more information on both **DISCIPLINE** and **MARSHAL**, see pages 276 and 280, respectively.

## SCALE LEVELS

The below chart indicates the scale of various groups and effects you might encounter in **Band of Blades**. The chart below is a guide, including some of the most commonly encountered such groups, but is not an exhaustive list. Importantly, something gains scale when it affects (or is of a size to affect) several people. A Crimson Seeker shell (from the Sniper Crimson Shot ability), for example, has scale 1, though it has a much higher threat (four), because a single bullet affects one person very severely.

### EXAMPLE SCALE LEVELS

- |   |                                                                                                                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>One or two people.</b> A Shadow Witch's hex. A Spitter's caustic bile.                                                           |
| 2 | <b>A small group (3-5).</b> A squad. A grenade. A Horror. A Gut-Sack's explosion. One of Render's shredder-mines. A pack of Hounds. |
| 3 | <b>A medium group (6-10).</b> Fire Oil. A pack of Rotters or Gaunt. Blighter's poison mists. A banner of Black Oak Knights.         |
| 4 | <b>A large group (20).</b> A platoon. Black Rotting Gale's miasma. A pack of Burned.                                                |
| 5 | <b>A huge group (40).</b> A squadron of cavalry. Bell of Keening.                                                                   |
| 6 | <b>A massive group (80).</b> A company. Breaker's Fog and Storms.                                                                   |
| 7 | <b>A colossal group (160).</b> A battalion.                                                                                         |

## EFFECT FACTORS

Three factors go into determining effect: **potency**, **scale**, and **threat**.

Potency can be gained by using specific equipment in the right circumstances (such as Black Shot vs. undead), or having the right special ability (such as the Heavy's Weaponmaster). Potency is binary: you are either potent against this obstacle in this way or you are not.

Scale can be gained by outnumbering your opponent. The difference in scale impacts your effect, what position you're in, and the harm you're subject to.

For example, if the undead have a medium group (12 undead), and you have only your squad (five Legionnaires), they have one level of scale on you. This could be worse position, or less effect, or a mix of both, depending on the circumstances. If you're engaging directly, they will do one extra level of harm to your whole unit, and you'll do one level of harm less to them.

All Legionnaires are threat 1 by default. Those who equip fine equipment—usually Specialists—become threat 2. Undead, however, have threat based on what type of creature they are.

Threat, especially high threat, represents the danger that a particular thing imposes. For example, Spitters projectile vomit flesh-melting acid so are threat 2. But circumstances can affect the threat level a creature actually has. If you're protected by an alchemical ointment and that acid can't burn you, then a Spitter's threat might be lower. However, threat can never be less than 0.

Most high threat opponents will need to be worked as clocks. See page 20 for more information.

The difference in threat between you and your opponent impacts the position, effect, and harm discussion in the same way that scale does. When harm is on the table, we examine what might be causing the harm. The difference in threat either adds (if the opponent is higher threat) or subtracts (if the opponent is lower threat) one level of harm per level in threat difference.

- ◆ A Rookie (threat 1) is facing down a Spitter (threat 2) solo and wants to close with it and run it through—a risky/limited action against its ranged attacks. A consequence here might be getting doused in a deluge of corrosive, corrupting bile. On a risky action, the Rookie could take level 3 harm (the difference in threat increases the usually serious harm) and 2 corruption (corruption is set by threat level).
- ◆ Marchioness Phaera Rodano is facing down a Heartless (threat 2) and wants to close and smash it with her warhammer—a risky/standard action. She has fine weapons and armor, making her equivalent threat to the Heartless. If she were to spend an **ANCHOR** use to fight as the equivalent of a small unit, she'd have scale on her opponent.

- ◆ The Marchioness is facing down Chimera (an Infamous Transformed). Chimera is twice the height of a horse, with multiple animal heads and wielding a small tree as a club. Because of its reach and wild strength, the Marchioness will make a desperate **SKIRMISH** against it. A consequence of that roll might be taking level 4 harm—level 3 from a desperate action, +1 for its threat difference. At least physical bludgeoning doesn't corrupt.
- ◆ Marchioness Rodano decides to bring backup against Chimera. She has the Ember Wolves (a squad of five Rookies) surround and poke at the Transformed with long spears. The group's size gives them scale against the Transformed. There is some discussion at the table about threat. The Marchioness is threat 2, and the Rookies are threat 1. Does the whole force count as threat 2 due to the Heavy's equipment? The GM rules that the Marchioness alone isn't enough to offset the majority of the unit. If the Marchioness were to spend an **ANCHOR** use, and fight as a small squad on her own though, this would change. The consequence on a risky roll here is level 2 harm to the Marchioness (2 to start with, +1 for threat on the Infamous, -1 for the scale of her group) and three dead Rookies (equal to level 3 harm since it's level 2 harm to start with, +2 for Chimera's threat since Rookies are threat 1, -1 for scale). In return they would fill in one segment of its clock (zero effect of a threat 1 force vs. a threat 3, +1 for scale).
- ◆ Let's say the Marchioness spends an **ANCHOR** use in the previous example. This gives the Heavy an extra level of scale. Two small squads together fight as a medium squad. If they were to take a consequence, the Marchioness would take level 1 harm, and the Rookies (who are buffered by the Marchioness's **PROWESS**) might only lose one squad member (equal to level 1 harm). The group would also tick three segments on the Infamous's clock in battle (1 segment of limited effect for threat 2 vs. threat 3, +2 for scale).
- ◆ A Spitter sneaks up on the Ember Wolves as a consequence of a failed risky **SCOUT** roll. It vomits bile from the rafters on the squad. Since the deluge of bile is designed to soak an area, the squad's scale would not apply. Three of the Rookies (equal to the wound level) die from the attack. Any Rookies being played would take level 3 harm and 2 corruption.
- ◆ A single Rookie (threat 1) is facing down a squad of a dozen Rotters (threat 1). She would take lethal harm on a consequence (level 2 harm for a risky **SKIRMISH** against something of a similar threat, and they have two categories of scale), and do zero effect to them (standard effect, reduced by two orders of scale). If she could somehow narrow their numbers (fighting in a doorway or other chokepoint), their numbers wouldn't help them, and the situation could become controlled, with standard (or possibly great) effect, capable of reducing their numbers significantly each roll.

## EXAMPLE MISSION

### OPERATION SHATTERED CITADEL

### MISSION

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. +1 Supply.

**MISSION PENALTY:** +1 Pressure.

#### MISSION NOTES:

Sam (the GM) makes a few notes while preparing the primary mission. She knows Blighter will be getting Spitters soon, so she makes a lab where one of Blighter's notable alchemists—an Infamous known as the Doctor—is doing experiments on some living people. She sets the player obstacles as city guards and a trap. City guards: patrols of Rotters on the streets and Crows on rooftops moving about the burning city, with one squad guarding the entrance to the lab with their Horror attachment. The trap: a special Horror standing by inside the lab if the players make it all the way inside. She also sets up a 6-clock for the Doctor. The Infamous Crow will leave if the players take too long, and Sam will add clock ticks when significant time passes or they make too much noise, as possible complications or side effects of rolls.

### MISSION BRIEFING

"Listen up, Legionnaires," Sam says in her sharpest briefing voice. The rest of the table quiets down, as the mission briefing is about to begin. "Now, we know Blighter's been quiet since she crossed the big river, but we have word from some of the locals that there's activity from her troops in the small town of Talstadt to the east. It's in the foothills of the mountain range, so it'll take a few days to get there."

Sam pulls out a small town map she's prepared with a few red circles on it. "We don't have precise reports about what's going on there, but plumes of green smoke have been

rising up above the foothills, so we know there's serious alchemy at work. Whatever Blighter is cooking up can't be good for us."

Sam points to the map as she speaks. "The easiest approaches are either through the front gates, or over the mountains and rappelling down the back wall into the town. That's where you find the first catch; both the hills and the path leading up to the front gates have serious patrols. Your mission is to get in, find out what Blighter is making, and destroy it if at all possible. Questions?" Sam looks at Rachel, who is playing the Commander.

## INTEL QUESTIONS

Rachel checks her Commander rolebook. "Let's see. I have 2 intel, so I get three questions. I know what I want for my 2-intel question: *Which Infamous or Lieutenant are we likely to see on this mission?*"

Sam doesn't hesitate. "We've heard there's a Crow that rides on the back of a massive Horror. Considering the Crow itself stitches together many of those monstrosities, the troops have taken to calling it 'The Doctor.' If you can kill it, we probably won't find as many Horrors made with its special love and care."

"Horrors are nasty," says Alice. "We should try to take out that guy."

"Okay," says Rachel. "I know what I want for my 1-intel question: *What resources or benefits might we be able to leverage on this mission?*"

Sam thinks about that for a moment. She didn't plan any specifics, so she makes something up. "Your Legion has an Alchemist, right? They can tell you which alchemicals are explosive and can blow up that lab, since you aren't carrying lab-be-gone kits."

"What do you think about the last question, folks?" Rachel asks the table. "Should I ask about highest threat level in case the Doctor is not the worst thing we'll face, or should I go with a handy item to bring?"

"I don't know that we'll face something much worse than the Doctor," says Alice. "I vote for the handy item." The group nods in agreement. "Okay Sam, lay it on us."

"Something handy to bring...probably something to help you breathe when in alchemical gas. Or Reliquaries. Blighter's stronghold will have a fair bit of corruption."

"I don't know that gas masks are gear we can just have," says Dwayne, who plays the Quartermaster. "But I can mark off a Religious Supply to make sure everyone starts with a Reliquary."

"Ok," says Juan, pulling out the Marshal rolebook. "Time to assign the troops. Ghost Owls took a hit last time, but if we're going to **RIG** labs to explode, they have the only Rookie with **RIG**. This is an assault mission: we need to send a Heavy, Medic, or Sniper. Our Medic is still wounded from that last fiasco, as is the Officer, but our Sniper and Heavy are set. Alice, you made both the Heavy and Sniper. Do you have a preference?"

"I'll go with the Sniper," says Alice.

"Sounds great," says Juan. "Rachel, you want the Heavy? She'll be in charge of the mission." Rachel nods and grabs the playbook. "Dwayne, I'm grabbing the Soldier I'm transferring over. You want this Rookie? He has a few xp on him, so he might be able to promote at the end of the mission." Dwayne grabs the Rookie playbook. "Remember everyone," Juan says. "This is an assault mission, but we have to get into that town first."

"We going full stealth?" asks Alice, ready to take light load.

"Go with what you prefer. Maybe even a heavy load," says Dwayne. "I have a plan that doesn't require as much stealth." Everyone nods.

## CHARACTERS

For the purposes of this example, here's the squad and players we'll be following on the mission:

- ◆ **MARCHIONESS PHAERA RODANO.** Orite Heavy. Good at **ANCHOR**, **SKIRMISH**, and **DISCIPLINE**. Her shining, silver, Orite-machined armor can be seen from a distance. Troops trust her to keep them safe. In charge of the mission. **Notable abilities:** Bulwark, War Machine. **Player:** Rachel.
- ◆ **LANDGRAVE AURORA GAROSI.** Orite Sniper. Good at **AIM**, **SHOOT**, and **SCOUT**. Nicknamed "Deadeye" both because she's an excellent shot, and because she's had one of her eyes replaced with an alchemical crystal. **Notable abilities:** One Eye, Ambush. **Player:** Alice.
- ◆ **RED STRIKING PYRE.** Panyar Soldier. Good at **MANEUVER**, **SKIRMISH**, and **MARSHAL**. Quick and tough. Handy with a longspear. Recently assigned to the Ghost Owls after they took heavy losses and the Marshal shuffled some personnel around. **Notable abilities:** Over the Top, Iron Will. **Player:** Juan.
- ◆ **HARISH KATU.** Bartan Rookie. Good at **MANEUVER**, **RIG**, and **SHOOT**. Harish has only been training with the Legion for a few months. Is usually laden with tents and pots and pans. Always carries a carved hunting rifle, which was a gift from his grandfather. **Notable abilities:** Home Cooking. **Player:** Dwayne.
- ◆ **SQUAD:** Ghost Owls. Currently the remaining three NPCs are all Panyar **Rookies:** Emerald Dancing Shadow, Violet Raging Ember, and Azure Flowing Storm.

## ENGAGEMENT ROLL

"Okay!" says Juan. "Time for the engagement roll." He picks up one die. "Since we're all Legionnaires on this mission, I assume we're all loyal to the Legion." Everyone nods. "Rachel, is the Commander spending an intel to give us better info on the mission and an extra die?"

Rachel shakes her head. "I'm saving that for the secondary mission."

"Cool," says Juan. "Not everyone is a Soldier in this squad, so no die there. Sam, do the Ghost Owls distrust the leadership?"

"Funny you should ask," says Sam. "After that last mission went sideways they're a bit leery, especially since the Marshal added a ranking Soldier they haven't worked with before, presumably to head up the squad. I think they're fine for now, but I might start a clock for disgruntlement with command depending on how this mission goes."

"But we're good for now?" asks Juan. Sam nods. "Okay, assault mission. Dwayne, you sending us in with Black Shot?"



"You know it! Everyone remember that this means you start with Black Shot marked automatically. And I'm marking off a Religious Supply, based on our intel. So everyone mark your Reliquary too."

"Okay, I know nobody has wounds," says Juan, consulting his Marshal rolebook. "Two dice. Not great but not bad. Here we go." He rolls the dice and gets a 5.

## THE PATROL

"So before I give you the starting position," Sam turns to Rachel, "Marchioness, since you're in charge, are you folks booking it up the mountain, or being super cautious and taking your time? And Dwayne, did you want to spend Horses to get them there quickly?"

Dwayne shakes his head. "We're going to need those for advancing and recon missions. I don't have spares."

Rachel thinks a moment and tells Sam, "We're definitely not doing a forced march, but I don't know that we're tiptoeing it either. Maybe doing small smokeless fires for food when we're in the mountains, and keeping an eye out for patrols." She looks at everyone else, "That sound about right?" Everyone nods.

"Okay, before we get to the situation," Sam says and draws a 6-clock, "I'm going to put a tick on this for time passing. It represents the plans of someone inside the town, and occasionally the fiction of the situation might increase it. Time passing is

one of those. So, you've been moving carefully up the mountain for a few days. You camped with no fire last night, and early this morning, still stiff from the chill mountain air, you get your first look at Talstadt. You see that the gates still hang shattered, and a faintly green mist makes the morning air hazy. What's everyone's load?"

Most of the players took normal load, except for Rachel, who took heavy load.

"Great," says Sam. "You've stopped for a moment under a small overhang of rock, and everyone is resting a second while you decide on a path. That's when you hear a few pebbles fall down the overhang. Everyone freezes and looks up to see the black form of a Crow perched on the rock above. Now, it hasn't spotted you, but it heard something and its raven-beaked mask is looking around cautiously. The Owls can probably sneak past it, but the position is risky, because the Marchioness's heavy plate can't quite get out with the same amount of stealth."

"I imagine Landgrave Garossi is probably somewhere above as lookout?" asks Alice. Sam nods. "I could shoot it, but that would alert any of its troops that may be about." Sam nods again. "Okay. What if I distract it? Can I throw a rock, get it to investigate a noise while I sneak away? That should give our troops a chance to back up a bit."

"That sounds reasonable," says Sam. "Are you going for a **SCOUT** roll?"

"Yeah the challenge here is whether I distract it without giving away my position and slink away." Alice picks up two dice for the Sniper's **SCOUT**. "I think I'm doing this solo because I'm away from the group, so I doubt anyone can assist?" The rest of the group shakes their heads.

"Do you want a Devil's Bargain?" asks Sam. "Getting back to your team is going to take a while no matter what."

"It's too early to take too long," says Alice. "I'll just push." She marks 2 stress and rolls three dice—a 6! "Yes! The Landgrave's luck holds!"

"Great," says Sam. "So it goes down just like you described. The Crow's mask locks onto where the sound came from, and it leaps, its black cloak moving but no sound escaping. You see it land on some rocks and leap nimbly between ledges. You move away cautiously."

"Do the rest of us need to roll?" asks Juan.

Sam shakes her head. "I think the plan worked! It's far enough away that if you're careful you can back away from the position. If you're not planning to hang around or do anything fancy, you're fine."



## FLASHBACKS

"So," asks Rachel, who is in charge of the mission, "Since we don't want to make a ton of noise going in through the front gate, how do we get in? Anyone bring climbing gear for those mountains behind the town?"

"Actually," says Dwayne. "I mentioned I had a plan." He turns to Sam. "So the town gates are blown out and it's pretty obvious the undead have held this for at least a week or more."

Sam nods. "Yeah, there's no way all the equipment and experiments would have been set up in a single day."

"Great," says Dwayne. "So I imagine some refugees from the town made their way to Plainsworth, where we're camped." Sam nods. "I want a flashback for Harish. Knowing that he's going on a mission to this town, he spent some time talking to the refugees, asking questions." He points to the river on Sam's sketch of the town. "I think one family told him about the sewer route they used to get out of town when the front gates were coming down. Harish has a small sketched map with some notes to help him navigate under the city."

"Nice," says Sam. "That sounds plausible but unlikely to be divulged immediately. How do you think something like that might come up in conversation?"

"Oh I don't think it's something Harish just picks up. He's a Warm, friendly Bartan," Dwayne says stressing one of his heritage traits.

"I think he sometimes makes a bit of spicy Bartan stew, and shares it with some refugee kids. Usually he asks for nothing, but knowing about this mission he might actually prod a bit, and trade a few of his supplies for some information."

"Okay, that scans. We'll say it's zero stress. I think you would have had that kind of opportunity."

"Smart," says Rachel, giving Dwayne a thumbs-up. "That saves us a lot of agony. Sam, how far do we think the sewers can take us?"

Sam thinks about this a second. Sewers can go anywhere, but it might be easy to get lost or run into trouble. She decides to make a fortune roll with two dice. Plainsworth has an assets rating of 2 and she decides this is fair to gauge the quality of the information. She gets a 5. So something close, but not perfect.

"Okay," Sam says. "You folks backtrack and find the river entrance where expected. The map is pretty good. It'll get you not just under town and the perimeter guards, but a ways towards the lab. But a map drawn from memory does have a few twists and turns, and it takes a while to get through." Sam puts a tick on the "Doctor Departing" clock. "As you get close to the lab, the air becomes increasingly hard to breathe. The water is not the green color of moss and sewage, but the bright green of chemical runoff. Just as it's getting really rough, you run into a thick metal grate that there is no obvious way to bypass."

"I don't suppose you brought any wrecking tools, Rachel," asks Dwayne.

"Yeah, actually. It's under my heavy load. But even if we popped open this grate, we'd have to wade hip-deep through undead alchemicals, not to mention we'll likely have to break upwards through brick into the lab and they'll hear us coming. I think we go up here and cover the last bit of ground on foot. I'd rather not take corruption until we have to."

"Are those your orders?" asks Juan, who declared the Heavy in charge.

"Yeah, let's get out of these sewers," says Rachel.

## PC VS. PC

Sam describes the scene. "As you come out of the sewer grate, you realize you're in a small alleyway off the main square in town. The first thing that hits you is the smell. The stench of rot here is ten times worse than the sewer. There's a big church with the two spears and hammer of the Aldermani twin gods on its doors. In its main courtyard are these two big, metal cages with maybe a dozen people inside each. The courtyard has these huge piles of bodies, badly mangled, and so much blood poured out that it goes past the gates and the wall around the basilica and fills the spaces between the cobbles in the road. It's clear they've been bringing people in for a while. You see some Rotters lazing about the courtyard. What do you folks do?"

"I think we hold position and watch a while," says Rachel.

Sam nods and casually ticks the clock for the Doctor, which is now half-full.

"You see a Crow open the front gates to the cathedral and scan the cages. It points to someone inside a cage, and the Rotters move up, open the doors, and—despite begging and pleading—grab a victim and drag them into the church. You can hear more screams from inside. The Rotters come out a bit later and idle about. Some casually choose bodies from the piles, and rip off a limb to chew on while the people in the cages look on in horror."

"Wow," says Dwayne. "Did this just become a rescue op?"

"Hmm. No," says Rachel. "We want the mission rewards, and going off mission means we don't collect at the end. Even if we save these people, Blighter will use the lab to make more. We'll save more people in the long run shutting down her lab."

"But we're not just going to leave people in cages, are we?" Dwayne says, looking upset.

"Wait, Dwayne, is Harish upset, or are you?" asks Rachel. "Because if this is really upsetting you, we can change our characters' priorities."

"Nah," says Dwayne, smiling to show it was just in-character. "I think Harish is just a warm, caring Bartan. I think he is remembering all the folks he shared food with, and the stories they told him about the townsfolk here. He's a Rookie with a big heart, and doesn't want to think about what's going to happen to these folks."

"So is this PC versus PC? Are you trying to convince the Marchioness to go off mission?" asks Sam.

"I guess I am!" says Dwayne.

"Rachel, do you think the Marchioness can be convinced?" asks Sam.

"Yeah. For sure," says Rachel. "The Marchioness might be a terror in battle, but she's not a monster. She is of course moved by seeing people held captive. But this is her command, and she doesn't want to have to explain to the Marshal why the squad failed to complete their objectives."

"Okay, so she's a Specialist, and in charge of the mission. You agreed at the start of the mission that you'd listen to orders no matter what," says Sam, about to argue that there might be a resistance roll required for Harish to even act.

"Ah, but we haven't been given an order yet. Do you think I can get a **SWAY** roll here if I have a reasonable argument?" Dwayne asks. Sam looks at Rachel, who nods.

"Okay, Harish will speak up before the Marchioness gives the order. 'We don't have to completely go off mission. I have the map. We can get them into the sewers and meet up with them at the exit.'"

"I can assist with that," says Juan. "I packed a Soldier's Kit. I can have a piece of chalk in there, right Sam?" Sam nods. "Can I flash back to using it as we came in?"

"Sure, sounds like a zero-stress flashback," says Sam.

"Okay," says Juan. "Red Striking Pyre speaks up and says, 'We may not need the map ourselves. I marked our path coming in.' He shows everyone the chalk in his hand." He marks a stress on his playbook for the assist and Dwayne picks up his dice and rolls. He gets a 4/5—partial success.

Sam thinks about the possible consequences. She goes with a complication—adding a bit of pressure to the scene while the Legionnaires are arguing. "I think the doors open again while you're arguing. A couple of strange creatures shamble out along with the Crow. They're wrapped up like mummies in dirty gauze that's been soaked in blood and some putrid greenish liquid, and they look like week-old drowned corpses—bloated, and with bits of flesh pushing out of the gaps in the wrapping. Also, maybe limited effect. Marchioness, how do you feel about going back through the sewers with no light...did you want to resist their words?"

"I think I am somewhat convinced. I'll turn that question back on them," Rachel says. She eyes Dwayne and Juan and uses her best Marchioness voice. "'We don't have time to argue about this. Neither they, nor we, can walk back without light. I didn't exactly bring spare lanterns for the locals. Did you? Get your weapons out. We've gotta take out those nasties and preferably do it without using guns. Get your heads in the game, Legionnaires. Everyone form up.'"



## THE COURTYARD

"How are you taking out the undead?" asks Sam.

Rachel points at Alice. "Can you set up shop back here? Kill anything that tries to run?" Alice salutes. "We don't want them taking more people away, or fighting around those cages. Let's charge. It should make enough noise that they'll focus on us out here, but not enough noise to alert everything nearby. So grab your melee weapons, or affix bayonets and let's go."

"They have about a dozen Rotters, and another handful between the wrapped-up things and the Crow. So they have significant scale on you," says Sam. "That might make this desperate..."

"Huh," says Juan. "I didn't catch that there were so many. Can we fight them at the gate and limit how many we're facing at a time? We can probably have people poke through the bars, while the Marchioness acts like a wall in the middle. That way it's not just limited effect."

"Yeah, that sounds plausible," says Sam. She checks in with Rachel, "You're in charge—are those the orders?" Rachel nods. "Okay, so what's the plan? How are you engaging? The Marchioness said no guns, so is this a **SKIRMISH**?"

"Let's do a group **SKIRMISH**," says Dwayne. All the players nod in agreement.

"I'll lead since I'm in charge and giving orders," says Rachel. "What's our position and effect?"

"I think risky and standard here," says Sam. "You have reach through the bars, and your plan is solid. But the Marchioness is in heavy load, and making sure you're in the right position in time is a bit risky."

"Do you want to roll for the Ghost Owls, Juan?" asks Dwayne. "Remember you're in charge of the squad."

"Here's hoping it isn't a short-lived stint." Juan assembles his **SKIRMISH** pool. He has a **SKIRMISH** of 3, and he decides to push, so he's rolling four dice. Rachel has a **SKIRMISH** of 3, and decides to save her stress for resisting. She goes with three dice.

They both roll. Juan gets a **1, 3, 4**, and **4**. Rachel rolls a **4, 4**, and **5**. The group gets a **4/5** result and Rachel takes no stress.

Sam consults the risky action chart. "You do standard effect against the enemy unit, which drops more than half the Rotters. But there's a consequence. One of the Rookies jabs one of the bloated, wrapped corpses. It shudders and takes a step back, and then detonates. Horrible, caustic bile explodes through the bars on the gates. There's sizzling as this stuff eats into people, spreading corruption. Three squad members and Phaera get splashed. The Rookie that poked it dies screaming, as his face melts. Marchioness, Pyre, you have fine gear that protects you somewhat from the splash, but you take level 2 harm "Caustic Burns" and 2 corruption. Harish, I think you were standing close, and you're going to take the same except your harm is level 3."



“This is what I saved my stress for,” says Rachel. “I want to protect the squad and resist for them. I have Bulwark, which lets me shield them from consequences of an action like this. I’m standing in the middle of the door when I hear the rumble in that thing’s belly. I’ll yell ‘Look out!’ and shoulder check forward, using my big slab of a tower shield to catch most of the wave. My Bulwark ability lets me spend an **ANCHOR** use to protect the squad from consequences. Since the wave won’t hit them, do they still get corrupted or do I need to spend a second use?”

Sam thinks a minute. “One is fine. If they don’t get damaged, they don’t get corrupted. Is your shield and armor toast? Plus, I think with the sheer volume of that bile that’s covering you, the corruption might be just a touch worse. Say 3 corruption.”

“So I think I do drop the shield to help reduce the harm,” says Rachel. “But I’ll resist down the second level. I’m pulling out my flask and washing off my armor with water. I don’t know if just one flask is enough, but everyone else is still fighting.”

“Oh now wait,” says Dwayne. “Harish feels terrible that he got in a squabble with you a minute ago. I’m running over with the big cooking waterskin for the pot and helping. I know mechanically you don’t assist resistance rolls, but I feel like fictionally I’d do that half-comical Rookie thing where I’m dropping some pots and pans while I’m pulling the water out.” Everyone smiles at the image.

“**PROWESS** resist since this is a physical consequence—right?” Rachel asks. Sam nods. Rachel assembles her mighty **PROWESS** resist of four dice. She rolls a 5—so for 1 stress the bile is washed off and the Marchioness only gains a nasty stench and some superficial burns.

“Are you just taking the corruption?” asks Sam.

“I’ll resist that too. I have a Reliquary to spend a charge of.” Rachel grabs three dice—two for her **RESOLVE** resist and one when she marks the Reliquary. The Reliquary always reduces corruption by one when used, and the resist will reduce a second. She rolls and gets another 5. She marks the 1 remaining corruption and 1 stress for the resist.

“At this point you have fairly equal numbers, but better equipment for fighting at range,” says Sam. “What’s the plan?”

“We can probably take out the remaining Rotters no problem, but I don’t know what to do about that second exploder in the mix,” says Juan.

“I got this,” says Alice. “I’m going to load some Black Shot, and I’ve been sitting patiently, scoping the fight. I saw where the Rookie jabbed that first one. Midsection, right?” Sam nods. “I’m going to bet that not every bit of these things is rigged to blow. I’ll see about putting a bullet in a bone somewhere in the lower leg. Black Shot isn’t hot, right? It’s not going to burn like magnesium and just set the thing off?”

"I actually don't know," says Sam. She looks at Dwayne. "Quartermaster, you're the one with the Alchemists. Do you know what the temperature of Black Shot flame is?"

Dwayne pushes invisible glasses up his nose and pretends to be a teacher for a moment. "As you know, though tremendous heat is required to actually produce Black Shot, the flame it produces when it hits the undead is ethereal and heatless. It is," he wiggles his fingers dramatically, "alchemical in nature, not real flame."

Everyone laughs. Sam shrugs. "Well you heard the expert, Black Shot gives off no heat."

"Okay, that should work then. What do you think, Sam? Also I haven't fired yet, and I've been lurking back a ways, aiming. Do I get my Ambush die for attacking from hiding?"

"Yes. It's a risky action, standard effect with Black Shot. But the consequences are probably going to hit the group, not you. Make sense?"

Alice picks up her dice. "Hang on," says Juan. "I can help. Pyre is a spear fighter. I spin my spear around and hit the mummy-thing with the end of the spear. I'll shove it away from us to give you a cleaner shot." He marks a stress, and Alice gets an extra die. She rolls five dice—1, 3, 3, 5, and a 6!



“Great!” says Sam. “Exactly what you said happens, happens. The shot rings out,” she marks a tick on the Doctor’s clock for the gunshot, “and the shot lodges in the leg. Green, ethereal flame spits out and a few seconds later it kneels, and falls over.”

“Okay!” says Juan excitedly, “I’ll give this another try. I’ll roll for the squad doing this last cleanup. What’s my position?”

“Controlled, standard I’d say. Because your squad has the upper hand, you can capitalize on that now,” says Sam.

Juan pushes again, and rolls his four dice, getting a 4.

“Okay,” says Sam. “You do it, but you end up in a risky position. You take out most of the Rotters, but that Crow that was in the mix grabs one of the NPC Rookies. Marshal, who is it?”

“Azure Flowing Storm,” says Juan. “He is responsible for confirming kills in combat, and was probably distracted for a second making sure the Rotter he stabbed would stay down.”

“Right,” says Sam. “The Crow seizes Azure Flowing and wraps its nasty nails around his throat. It’s whisper quiet, even dragging him back. It hides behind him, and looks at all of you, as if to dare you to trade one of your own for its undead life. What do you do?”

“I shoot it in the head,” says Alice calmly.

“A bold plan. Risky, standard. I assume you’re using Black Shot?” asks Sam.

“Yeah, that should give me potency against this guy, and it’s less effective on the living and armored, like Storm. So hopefully if he gets clipped a little it won’t hurt as much.” Sam nods. “Okay. Here we go. I think I’ll save my last push for inside.” She rolls three dice and gets a 6.

“Green fire erupts from the crow’s eye,” says Sam. She marks another tick on the Doctor’s clock for the gunshot—it’s one tick from done! “Good job.”

“Wow, they don’t call you Deadeye for nothing!” says Dwayne.

## THE VILLAGERS

“The Marchioness is going to finally bust out that Wrecking Kit to free these people. Dwayne, does Harish have any ideas yet for extra light in the sewers?”

“I do actually, though it may be a bit grisly,” say Dwayne. “I have some Fresh Food and a Cooking Kit. I’m sure I have some good oil in there. I can probably **RIG** torches with some clothes from the dead in the pile, and some sticks, bones, or whatever’s vaguely appropriate to wrap a torch around nearby.”

Rachel nods at Dwayne. “I think that handles the last of the Marchioness’s concerns about the plan to help the folks here.”

“I’m hearing some actions in there,” says Sam. “Now usually given some time and no enemy pressure I wouldn’t make you roll to pry a cage open, but you’re in a bit of a time crunch.” She taps the “Doctor Departing” clock with one finger.

"If I spend 2 stress to activate War Machine, do I have to roll?" asks Rachel. "The ability lets me perform a feat of near superhuman strength. I have the tools here, and I think I can try to force these cages open."

Sam thinks a second. "Yeah, that sounds fair. The Marchioness is a beast. We've seen her do more impressive stuff easily. If she gives it her all, you can just mark the stress and it's done."

"What's the position on my **RIG** roll?" asks Dwayne.

"Controlled, standard I think," says Sam. "You are using makeshift tools, but your outline of what you're doing is reasonable."

Dwayne grabs his two **RIG** dice. He rolls and gets a 4. "Huh, something goes wrong I guess," he says.

"Not necessarily," says Sam. "You can do it with a minor complication. You're rooting through piles of alchemically treated corpses for clothes and parts to make these torches from. You pick up one point of corruption but can do it. Is that something you're willing to take for these strangers?"

Dwayne doesn't hesitate. "Of course. I'm a Warm Bartan right?" He marks the corruption. "I think I'm the one that speaks the best Aldermani, so I'm also the one that's giving them the map and explaining how to get out."

Sam thinks for a second and asks, "How well do you think Bartan customs are known in Aldermark?"

Dwayne shrugs. "We've met and recruited some Bartan expatriates out here. I'd assume they're not common, but countries don't have giant walls at the borders exactly. There's trade and lots of talk. Why?"

Sam makes a quick fortune roll, using Harish's **SWAY** for a pool and gets a 4. "Some of these people are so scared and tormented that they're clutching onto other survivors and shambling away as soon as you're done. But a few stop. A man takes off his wedding band and hands it to you, pointing at your charm bracelet. At the same time a woman pulls off a fancy button made of an opalescent shell. They have very little, but a few of them try to give you Bartan-style friendship tokens in gratitude."

"Oh wow," says Dwayne. "By the time the people are on their way to the sewer path and Harish turns back to the squad, he's got some tears streaming down his face."

Juan reaches over to pat Dwayne on the back. "Pyre squeezes your shoulders and claps you on the back to tell you that you did good work."

"I think the Marchioness is a bit embarrassed at not wanting to rescue these people earlier. So she barks orders to get everyone in formation, but she catches Harish's eye and gives him a nod. You get the sense that she approves at the end of it all."

"That's so heartwarming, but are we ready to see what the hell this clock was about?" asks Alice.

The Legionnaires head into the church.

## THE CHURCH

“So the main room of the church you’re in is about forty paces across. They’ve cleared out most of the pews and put them in piles to the sides. Some have been broken apart with amazing force, and the kindling that they’ve been turned into is being used to heat big tubs of alchemicals.

“You can see that they’ve gathered piping and metal from many parts around town here. Where the pulpit would be in a real church, they’ve dragged down the bell, flipping it upside-down and welding pipes to the sides so that it can be pumped full of a horrible greenish liquid. There’s a lid and a latch-like a port-hole on top, and it looks like they’ve been lowering things in and out.

“On the far side of the church is a Crow packing up its notes and research, who bolts as soon as you enter. For the most part this place looks empty otherwise.”

“Can I snap off a shot at that Crow? And is it the Doctor?” asks Alice.

“Yeah, you recognize that bone-white crow mask with the bloody hand-print on it from way back here. You can certainly take a shot, though it’s risky to do so. You’re firing a snapshot into a room full of horrible unknown chemicals. What could go wrong?”

Alice grabs her three **SHOOT** dice. “I’m going to push. I don’t want to miss this. I’ll be full up on stress here.” She grabs a fourth die. She rolls—1, 3, 3, 3. “Rats!” she says. “I guess I miss.”

“No, I don’t think so,” says Sam. Alice looks at her in confusion. “The Landgrave doesn’t miss shots at this distance. When you folks enter the church, the Crow whirls around. Its hand comes up and rings a tiny bell. That bullet would have gone right through its eye, but as you squeeze the trigger, the left wall explodes and the bullet is lost in brick dust and the sheer mass of a Horror moving on six limbs sewn together from twenty or so corpses. In the chaos, the Doctor escapes. You’ve lost your opportunity.”

“I’m full on stress, and I can’t think of a good way to resist,” says Alice, checking her playbook.

“Hang tight,” says Rachel. “The mission is to blow this joint. The Doctor would just have been a cherry on top. Katu? You’re up. Can you blow this or not?”

Dwayne checks with Sam. “Can I?”

She makes a 6-clock labeled “Destroy Research.” “I don’t know, mixing explosives and setting things off might be complicated. Do you know how to do this?”

“I have one dot in **RESEARCH**. What’s my position?”

“Risky,” says Sam. “You’re quickly scanning the room to figure out a plan. Complications will likely result in a desperate situation.”

Dwayne rolls the single die—a 4 result. “Okay,” Sam marks a clock tick. “Reduced effect. You see stuff you can dump into those tanks but it’s behind the monster, and you’ll need some heat to get it to be explosive.”



"I got this, captain," says Dwayne.

"You run for the walls, Rookie," says Rachel. "Everyone else, spread out, load Black Shot, and light that thing up. When it comes for you, I'll get in the way. When it moves, you go for those chemicals."

"Usually I'd lead shooting," says Alice. "But I'm out of stress, and probably distracted looking for where the Doctor went."

"I can step up," says Juan. "I'll bark orders and get the unit organized. I don't have a gun marked in my loadout, so everyone else can fire, but I can level my spear and organize everyone. I can push and roll as the corporal for the Rookies. What's our position for the group action?"

"Risky," says Sam, making an 8-clock to represent the monster. "This thing is huge, and bullets won't drop it like they do line troops. It's going to take some serious damage to stop it, and it has six limbs. It's going to be closing distance here pretty quick. Also I want to be clear, this thing is big. If it gets a hold of you, it's got serious mass and strength. It's not going to be pretty."

"I'll push and roll for the squad since I don't have **SHOOT**." Juan rolls a 3, and Alice gets a 5. Juan marks 3 stress (2 for the push and 1 for the failure). Sam marks three ticks on the Horror's clock. (The thing is huge, so scales are matched. The group with saturation fire gets standard effect—two ticks—and one more for potency from Black Shot.)

"You light it up, and the light in the room shifts to cooler colors as the Black Shot bursts into ethereal green flame from half a dozen hits. Several of its faces start screaming. A few of the bodies go limp. But it charges forward, and with one of its limbs reaches out for a pew. As it's moving on four limbs, it hurls the pew overhand at terrific speed. Most of you are about to get splattered by a high velocity hardwood pew."

"Except," says Rachel. "The Marchioness steps in the way, like a Bulwark against the attack," she marks an **ANCHOR** use, "protecting everyone by catching that pew in her midsection, metal full-plate boots throwing up sparks as she slides backwards on the stone floor."

"I'll grant you that you can protect the group, but I don't know that any person can just catch an overhanded pew like that."

"Not every person is a War Machine," says Rachel. "Can I burn the stress for a near-superhuman feat of strength here, and apply the die from the push to my counterattack?"

"Wow, yeah. Impressive. I don't think anyone else could have done that. Okay. I still think you might take harm from being hit in the chest by a flying pew though. Sound fair?"

Rachel grins. "How much damage?"

"Level 2 harm. There's probably some cracked ribs and nasty bruising. It would be 3 normally from this thing's enormous strength and size, but I think fictionally you're matching that."



"I'm resisting that down. I'm saving my armor for the last bit. **PROWESS?**" Sam nods. Rachel picks up her dice and rolls a **6**! "Heck yeah!" she says. "No stress! Let's go team! Is 'Battered and Bruised' appropriate level 1 harm here?" Sam nods. "I'm going to let out a mighty roar of my own, level that shattered pew like a lance, and brace for its charge. I don't know that I'm holding back, but I'm fighting defensively. I'm trying to distract it from the group, and from Harish."

"Can I slip by this whole affair," Dwayne says, making motions at everyone else, "and get to those chemicals?"

"I think so," says Sam. "That Horror is pretty busy. You have what you need, want to give me a **RIG** roll to mix them in the barrels?"

"My hands are shaking, but I'm repeating the formula rapidly, and focusing with everything I can. I'm going to push here, but for effect. I want that "Destroy Research" clock full as soon as possible." He picks up his two **RIG** dice. "Devil's Bargains for me, anyone?"

"You're handling some nasty undead stuff. Take a tick of corruption?" says Juan.

"Ooh I like that," says Sam. "What do you think, Dwayne?"

Dwane nods, marks a point of corruption, and grabs an extra die. He rolls and gets a **CRITICAL**! "Holy smokes! That's what—five segments? This **RIG** really pays off. Are we done here?"

"Mostly," says Sam. "Note that this lab has a ton of quality metal, rare alchemicals, and serious medical tools. The supply reward for this mission implies hauling some of that stuff back to camp."

"Are you saying we have to haul metal pipes leagues through some sewers?" asks Dwayne incredulously.

"I don't know that the Quartermaster would care much for your tone, Rookie," says Sam, winking. "Do you want some information for your bonus effect?"

"You can tell me the story while I empty my pack to hold these chemicals!" says Dwayne.

"Behind the bell are some surgery tables, and the whole area is covered in gore. When you crack the bell to dump in chemicals, there's a body in the green liquid. It's got some of the look of the Gut-Sacks you met earlier, but it looks up and its jaw, neck, and upper torso crack open. It inhales sharply and deeply...but you shut the bell. The vent you opened starts to sizzle and some acrid smoke comes from the cracks."

"Oh good. They can throw up those explosions. Great," says Dwayne.

## THE GETAWAY

"Okay, let's wrap this up," says Rachel, "The Marchioness is craving some drinks when the troops get back to camp. 'Everyone go help Katu with that stuff. I'll hold this thing off.'"

"Is that what everyone is doing?" asks Sam. Everyone nods.

“Okay then, shall we see if you can hold the beast, Marchioness? This thing is pretty big, so it has scale, and potency from its vast strength. You have some wounds that are troubling you, so you have limited effect.”

“Except I’m a Vengeful Orite. It just hit me, and I’m itching to hit it back. I’ve got potency to offset the wounds. Also I’ve got immense strength as a War Machine, and I’ll spend my last **ANCHOR** to fight with the fury of a small squad!” She picks up her three dice for **SKIRMISH**, and one from her earlier push. “What’s my position?”

“Desperate, I think,” says Sam. “You’re facing this thing as well as anyone could, but it’s huge, and faster than it looks. If it’s fully focused on you, you can’t cover all its reach and angles.”

“I’m fighting mostly defensively,” says Rachel. “I’m not trying to hurt it as much as keep it busy and away from the others.”

“I’ll also help,” says Juan. “While the rest are hauling things, with Landgrave Garossi in charge, I’ll try to flank it a bit. Throw in some jabs using my spear’s range. Keep it whirling between the two of us. Sound fair?” He marks another stress.

“We’ll make it risky then. Still limited, but with your potency, standard. You’ll keep it at bay for the moment.”

Sam nods. Rachel grabs one more die. She rolls, and gets a 4! Sam says, “I think this is simple. You have a heroic fight, but at one point it clips you, and you go flying into a wall, and hear a nasty crack. Take level 2 harm ‘Cracked Ribs.’”

Rachel shakes her head. “I think, someone who wasn’t in this fine,” she marks both armor uses on her playbook, “heavy, well-crafted Orite armor, would have been more than shaken. I just have some bad dents, and my pauldron gets ripped off.”

“So how are you folks getting out of here?” asks Sam.

“I think it’s a group **MANEUVER**,” says Dwayne, “and I have some stress free, so I’ll lead. I’m telling everyone what to grab, and unscrewing the pipes we need.”

Everyone grabs their dice. “Position?” asks Dwayne.

“Risky,” says Sam. “It might get desperate here depending on rolls.”

“Can we also **MANEUVER** to make a fighting retreat here?” asks Juan.

“Yes, though you will be rolling separate from the squad, since you’re coming from a different direction and not coordinating.”

Everyone grabs their dice and rolls. Alice has a low **MANEUVER** and gets a 3, Rachel and Juan both get 4, and Dwayne, rolling for the Rookies, gets a 6.

“Okay, so you’ll get away without too much fuss. This is one of those dramatic exits, the Marchioness and Pyre coming out last, the lab lighting on fire and exploding just as the Horror is breaking down the church doors with a couple of mighty strikes. Unless someone has something else, I think we’re done.”

“Just got to roll for the secondary mission and get xp!” says Juan.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The previous is just an example. Consider how you would you change some of the calls made during your own game:

- ◆ How would a different engagement roll result change the mission? On a 1-3, the squad would start in a desperate position. Would you start with being discovered by a patrol, or an ambush set up by the undead? What if they had gotten a 6 or a **CRITICAL**? How would you handle it?
- ◆ Dwayne had a flashback to take a route through the sewers through town. Sam ruled that a zero stress flashback. Do you agree? Sam uses a fortune roll to determine the quality of the information. If Dwayne had said the information was definitely solid, would the cost of the flashback have been higher?
- ◆ The clock for the Doctor leaving was one tick away from filling before the squad arrived. What if it had filled early? How does that change the final obstacle of the mission? Is the last encounter an ambush by troops the Doctor left behind? Is it a room full of research notes or is it rigged to blow?
- ◆ Alice takes a shot at the notorious Doctor and gets a 1-3. Normally higher threat opponents are worked as clocks, but what if Alice rolls a **CRITICAL** here? Does the Doctor take a fateful bullet of Black Shot and expire? What about on a 4/5?
- ◆ Rodano is facing a Horror, a monstrosity made of many bodies. She's activating War Machine for massive strength, and matching it on scale using **ANCHOR**. Sam still thinks this is a desperate position. Do you agree? What could she do to make that position risky instead?
- ◆ A bunch of refugees make it out of this mission. Would they show up at the camp? How would you reincorporate their rescue into the game after the mission? What does the Doctor (and consequently, Blighter) learn of the Legion as a result of their actions?
- ◆ Did destroying the research do anything? If the Doctor was going to get Spitters soon (because the Legion was close to filling up their clock), has that been prevented, or simply delayed a few ticks of the "Time" clock? Would the answer change if the Doctor had been captured or killed instead?



## SECONDARY MISSIONS

Once you've finished your primary mission (successfully or not), the Marshal will resolve the secondary mission with a single engagement roll. This is assembled the same as it is for the primary mission (spend resources and make decisions by asking questions as appropriate). Then interpret the result, and briefly discuss how the mission went. As with primary missions, the Marshal determines who will deploy on the secondary.

*The secondary mission in this case is a recon mission against Breaker's troops. The rewards are a significant intel boost, and the penalty is an increase in pressure. The Marshal assembles the roll and gets a 1-3. Three Rookies die (morale loss for them is calculated during the bookkeeping step), and both the Specialists on the mission take level 3 harm. So what happened? The group discusses that when the remaining two Rookies show back up, their horse is dragging a travois with the Specialists, who are screaming. Apparently the squad was near the scouting site, camping for the night, when in the middle of a funny story by the Officer, a massive Devourer with a powerful Shadow Witch landed in the middle of camp. Those that weren't ripped apart fled, but the Specialists were hit with a powerful curse that looks like bugs crawling beneath their skin (the Marshal makes note of this on their playbooks). This mission also counts as failed, so its penalty (additional pressure) will be added during the bookkeeping step.*

## BOOKKEEPING

Once you've finished your missions (successfully, or not), you need to apply the appropriate mission rewards or penalties. If you accomplished your mission objective, you gain the mission rewards, and if you do not, you suffer the mission penalties. It's important to recognize that not all mission objectives require the survival of the squad. More than one Legionnaire has made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause.

When Legionnaires do die, however, the Legion suffers a morale penalty of -1 per death. These are applied during this bookkeeping step after the mission. Each of the surviving Legionnaires on the mission also earns xp. Both tracking morale and calling for players to mark xp are duties of the Marshal, and are described on page 125.

## BACK AT CAMP

Life at camp is vibrant, messy, and subject to the tremendous pressure of the undead closing in. After the squad finishes the mission, the Lorekeeper sets a Back at Camp scene. (If there is no Lorekeeper in your campaign, this duty falls to your GM.) These scenes depict life in the Legion and continue the story after the end of the mission.

The scene you choose must be chosen from the list, based on the current morale of the Legion. Consult with the Marshal to select a scene from the list for the appropriate level of morale. After playing out that scene, you must cross it off your list. If no scenes of the correct level of morale remain when you go to select your scene, select one from the next level down.

### HIGH MORALE SCENES (8+ MORALE)

- ◆ Soldiers hold a remembrance for the fallen.
- ◆ A young soldier is detonating munitions, egged on by others.
- ◆ Storms darken the skies. Rumors and wild speculation spread.
- ◆ Supply crates go missing, but no one admits to knowing why.
- ◆ A squad talks about home, and asks their captain about theirs.
- ◆ Your Chosen has fallen silent and refuses to speak to anyone.

### MEDIUM MORALE SCENES (4-7 MORALE)

- ◆ A fight breaks out over one Legionnaire stealing from another.
- ◆ After an undead attack the Legion must break camp and relocate.
- ◆ A soldier is caught selling supplies to locals for special treats or favors.
- ◆ News arrives of devastation from a different front.
- ◆ A squad refuses to go into the field until their captain is replaced.
- ◆ A band of refugees stumbles upon your camp and begs for help. *May happen twice.*

### LOW MORALE SCENES (3- MORALE)

- ◆ A festering blight wound covered up by a soldier is revealed.
- ◆ A bunch of Legion medical supplies are missing. The wounded cry.
- ◆ Hidden experimentation on an undead is uncovered within the camp.
- ◆ Screams can be heard in the distance at all hours, preventing any rest. *May happen twice.*
- ◆ A hungry squad that resorted to foraging becomes badly ill. *May happen twice.*
- ◆ A deserter is caught before they can leave. Judgment must be passed. *May happen three times.*



## FRAME AND PLAY THE SCENE

Explain the idea of the scene to the table and ask a few people to take on specific parts during a scene. You can ask who wants to play a particular character in the scene, or ask a player if they can play the character that embodies their Role. The GM can play the Chosen in the scene, if they need to be present. These scenes should be short and direct—perhaps 5 to 10 minutes, as the table desires.

Try to select scenes that incorporate the themes of game: something from the recently completed missions can serve as inspiration. Perhaps the themes of the Broken you keep running into can be worked into the scene.

## MISSION PHASE SUMMARY

- ◆ **CHOOSE MISSION PRIORITY.** The GM lists available missions, and gives mission briefings including a short list of objectives, rewards, and penalties. The Commander (and if present, the Spymaster) asks their intel questions. The Commander chooses which mission is the priority mission and which is secondary. The Legion only has resources to deploy for two missions, as the camp is constantly attacked, so they automatically fail the third mission when it's present.
- ◆ **RESOLVE MISSIONS.** The Marshal selects who goes on each mission and who is in charge. They also ask the engagement questions and make the engagement roll (during which the Quartermaster can spend materiel to help). Zoom in and play through the primary mission. The Marshal also should make sure all Legionnaires get xp at the end of each mission. Legionnaires played on the primary mission gain xp according to the back of their playbook. Resolve the secondary mission with an engagement roll. Specialists that survive the secondary mission mark 2 xp.
- ◆ **BOOKEEPING.** Mark -1 morale for each Legionnaire that died on the mission. There are so few left that each death is felt. Always apply mission penalties first. If you've attempted the mission and been at least partially successful (GM has final say), don't apply the mission penalty. Gain mission rewards for successful missions.
- ◆ **BACK AT CAMP.** If you have a Lorekeeper, they set a scene that occurs as the troops return from their missions. If you do not, this is the GM's responsibility. Play out the scene.



## CHAPTER 6

# THE CAMPAIGN PHASE

*The Grinning Ravens came back from recon with their horses hitched to a cart they stole from an undead-held village. A yellow berry called “konigzuf” grows up in the local mountains. Apparently one of the rookies recognized a building in the village, and risked the mission to rescue several barrels of brandy and packages of a curious gold-colored sweet made from the stuff.*

*Without any specific word, the other squads started cooking and pulling out carefully hoarded spices and fresh foods, and wandering over to the Ravens’ camp. By nightfall, most of the Legion was laughing and sharing stories there. Instruments appeared. Even the command staff made an appearance. The Commander showed us an old Bartan dance she knew.*

*I saw our Chosen at the edge of the firelight watching us, unsure why in the middle of all the fighting and death we were all laughing and feasting. I looked back at the Vipers putting on a comedy skit, and was struck with warmth and joy at this strange little family I adopted.*

*I took some drink and food and went to feed the people on watch, and offered to relieve them so they too might remember why we trust each other, what the Legion is, and what we fight for.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

Life in the Legion isn’t all missions and undead. After the dust settles and the Legionnaires return to camp, the leaders of the Legion convene and discuss their next moves. Does the Legion advance? What resources are left to supply the troops? And how best can they make use of the people at their command?

The more strategic elements of the war are played out in the **campaign phase**. Time passes, several of the Roles play out their campaign actions, and the Commander decides whether to advance. Finally, missions are generated so that the next mission phase can begin anew.



## TIME PASSES

At the beginning of every campaign phase, time marches forward, even if the Legion does not. The Commander adds one tick to the currently unfinished “Time” clock. If this fills up a clock for the first time, the Broken gain an advance. The Quartermaster also uses 1 Food to sate the appetites of the troops. If they cannot, the Marshal reduces morale by 2. Finally, the undead continue to encroach on the camp—the Commander increases pressure by 1. If a Lorekeeper is present, they tell their tales if enough Legionnaires have died (see page 143).

## CAMPAIGN ACTIONS

The Quartermaster (page 135) (and Spymaster, if present), have campaign actions to spend after time passes. In general, these actions are the responsibility of their respective player, but the group should discuss these actions with each other to get the result that everyone wants.

## ADVANCE

The last action for the Legion is for the Commander to decide whether they are going to order the Legion to advance, and along which path. Each time the Legion advances, time is increased by rolling pressure and adding an appropriate amount of ticks to the “Time” clock: **1-3:** One, **4/5:** Two, **6:** Three, **CRITICAL:** Five. If the Legion runs out of time while advancing, even if they are advancing to Skydagger, they are cut off by the undead, and the Legion is lost. (See the Commander Role on page 117 for more information about advancing, and page 428 for more information about ending the game.)



## FREE PLAY

Sometimes there will be unresolved business after the mission or campaign phases. Though it's often fun to let drama stew via clocks and boil over during missions, it can also be fun to play out scenes of day-to-day life in the camp, where we can view our Legionnaires outside of the life-or-death context of a mission. This is addressed in **free play**.

Free play scenes are like the Back at Camp scene, but instead of coming from a list of specific scenes contingent on morale, a free play scene can be anything you want to see. Feel free to speak in character as the command staff (Commander, Quartermaster, Marshal, or others) to make decisions about the Legion. As a player (and this includes the GM), call for any scenes you want to have, and explain what you're looking to get out of them.

Use these scenes to zoom in on the personalities and conflicts of the Legionnaires outside of the mission scenes. If you don't have any ideas for scenes in mind, that's okay. Let your default be *we'll find out in play during missions*.

Here are some example scenes that you might like to see in your game:

- ◆ The Soldier and Rookie that got into an argument during a mission attempt to mend fences. *Who makes the first move?*
- ◆ The Marshal reprimands an Officer for abandoning the mission objective. *What punishment might they receive?*
- ◆ The Legion awards a commendation for bravery to a Legionnaire for their heroics last mission. *Is attendance mandatory?*
- ◆ The squad tells heartfelt memories about a fallen comrade over dinner.
- ◆ Two Snipers boast about which of them is going to be the first to bring down a Broken over a game of cards.
- ◆ A squad welcomes a transfer from a different squad, the sole survivor of a mission that went terribly wrong. *Do they think they're cursed?*
- ◆ A Legionnaire confides in their friend about the blight they've been hiding.
- ◆ The Chosen visits one or all of the people on the last mission, for their own agenda. *How rarely does the Chosen speak directly to the troops?*
- ◆ The leaders of the Legion discuss whether to divulge horrible news to the troops or to keep it hidden. *Do they believe the troops trust them?*
- ◆ A Legionnaire begins or continues their studies to gain a new special ability. For example, a Soldier is studying to become a Grenadier, or Cavalry. Or an Officer is undergoing Officer School training. *What does that look like? What resources does it take?*

## EXAMPLE CAMPAIGN PHASE

Sam's group has just finished a mission phase. The primary mission was tough but successful, and the secondary mission was a failure. The Legion is currently located in Plainsworth and now must consider their options.

### CHARACTERS

For the purposes of this example, here's the group of players and their Roles that we're following through the campaign phase:

- ◆ **GM.** Since there's no Lorekeeper in this example, Sam will be running the Back at Camp scenes, portraying NPCs and preparing missions. **Player:** Samantha aka "Sam."
- ◆ **COMMANDER.** Portrayed as a bold, brilliant, Bartan woman that's led the Legion for many years. **Player:** Rachel.
- ◆ **MARSHAL.** Portrayed as a grizzled Zemyati veteran. **Player:** Juan.
- ◆ **QUARTERMASTER.** Portrayed as a shrewd and calculating Orite, focused on helping the Legion through cunning long-term plans. **Player:** Dwayne.
- ◆ **SPYMASTER.** The Spymaster, a Panyar woman, is focused on playing a strong supporting role, including extending intel on missions and enhancing missions. **Player:** Alice.

### BACK AT CAMP

Wrapping up the mission phase, the group has arrived at camp. Since there is no Lorekeeper in this campaign, the GM frames the Back at Camp scene. The players take on the roles of the Legionnaires returning from the mission as they're accosted by pilgrims, who are begging to be let into the camp so that they may travel with the Chosen of their god. They discover that, though the pilgrims are self-sufficient, a few show signs of blight, so the Heavy from the mission sends them away rather than risk their lives on Shreya's "mercy." The group passes all their playbooks to Juan—the Marshal—and each grabs their rolebooks as they enter the campaign phase proper.

### TIME PASSES

Rachel, playing the Commander, already increased the pressure by 1 as a result of the failed secondary mission. When time passes, she increases the pressure by 1 again (it's at a total of 3 now) and adds a tick to the "Time" clock.

Dwayne is playing the Quartermaster, and he marks off one circle of Food. The Legionnaires are fed another few days.

### ROLE DISCUSSIONS

Dwayne takes a careful look at his Quartermaster sheet and purses his lips. He looks up at Rachel. "Hey Commander, are we still planning to advance?"



"I was," answers Rachel. "Why?"

"Well the pressure is pretty high," says Dwayne. "I wanted to grab more horses in Plainsworth, since there's a bonus to acquiring them here. Do you know where we're advancing to and what the horse situation is there?"

Rachel frowns and checks her sheet. "I wanted to go north, but there isn't a place to resupply until the mines. We'd have to survive the Long Road. I don't know how difficult that will be."

Dwayne scratches his cheek, thinking. "You never make it easy on me. Do we know what the Long Road takes to navigate? Like, what's hard or easy to get there in terms of supplies?"

"I can help with that," chimes in Alice.

## **SPYMASTER ACTIONS**

Alice is playing the Spymaster. She got lucky on some of her improvement rolls and has a Spy Network upgrade already—in her case Field Assessment. Her spies are Igrid (who can ask extra questions when interrogating) and Bortis (who improves the spy network faster, and how Alice got the upgrade so soon).

"So Sam," says Alice, getting the GM's attention. "I'm going to task Igrid to do some interrogation. She asks two questions normally, but we finished the Field Assessment upgrade so I get three." Sam nods. Rachel offers Alice her Commander sheet to reference for intel questions. She picks one from the 2 intel list. "What challenges or problems are inherent on the Long Road?"

"The Long Road is hundreds of miles of poorly upkept Old Empire road," says Sam. "There are few places to resupply and fewer towns. It's weeks of marching on plains that have some bad weather this time of year, running on mostly what you have packed. To put it bluntly, it costs extra Food to spend time there, the assets rating for the Quartermaster acquiring assets is zero dice, and there's only recon and assault missions available. In terms of threats, Igrid finds out there's rumors of blighted beasts and travelers being attacked."

"Hmm," says Dwayne. "I'd need to gather extra Food too if we're going that way. Our supplies are too low to take that road safely as it stands now. Sunstrider might be easier, Commander."

Rachel thinks a moment. "Alice, can you figure out what the rewards are for going north? Is it worth trying to scrape the resources together to make that journey?"

Alice nods and looks at the question list for another moment, before asking, "What resources or benefits might we find in the mountains up ahead?"

"Which specific location are you thinking of?" asks Sam.

"I guess Barrak Mines? If I'm sending Igrid up north, can I tell her to get me some general info on what travelers are saying about the overall area, even if it means not getting specific intel about a single place?" queries Alice.

Sam thinks about the route. A spy would probably spend time in Barrak before climbing the mountains to find temples. Also Igrid is really good at asking questions. She glances over the locations up ahead. She thinks Alice's request is reasonable.

"Barrak has a ton of Black Shot available, and some Alchemists to boot. It's a good place to pick up those sorts of supplies. As for the mountains, there are some famous temples from previous eras high up that might have powerful artifacts or blessings. Is that fair?"

Alice nods. "Okay, I'm going to save my last question for the missions. Rachel, does that help you decide where we're going?"

"Well," says Rachel, "you don't get to be Commander by going with the safe choices. I want to see those temples." She grins as Dwayne groans. "Let's see what trouble we can get into by racing the undead north."

"Okay," says Alice, "I think I'll get Igrid to investigate those temples next time with a question about special missions there, but for now, I'll tell Bortis to stop expanding my network and start guaranteeing us one of those missions up there."

She flips her sheet over, and picks up Bortis's two dice (one base, plus one because he's a Master spy). She rolls for the long-term assignment and gets a 1 and a 4—and marks two segments. At least Bortis wasn't hurt, and the mission will probably be ready by the time they get there.

"Okay," says Alice. "I'm good for now."

## CAMPAIGN ACTIONS

"I might boost a Liberty action to try and get our morale out of the dirt," says Dwayne.

Juan says, "Our morale took a hit, but you still get two free actions. Morale is lower—right at the edge of medium—but you don't have to boost it this time."

"A boosted Liberty would also increase the stress reduction though. How are we for stress across the Legion?" asks Dwayne.

Juan reviews his Marshal sheet and chews his lip. "Without the boost, most folks would be at 2 or less stress. It's a third of most stress tracks, but it's workable."

"Okay. I'll need extra Food and Horses for the long road. That leaves me in a tricky place for actions. How bad off are we if I don't heal up our troops with Rest and Recuperation?"

Juan checks his Marshal sheet. "I have an extra squad at this point, though we'll probably have to Recruit more Legionnaires at the mines. The Specialists are the problem. The Marchioness is good for assault missions, assuming we get one, but our Scouts and Snipers are wounded. Blue Rising Iron is only a little hurt. They'd be going out with level 1 harm. A Rest and Recuperation would clear them for duty. What are you thinking for the missions, Commander?"

"I'm throwing you into the fire with this whole north path idea. Let's stick with assault to keep our morale high," Rachel says.

“Good,” says Dwayne. “I’m going to probably burn through my spare supply. Can we make sure to look for supply missions around Barrak Mines?”

Rachel nods. “It’s a deal.”

“Okay, then. Here’s the campaign actions.” Dwayne points at Juan. “I’m doing a regular Liberty. Clear 3 stress from all Legionnaires, and add 2 morale.” Juan marks the morale change, and starts going through the sheets for the Legionnaires and clearing stress.

“Sam,” says Dwayne, “for my second action I’m going to acquire some Horses. What’s the assets rating of Plainsworth?”

Sam checks the location. “Two is the rating for most things, but you get +2d for Food and Horses here.”

“Looks like I’ve picked the right time to grab this stuff,” he says, picking up four dice and rolling. “Whoa, a **CRIT**. What’s that get me?”

Sam thinks a moment. “You’re lucky! A few people are selling off goods before departing east ahead of the undead, and you get a really good price. Feel free to draw in an extra circle of Horses. You get four uses instead of three.”

Dwayne marks off a supply. “Okay, for the cost of a supply, I want another action to acquire Food.” He rolls the four dice and gets a **4**. “Standard quality is enough for Food right?” he asks. Sam nods. He marks a single Food box, but gets four uses owing to the Legion’s Supply Cart.

## LABORERS AND ALCHEMISTS

“Okay,” says Dwayne. “Sam, I want to start a new project for my Laborers to work on. What would it take to upgrade the Legion line troops’ gear quality?”

Sam chews her lip and thinks hard. “Usually that would be outside the scope of a campaign. We’re talking dozens of weapons of high quality, which takes months to forge or massive amounts of purchasing power. We can make a 12-clock, and if you find some high-quality metal or you’re in a place where you can find fine quality gear, like some of the forges in Barrak, we can do a Long-Term Project roll.”

Dwayne frowns but draws the clock in his notes. “I don’t know that I have the supply to try and find fine or better metal here. Okay. What about some stills? Can I have my Laborers work on a still that can be put on the back of a cart?”

Sam shrugs. “What do you expect the still to do?”

“Maybe increases the stress relief of a Liberty action by one?”

“Sure,” says Sam. “Make a 6-clock.”

“Okay, I’ll tick it once for my Laborers. Lastly, I want to roll for my Alchemist.”

Earlier in the game, Dwayne and Sam had discussed Alchemists. The Legion has faced some of Blighter’s chemicals and also Render’s hounds, and discovered that the ability to go without breathing would be useful.

The Legion's Alchemist has been brewing potions to help troops do just that. The 4-clock alchemy project has two ticks already. Dwane rolls a die for the single Alchemist, and gets a 5. Two ticks, completing the clock! He then rolls again and gets another 5. The Alchemist will take 2 corruption. He marks it on his role-book. The potions are done, and the Alchemist is at 3 of 8 corruption. If there were a second Alchemist, they could split the corruption between them, but the Legion has yet to find another.

"So how do we handle the potions?" Dwayne asks Sam.

"Just fill in one of the empty slots on your Quartermaster sheet. You'll get three uses. If you spend it on a mission, everyone equips a potion."

"Excellent," says Dwayne. "I think that's it for my actions."

## **ADVANCEMENT AND MISSIONS**

"Okay," says Rachel. "We're advancing to the Long Road. I've got 3 pressure. Dwayne, are you spending Horses?"

"Yeah, I'll spend one from our last batch and one from this new one. That leaves us three to carry us to Barrak. I'll try to resupply some horses there."

Rachel rolls a die for pressure being at 1, and gets a 5. She marks two ticks on the "Time" clock and lets Sam know the first clock is full. Sam grabs her Broken sheets and starts perusing their abilities. Each will gain one new horrible way to accost the Legion.

"Before we wrap up for tonight, Rachel do you know what your mission priority is?"

"We agreed on assault I think," says Rachel. "Let's keep morale high as we advance."

"Are you spending an intel for special missions?" asks Sam.

"Nah, I think I'll save it for the mountains," answers Rachel.

"Excellent, I'll make sure the Broken are ready with some nasty surprises for next time. We'll start with a description of the area you're traveling through and the mission briefings."

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The previous is just an example. Consider how you would change some of the calls made during your own game:

- ◆ Would you have given Alice the opportunity to modify her spy's question? To what extent?
- ◆ What sorts of benefits would you have assigned the **CRITICAL** Acquire Assets roll? Would you have changed the nature of the horses, perhaps offering Firemanes from Sunstrider? Or added a different benefit?
- ◆ Is a 4-clock sufficient for an alchemy project like Deep potions? Considering how quickly Alchemists burn out, would you make it a 3-clock?

## CAMPAIGN PHASE SUMMARY

- ◆ **TIME PASSES.** **Time** and **pressure** on the Commander rolebook increase by 1 each. The Quartermaster must spend **1 Food** use to feed the Legion or the Legion loses 2 morale. The Lorekeeper tells their tales of the Legion (if enough Legionnaires have died).
- ◆ **CAMPAIGN ACTIONS.** The Quartermaster takes **campaign actions**. The Legion will get a number of campaign actions for free based on troop morale. This is also when Laborers work on Long-Term Projects, the Spymaster (if you have one) deploys their spies on assignments, and Alchemists can be used to perform alchemy projects.
- ◆ **LEGION ADVANCES.** Ask the Commander if the Legion will **advance** to the next location, and which path they'll take. If the Legion advances, the Commander will roll **pressure** to see how much **time** they accumulate. The Quartermaster may spend **Horses** to lower pressure for this roll (one use per pressure).
- ◆ **MISSION FOCUS.** The Commander chooses which **mission type** to focus on from those available in the Legion's current location. This doesn't guarantee that such a mission will appear in the next set, but it makes it far more likely.
- ◆ **MISSION GENERATION.** The GM generates and fleshes out missions using a combination of the charts on their sheet, and what has happened previously in the campaign. This process is detailed on page 314.





# CHAPTER 7

## HOW TO PLAY

*Everything hurts.*

*Our Medic cleared me for duty yesterday. Because one of the Shattered Lions was promoted, the Marshal pulled me aside and talked to me about filling the spot. I walked anxiously to their section of camp.*

*The Lions have always been larger than life. The pride of the Legion. Our very best. I was once again a nervous teenager, wondering if I would be accepted, or if cool gazes would greet transfer orders. Their leader—a Zemyati named Eleya—approached me and her stony face broke into a smile as she clapped my shoulder. Tonight, she said, we would celebrate.*

*The Lions know how to drink. Blighter was chasing us and rumor was that advance forces were about. Despite that, we snuck past the perimeter and walked miles to a local village, where Eleya woke the innkeeper. I don't know what she told him, but the man poured a drink for us. Then two. Then three. My cheeks were warm and I felt accepted. The walk back was good.*

*We caught the acrid smell of alchemicals before we got to the fight. The camp was under attack. The Marshal was holding the east flank and his squad was about to be overrun. Eleya didn't hesitate. Three of us had brought steel. Eleya drew her oath knife. We charged.*

*It was panting and panic. Screams of warning and close calls. Eleya took a nasty hit to her shoulder. And then fight was over. We grinned at each other. When the Marshal asked “where were you Lions an hour ago?” The grins vanished.*

*We've been digging ditches since last night. The Legionnaires stop by periodically to give us a hard time. We throw back jibes and grin at them and at each other. I guess I've found a new squad to call home.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## FICTION-FIRST GAMING

While the order of play is as regimented as life in the Legion, this is fundamentally a game used to tell a story. You choose what you want to see in the story and try to make those things happen by describing the fiction of a scene. You'll engage with the rules as you go to determine the outcomes, after you make clear what the story is. The term for this style of play is **fiction-first gaming**.

The rules of **Band of Blades** are there to facilitate that story. You say what your character does in the scene that you and your group at the table are collectively weaving. You engage with the fiction first, describe the narrative, and then apply rules (like action rolls) if they're called for and appropriate. Your choices are only constrained by the fictional context in which you make those choices. You may even be unsure what mechanics to engage with until you examine the context you're in.

For example, here are several mechanics in **Band of Blades** that could be used if you're trying to fix a broken ballista. To understand which mechanic to use, we have to first establish the fiction.

If you're in the campaign phase, there's no real risk, so you may be able to just fix the weapon. If the parts you have to replace are rare or customized, maybe you have to spend a few weeks forging a new torsion spring. This uses the Long-Term Project mechanic. Or if you don't want to wait and you're in a city, maybe you can acquire the asset of a master smith. It might cost a supply to get someone skilled enough, but it'll be quick and safe.

On the other hand, if you're on a mission and the Rotters are coming over a hill, and you have moments to string up a new bowstring on your ballista, this is a different story. You might have to quickly **RIG** some rope up. Perhaps you leverage some **RESEARCH** you've done on the matter, or you can **MARSHAL** your squad to make the rapid repairs you need.

There are countless approaches one could take, constrained only by the circumstances of the story. Once you establish what's going on in the fiction, determining which mechanic to engage with is usually straightforward. If you attempt to reverse that process, play can become confused or flat. Likewise, if play gets confusing, it often helps to re-examine what was going on in the fiction.

Don't try to force any particular rule on the fiction. Sticking with a fiction-first approach ensures that everything happening in the fiction stems from something in the narrative, and makes players more invested in the story.

This game has a lot of tools! Without a fictional context, however, these tools are inert. Use the ones that suit what you're trying to do as established by the fiction. This process of matching the tool to the job requires judgment and opinions about what pieces of the toolkit are provided by the game.

As your group gains familiarity with the rules, you'll have opinions about which tools are best for which circumstances. This is a really good thing! The process of determining which tools to use and why can be thoroughly creative and satisfying. It's up to you and your group to learn the options the game provides and decide how to best take advantage of them. As you do so, you'll establish a set of precedents and a style of gameplay that is uniquely your own.



## TRIGGERING THE ACTION ROLL

Play at the table looks a lot like a group conversation—you narrate actions, speak for your character, make wisecracks, speculate about what is going on.

At some point, the conversation switches. It's still a conversation, but now it's about the rules themselves and engaging with them correctly. This shift in topic is the GM's responsibility to manage, but anyone can call attention to it. For actions, you should call for a roll when any of these happen:

- ◆ A player character attempts a challenging action that might be dangerous, opposed, or troublesome.
- ◆ A player character leads or gives orders to an NPC or group of NPCs that faces something dangerous or troublesome.
- ◆ Someone grabs the dice and gets excited about making a roll.

The GM should interrogate the player's approach, which determines which action rating they'll use. It's also important to clarify the position the player is in and the effect level they'll have.

*"We need to get into that weapons depot to recover the equipment cache that was left behind."*

*"Okay, how are you doing that? There are undead crawling all over the area."*

*"We're going to **SCOUT** in, past the undead in the depot."*

*"Alright. That sounds risky. They're there to specifically catch people like you. It's at limited effect—you can get on-site but you'll still need to make your way to the correct building."*

Anyone at the table can contribute—clarifying, suggesting alternative positions and effect levels, or even offering new approaches that might be more or less dangerous. Once everyone is satisfied, you shift into the mechanical resolution, picking up dice and rolling them.

Don't just roll without going through the process of setting a meaningful position and effect.

If a player wants to take a shambling undead out with a single sniper shot, how easy or dangerous is that? Is the position controlled? Risky? Desperate? What is the character risking? Taking a moment to get everything contextualized makes outcomes feel natural, and the fiction make sense. Clarity before the roll helps avoid asking "Now what?" at the consequences.

Baked into the action roll is the assumption that things are never completely safe. Situations can change, some things can't be foreseen. There's always a risk of things like harm, consequences, losing an opportunity, or entering a dangerous situation. Characters still get stuff done. The 4/5 result is often enough to accomplish a goal, but there's a cost.

Is the enemy returning fire? Are both combatants fighting for their lives? Then the position is probably desperate. On a **4/5**, the player does it, yeah, but with serious consequences! They inflict a mortal wound, and receive one in return.

For some, receiving a deadly wound doesn't feel like success. But in **Band of Blades**, an action roll covers the whole exchange. It resolves both the PC's action and that of the enemy. That enemy is trying to do something too, and a partial success means they managed to do about as much.

If less immediate consequences are appropriate, the GM can use a clock. Instead of being seen on a **4/5 SCOUT** roll, start an "Alert" clock. This technique allows you to maintain the tension longer. Explain the fictional consequences when you adjust these clocks. Perhaps the undead Crow, after spotting a moving shadow but not finding the character immediately, gestures to the Rotters under its command to fan out.

Surviving to Skydagger involves struggles—nothing comes for free. The Legion has to carve out its victories despite the overwhelming forces of the undead and the reticent and fearful citizenry of Aldermark. The PCs have resources (such as stress or armor) to mitigate consequences. The players have to make hard choices about what's worth resisting with limited stress pools, and when to take a hit for a squadmate, accept a tough Devil's Bargain, and so on.

Teamwork is a great tool for stretching out resources and can change position, improve effect, improve your odds, or spread harm around.

When it comes to positions, ask what the PC is risking and figure out what position that implies. If they're about to take lethal harm, the position is probably desperate. Describe the NPCs mid-action, about to do something to the PC before the roll, to highlight risks.

*"The Hound is charging you, full-bore. You have a clean shot but if you don't land the shot just right, it's going to tear into you at full speed. Desperate position, great effect."*

Be mindful of these positions, as differences of threat can quickly make the consequences very dire indeed. Even with a **4/5**, a desperate position against a threat two levels higher than you is level 5 harm.

Experiment with these dials—position, effect, consequences. As a GM, avoid unilateral decisions—ask the group what they think. Is this desperate? Should it be limited effect or a one-and-done deal? By reaching out to the group, you develop buy-in to how the game goes and establish what works for your group.



## WHY WE DO THIS

We could just talk everything out instead of involving dice, but as people, we tend to build consensus. This is a good thing! It helps establish rapport, set expectations, and create a shared narrative. But we don't want to know what's going to happen before characters go into danger; we want to be surprised, driven to bigger risks, or inspired into new approaches by unexpected setbacks.

The roll introduces the unexpected. It tells us the costs of our choices. It interjects new problems and difficulties, and asks us to rise to new challenges together. We play using dice because we welcome this opportunity to be surprised, betrayed, and challenged by them.

When the action mechanic is triggered, we become the authors while we set position, define the threats, and determine the possible outcomes. Then author mode switches off and everyone gets to be the audience, holding their breath, waiting to see exactly how it all works out as the dice fall.

## HOW TO CHOOSE AN ACTION

An action roll is typically called for when the character is in motion, facing an uncertain outcome due to difficulty or obstacle.

Whatever they do within the fiction will determine the action rating they roll. A player is free to revise their character's action in order to use a different rating, as long as the character performs that new action in the fiction.

*Red Striking Pyre wants the Ember Wolves to charge a Horror. Just one problem: the Wolves don't want to die. The GM asks how Red Striking convinces them. "I yell that they need to fall in or we're dead here anyway!" Juan is describing a **DISCIPLINE** action, so that's what he'll roll. He might change his mind and say, "Oh, I'm not any good at **DISCIPLINE**. I want to **MARSHAL** instead." But simply wanting to use another action isn't enough—the action you take in the story is the action you roll.*

Sometimes, several different actions can apply to a given situation. This is fine! The player can choose the action they want to perform and the GM will set the position of the roll accordingly.

*Red Striking asks whether he can use **CONSORT** instead of **DISCIPLINE**. "I am the most senior squad member. I look at all my squadmates and tell them that we're Wolves. We're first into the fray. We've faced down equally hard challenges, and we will face down even harder ones in the future. We have to be together or we might as well already be dead." The GM says that a **CONSORT** is controlled, but limited effect. Red Striking can tug on their hearts, but the presence of the Horror is a huge factor. Juan decides to use Red Striking's better action rating and push for effect instead of falling back to **DISCIPLINE**.*



What Juan chooses to say in the end can change what action is rolled, and even the position and effect. The player ultimately makes the choice about how they will approach the situation at hand.

You can find details on each action, how to use them, and how some positions may play out for them, starting on page 274.

## DANGER AND STRESS

It can, at first, seem like the players are invincible—undead with low threat have little impact on the prepared Legionnaire, and there are so many ways to reduce or avoid consequences. It may feel like the NPCs or threats do nothing. This is okay! Despite the resources they have, the PCs have the odds stacked against them everywhere else. Resistance and the stress system give them a special ability to survive when they otherwise shouldn't. This gives players hope of achieving their long-term goals.

The purpose of threatening harm is not always to inflict it, but to describe it. It shows us what could happen in the fiction. Those threats shape the story as much as any character's actions, even if they're avoided.

*"The Shadow Witch's hex paralyzes your whole body!"*

*"You hear ribs snap as the Horror slams into your side."*

*"You can almost see her heart break as she realizes you're lying."*

Giving voice to these horrible possibilities makes the world feel dangerous, visceral, and real. Then the player gets to roll resistance and say, "No way. It's not that bad. I'll take whatever the stress cost is instead." It's empowering. It's the moment a character stands in defiance against an unfair world and says, "Not today."

You should describe harmful outcomes with gusto, but not be hung up on actually inflicting them. Instead of saying "You take level 3 harm," describe how the caustic acid sprays the entire front of a character, blistering their skin and causing them to collapse in agony. The harm becomes manifest in that description. Once revealed, the player actually cares about resisting it. "Oh, heck no. I'll mark armor instead." But the only way they know whether to risk the stress cost or spend a limited resource is if you describe the outcome. Each cycle of threat and resistance requires a new fictional outcome, leading to new, interesting places in the story.

## NPC DANGER

The severity of the consequences for an action is relative to the danger of the opposition. Weaker opponents have weaker levels of consequences on a standard outcome.

For instance, if the players are facing an NPC you've described as a haggard refugee who has been drafted into the local resistance efforts, the consequence of getting into a tussle with him might be getting punched in the face, or being wrestled to the ground.

The same situation is different if you're facing Lugos, the Clockwork Assassin. The expected consequence for getting in a tussle with it is a blade driven into the PC's heart by a mechanical piston-driven arm.

Because there are no stats or action ratings for NPCs, it is through the severity of their consequences, combined with the position and effect of the PC's action roll, that their difference in danger and threat is made real.

A dangerous NPC can take the initiative. Describe what the NPC is about to accomplish, then ask the character what they do.

*"The Devourer sniffs twice as you enter the courtyard and detects you on the far side. It takes briefly to the air as it pounces towards your squad. What do you do?"*

The PC's actions—and resulting action roll—will tell us how effective the NPC was. An action roll serves double duty, resolving both PC and NPC actions at the same time.

If the NPC is a true master of that moment, tell the players what the NPC has already done, then ask if they want to resist it.

*"As you shoulder down the door to the chapel, you see Viktoria Karhowl, hunched over the repurposed altar, upon which lays the sergeant you came to rescue. Karhowl throws a lever and an ichorous green fluid begins to flow into the tubes into the sergeant's neck. He screams, and his flesh begins warping. Do you want to resist your sergeant's corruption?"*

How much you can negate with a resistance roll will determine the tone of the game. Perhaps the resistance roll to save the sergeant will inflict some of that corruption upon the person resisting—you rip out the tubes, but are covered in ichor. Perhaps you want a more heroic feel, where such resistances can avoid the problem altogether. Some gaming groups prefer really strong dangers that are completely avoided with a resistance, as a way to punch up the stakes.

You don't have to decide this all at once. Be flexible and allow your group to grow into whatever they're most excited about. As you play, you'll establish examples and precedents that will establish your tone and genre expectations.

## THERE ARE ALWAYS CONSEQUENCES

No matter the outcome, every roll changes the situation and fiction. There's no such thing as a "nothing happens" result from a roll. How does this work?

"Failure" results for action rolls (1-3) are not simply "misses." The character's attempt has a tangible outcome. Something happens that changes the situation. On a controlled failure, the character spots a flaw in the approach, and can decide to withdraw or push their luck with a risky action. On a risky failure, the character suffers a consequence that presents some kind of trouble. Things get worse. On a desperate failure, the threat dominates and makes the situation much worse.

The characters are affected, the consequences linger, and the fiction is in a new place at the end of every roll. When you reach for the dice, something interesting should happen (good or bad).

## INTRODUCING RULES AS NEEDED

If you only use the core mechanic of action rolls and forget all the extra details or special cases, the system will continue to function just fine. The game is better when you use all the tools, but it won't come crashing down if you don't.

If you want to ease into the mechanics, make everything risky action rolls with standard effect. Don't worry about effect factors right away. Explain resistance rolls when something bad happens to a PC that they want to resist. When the group starts asking about teamwork and helping each other, bring in the teamwork maneuvers. When they go up against tougher opponents who are meant to be very dangerous, bring in effect factors. You don't have to explain everything up front.

The game is meant to be flexible, allowing players to revise their approaches, inject flashbacks, and discuss things as they come up. The same goes for the story. Don't feel like you have to get everything perfect every time. If you say something and then realize later that it was wrong, just revise it. No big deal.

*"I told you that Breaker was seen out west, but that was all wrong. It was supposed to be Blighter."*

*"Oh! Well that changes things. Okay, got it."*

If you're not sure what to do, keep it simple. Go with the obvious thing. Add mechanics when you're comfortable. Forgive each other's mistakes.

## SETTING PRECEDENTS

The PCs and NPCs are in the same world—what’s true for one is true for the other. If you establish that alchemical timers can be set with down-to-the-minute precision, that fact becomes true for an NPC’s bombs as well. If a skilled NPC can instantly kill an unsuspecting victim, then the PCs can too.

Judgment calls or new details about the game world become available to everyone as a new tool in play. Precedents don’t have to be permanent—feel free to revise them as you go along. But when you revise them, it still cuts both ways—for PCs and NPCs alike.

## ABSTRACTION VS. DETAILS

**Band of Blades** usually relies on specific fictional details in order to work. For example, it may become important to understand exactly how the wards on a holy temple work. It’s a small detail, but the description of alchemical protections guarding the temple contributes directly to understanding which position to roll for the action, the factors that go into effect, and the consequences of failure. Fleshing out the details of the world makes the story flow easily and the game system function better.

At other times, abstraction is preferred or necessary. For example, the players wonder how the small village they’re crossing through has fared through the war. Did they retreat within themselves and still have some resources? Have they turned to raiding travelers for their goods? Do they desperately need help? The GM could create or try to remember all the minute details, or she could simply make a quick fortune roll using the nearby location’s assets rating and see how it went for them. If no specific details have been established in play to indicate the town’s disposition, then abstraction is a useful tool.

If details are already present in the fiction or the game prep, using an abstraction may be unreasonable. For example, we may know for a fact that this particular village was the site of a huge battle and half the town burned. In this case, the catchall of the assets rating might not be as useful. Maybe with that kind of prep it’s obvious that the town is a shambles, so the GM just says so because of the already established facts. Or perhaps there’s still some variability, so the GM makes a 2d fortune roll for “Aldermani hardiness” rather than just the assets rating.

The same goes for the quality of items, assets, and defensive measures. Just because a Black Oak Knight is threat 2 doesn’t mean every piece of gear is better. If their fancy armor doesn’t protect them from an alchemical dust, or if they’re without their fine steel weapons, they may no longer be threat 2. Threat is an abstraction indicating the quality of a Black Oak Knight on average, under normal conditions.

Threat can be used for lots of things. But when there are specific details in play, those details establish what's actually true. You don't have to perfectly conform to the abstraction in every case. The abstractions—threat, supply, intel, engagement rolls—are abstract so that gameplay can focus on what's most important: the choices, actions, and consequences of the player characters. Action rolls are where the core of the system lies. Don't feel beholden to abstractions when you have specific fictional details to work with.

## ACTIONS IN PLAY

On the following pages, the 11 regular actions are detailed and fleshed out with examples of positions and consequences.



## CONSORT

When you **CONSORT**, you socialize with friends and contacts. You might gain access to resources, information, people, or places. You might make a good impression or win someone over with your charm and style. You might make new friends or connect with your heritage or background. You could try to direct your friends with social pressure (but **DISCIPLINE** may be better).

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ Who do you **CONSORT** with?
- ◆ Where do you meet?
- ◆ What do you hope to achieve?
- ◆ Why might they do this for you?

When you **CONSORT** with someone, you care about what the other person thinks and feels and in turn they care about what you want (at least a tiny bit). You're being a charming, open, socially adroit person. You can **CONSORT** with people you already know, or try to "fit in" in a new situation so you make a good impression.

To **CONSORT**, you need an environment that isn't totally hostile. You might **CONSORT** with some bandits you come across while you're out on a mission to deal with undead, but it's usually hopeless to **CONSORT** with the assassin sent to murder you. When you **CONSORT** with people related to your background or heritage, you can expect a better position and/or increased effect.

You might be forced to **CONSORT** in an unfamiliar situation in order to create an opportunity for another action. For instance, if you want to talk to the leader of an Aldermark resistance group, you'll have to at least try to **CONSORT** with them to find out where they're staying. **DISCIPLINE** or **SWAY** are options, sure, but expect a rather sudden escalation of trouble if things go badly.



### CONTROLLED

*Our last mission ended on some rough feelings between me and the squad. I want to patch things up between us. I want to drink a few rounds with them and smooth things over.*

**4/5 Minor Complication:** You have a grand time together, but you have to loot your personal stash to get enough for everyone. You won't be able to equip your Luxury Item or use your Noble trait next mission.

**1-3 Withdraw or Press On:** Gifts and platitudes will only get you so far, Officer. They want a personal apology for leading them astray, but there's a real risk of making it worse. What do you do?

### RISKY

*I know the villages along the Long Road are insular and distrustful, but if the undead find the Bruin Graveyard before we do, it'll be terrible for everyone. I'm going to pull on our common humanity and ask the villagers for a guide to lead us there along whatever backroads they know.*

**4/5 Complication:** Their guide is also their best hunter. The village will be far less prepared in their absence. They'll do it only if you leave a squad member here to help keep them safe until you return.

**1-3 Desperate Position:** The villagers draw knives at your suggestion. They seem to have taken your request as a demand, and it looks like they're willing to fight over it. You can press them further but it could end up in bloodshed. What do you do?

### DESPERATE

*This cult of worshipers for the Cinder King—maybe I could drink at a few bars and keep my ears open for any rumors?*

**4/5 Serious Complication:** You prowl the Eastlake streets until you follow a rumor to a gathering room in the upstairs of a tavern. You talk with some patrons, wondering who here might be a Smoke Cultist, when you realize that the serving staff have brought out a platter of undead flesh. It would seem everyone here is a cultist. What do you do?

**1-3 Severe Harm and Serious Complication:** You drink at one too many bars—take level 3 harm “Drunk” until you sleep it off. Just one problem: you find yourself in an alleyway, surrounded by robed Cultists with knives drawn. Want to resist any of that?

## DISCIPLINE

When you **DISCIPLINE**, you compel obedience with your force of personality. You might intimidate or threaten to get what you want. You might fiercely bark orders to get a squad to fall in line (though **MARSHAL** may be better). You might coerce people to do what you want (though **SWAY** may be better).

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ Who do you **DISCIPLINE**?
- ◆ How do you do it—what's your leverage here?
- ◆ What do you hope they'll do?
- ◆ How far are you willing to push it?

When you **DISCIPLINE** someone, you don't care about what they want. You tell them what to do and expect them to do it—out of fear, respect, or some other motivating factor (this is your leverage over them). If you're trying to get along with someone and work together, **CONSORT** or **MARSHAL** can be better. When you **DISCIPLINE** a friend or contact, they may feel angry and disrespected, so your position might be worse. Common consequences of **DISCIPLINE** can include starting clocks for disobedience or reprisals, and breaking apart friendships.

You don't generally **DISCIPLINE** troops into following your plan—that is usually easier done with **MARSHAL**—but you can keep them obedient. If your squad is about to break when they first encounter the nine-foot Horror with seven mouths, you can **DISCIPLINE** them to keep them from routing.

You might be able to **DISCIPLINE** another PC. Ask the player if their character has reason to follow your orders—perhaps they could be intimidated into doing what you ask, or follow you out of respect for the chain of command. If both of you agree, you can attempt to make them do what you ask. If you don't, then your action can only disrupt them somehow. You might frighten them with intimidation (inflicting harm), cause them to hesitate at a crucial moment, make them look weak in front of others, and so on. Remember, **DISCIPLINE** isn't mind control, but it is an intense interaction. The other player will judge if their character can be ordered around or not.

### CONTROLLED

*No way is Pyre going to fall asleep on watch tonight. I'm going to explain in fine detail the penalty for dereliction of duty in any squad I command.*

**4/5 Minor Complication:** You scare Pyre into obedience. So much so, that Pyre asks Vani to stay up with him. Vani is going to be dragging ass tomorrow (level 1 harm "Tired").

**1-3 Withdraw or Press On:** Try as you might, there's simply no time that you can corner Pyre without everyone in the squad watching you dress him down. Do you want to confront him in front of the troops? It's risky. Who knows what they'll think of Pyre after that.

### RISKY

*I shout at the Rookies, "Pull it together. We are taking that building, Crows or no Crows. Now MOVE!"*

**4/5 Reduced Effect:** They grab their gear and make a cautious approach towards the fortified position. They're advancing, but only in the safest (and slowest) way. Meanwhile, I'm going to tick this other clock for what's going on in the building, because it's taking so long.

**1-3 Complication and Harm:** The Rookies grab their stuff, fear in their eyes. You and two others get to the door, but Harish takes an arrow in the chest, and Vani hauls him behind a cart. They're cut off from the rest of the squad! What do you do?

### DESPERATE

*I know he's a powerful noble of this city, and I don't have much leverage, but I want to draw my knife, hold it to his throat, and scare him so bad he'll do what we ask. I'll deal with the consequences later.*

**4/5 Serious Complication:** You scare him so bad his hands shake. He orders his people to give the Legion what it wants. You know he's too scared to do anything personally, but he'll make life very difficult for the Legion if you don't advance immediately, and he'll use his money to haunt you in Eastlake as well.

**1-3 Severe Harm and Serious Complication:** One of his guards panics and stabs you. Take level 3 harm "Gut Wound". In the scuffle, your blade finishes the job your mouth started. The noble bleeds out before you and you're surrounded by angry and leaderless guards. Also known as a mob.

## MANEUVER

When you **MANEUVER**, you lift, climb, jump, run, or swim, usually either away from or into danger. You might vault over a barricade while pressing an assault. You might climb up the side of a cliff to approach a secret camp. You might ride a horse into battle or drive a wagon full of supplies through a dangerous battlefield. You might dodge crossbow bolts as you cross a courtyard to get a downed soldier. You might chase after an Infamous you're following (though **SCOUT** may be better).

You can also use **MANEUVER** to move across difficult terrain. Perhaps you want to push through the forest of Durresh with decent speed or without being attacked by some sort of beast, trek through the mountains of Gallows Pass without suffering frostbite, or jump from one narrow cliff to another along the High Road.

## GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How fast are you trying to move?
- ◆ Where do you want to end up?
- ◆ How are you avoiding missteps or pitfalls?

When you **MANEUVER**, you're trading finesse for efficiency. You chase or evade, usually at a decent speed. If you're attempting to do so without making your presence known, you may need to **SCOUT** instead.

You can use **MANEUVER** as a group action (for example, when the entire squad is charging some monstrosity). When you consider the scene, imagine what that action looks like. Perhaps there are crossbow bolts raining down on them from across the courtyard. Perhaps the squad is scaling the walls of a fortress to escape the undead. All **MANEUVERING** has an element of action or danger to it.

You can roll **MANEUVER** when you attempt to guide a horse or another creature as a mount, or a team of animals attached to wagons and the like. When the Quatermaster spends Horses on a mission, all members of the squad can take horses into the field. When using mounts, your position may change or you may gain potency to certain actions—like chasing down someone on foot.

When a **MANEUVER** roll goes badly, it's almost never because the action fails outright. There may be unexpected complications, or trouble you didn't see due to your speed. Let the action progress before demonstrating how it gets derailed. Push to the last possible moment to inject failure into the scene and **MANEUVERING** will feel punchy and tense.

## CONTROLLED

*Before the patrols come up over the ridge, Harish is going to try scaling the cliff face and infiltrating the camp below.*

**4/5 Reduced Effect and Minor Complication:** You go over the edge as the undead crest the ridge. You rappel about halfway and then notice a Crow above who heard you move. He looks around suspiciously. I'm going to start an "Alert" clock and add one tick to it.

**1-3 Withdraw or Press On:** Just as you snap your harness in, you spot a Crow looking in your direction. It doesn't look like he's seen you yet, but it will be risky to climb up there without him noticing.

## RISKY

*We have to get across this courtyard, whether or not Spitters will be raining acidic fire as we cross. Everyone check your straps and move out!*

**4/5 Harm:** As you're bolting across the courtyard, a stream of acid boils across your shoulder and down your arm. You're a Specialist, so you take level 2 harm. Good thing you have fine armor.

**1-3 Harm and Desperate Position:** You take a stream of acid into your chest, as you realize that the Spitters have repositioned while you were checking your gear. They're cutting you off, and you're badly outnumbered. What do you do?

## DESPERATE

*It may be suicide, but we need to get our wounded Chosen out of there. I'm going to ride hard into the undead ranks, relying on surprise to keep me alive long enough. I'll lean down, scoop them up, and ride out.*

**4/5 Severe Harm:** You ride deep into the enemy ranks, drawing their attention and fire. Claws and arrows cut into you as you ride. You hoist your Chosen up on the horse with you, but as you push to escape, a thrown spear catches you in the side. Because of the enemies' scale, take lethal level 4 harm "Pierced."

**1-3 Severe Harm and Serious Complication:** You are almost there, when a meaty Horror's fist slams into you, dropping both you and your horse to the ground. The horse mitigates the blow somewhat, so take level 3 harm "Crushed Leg." You're surrounded by the undead. What do you do?

## MARSHAL

When you **MARSHAL**, you direct a squad or group of people to action. You might organize a flanking maneuver to surround an enemy. You might coordinate fire to focus on the biggest threat on the field. You might direct the people under your command to set for a charge. You might organize and direct your squad to keep them from routing (but **DISCIPLINE** may be better).

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ Who do you **MARSHAL**?
- ◆ What are you trying to get them to do?
- ◆ Why do they recognize your authority?

When you **MARSHAL**, you direct a number of people that you're in charge of towards a larger goal—either a coordinated attack, tactical repositioning, or strategic action.

You can **MARSHAL** a squad to do most actions that any individual might do. This generally replaces whatever action they might roll. This is appropriate when the action itself is straightforward, but the effect of the group as a whole is uncertain. If the whole squad is shooting at close range at a large Horror, it's inevitable that someone will hit. But an uncoordinated volley of shots could almost be ignored. A **MARSHAL** action can be used to give the squad's volley the focus and impact needed.

You can also **MARSHAL** to wait for your command to fire, to time a charge with the actions of a Specialist that has gone ahead, or to simply have them hear your call for retreat over the din of battle.

In order to direct a group, they must be able to communicate with you and be willing to listen to what you have to say. If either of these is in question, this could worsen your position, or simply make it impossible to lead the group. The **MARSHAL** action works well with the setup teamwork maneuver, described on page 223.



## CONTROLLED

*We're clear of the enemy scouts and I'm not going to let them find us again, just because Pyre wants a smoke. I order the squad to go dark as we set up camp. Once we're set up, everyone kills their lights. No fires!*

**4/5 Minor Harm:** The squad grumbles but follows your orders. The night is bitter cold without anything to give them warmth. Everyone else huddles in their tents but Blue Rising Iron is on watch. In the morning they have level 1 harm "Frostbite" from their exposure during the night.

**1-3 Withdraw or Press On:** No good. Just as the first tent spikes are hammered in, you see one of the undead scouts on a hill in a distance. There's a chance that they won't notice you, but getting everyone to work silently and in the dark is going to be tough!

## RISKY

*No way we're taking that Horror head-on. We'll flank and strike it from both sides at once. "Ghost Owls, if we've done it once, we've done it a hundred times. Katu, you're with me. Landgrave, we charge when we hear the sniper shot. Pyre, take a few around the other side and don't let your clinking armor give away your position this time, eh?"*

**4/5 Complication:** You're ready to move, but there's no signal from the Landgrave. She's got a Rotter on her and she's cut off! Will you let her handle the Rotter or sacrifice the charge and come back to protect her?

## DESPERATE

*I clutch my Zemyati dagger and make a prayer to the Living God. It's never worked before but it's tradition, right? I yell above the din of the advancing Hexed and call on the squad to hold their ground and focus fire on the Shadow Witch. We are not throwing away our shot!*

**4/5 Severe Harm:** Green fire bursts from the Witch's wounds and she falls to bits. Malendhra's exalted cheer is cut off and replaced by a horrible gurgle as she's impaled by a Hexed spear. She takes level 3 harm "Impaled." Shame. She's the only one who knows how to tend to that wound!

**1-3 Serious Consequence:** This is the worst. Your squad fires but the Hexed interpose at her command, taking the shots instead. They pounce on Katu and drag him kicking and screaming to the Shadow Witch. As you battle Hexed for your lives, she carves a sigil into his forehead with her long, impossibly sharp nails.

## RESEARCH

When you **RESEARCH**, you scrutinize details and interpret evidence. You might gather information from ancient tomes, the Annals of the Legion, and whispered rumors from Aldermani citizens. You might do research on an esoteric topic. You might closely analyze a person to detect lies or true feelings (but **CONSORT** may be better). You might read what the histories have to say about a place (but **SCOUTING** it out for yourself may be better).

## GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What details do you scrutinize?
- ◆ What kinds of things are you looking for?
- ◆ What do you hope to understand?

When you **RESEARCH**, you concentrate on details—snippets of lore, repeated patterns of behavior, or tiny clues—to determine facts, corroborate evidence, find what's hidden, and guide your decisions.

You can **RESEARCH** a situation or a place. Finding clues, finding out who's in charge, figuring out why the undead are acting strangely, might all fall under a **RESEARCH** roll, assuming the information is there to find.

When you have all the data available to you, but you need to make sense of it, **RESEARCH** is the appropriate action. Occasionally, it may be questionable if you have all the right data. For instance, you may need to **SCOUT** the undead before you can **RESEARCH** what they're up to. If you don't have access to the right information, the GM might explain that you have limited effect (or no effect at all).

You can also use **RESEARCH** to read a person—this is a gather information roll to judge whether or not they're lying, what they really want, what their intentions are, etc. When you **RESEARCH** someone in this way, you can ask the GM questions while you interact with them if you want, or you might wait until they say something fishy, and then ask the GM, “Are they telling the truth?”

### CONTROLLED

*If we want to know what broke out of this tomb, we should find out what was buried there in the first place. I'm going to try and decipher the writings on the wall of the tomb to find out what used to be in here.*

**4/5 Reduced Effect:** Your Old Imperial is rusty and all you make out is that there are a pair of these tombs, holding two great enemies whose battles with each other were legendary. From the dust still in the air, you figure this one was probably broken open recently. You could make it to the other tomb before the Horrors do, if you start moving right now.

### RISKY

*I want to figure out what they are making here. I'm going to look at the earthworks and the tools left behind to see what they're up to.*

**4/5 Complication:** You creep into the abandoned yard to discover they're building a pillar to summon Devourers. That's when you realize you just stepped on a sigil and alerted a nearby Shadow Witch. What do you do?

**1-3 Desperate Position:** Just because the yard was empty doesn't mean everyone was gone. You're still not sure what they're doing here, but that doesn't matter anymore—from inside the battlement you're climbing over, a hand reaches out and grabs you. Another follows it. What do you do?

### DESPERATE

*Two squads on the same mission, and tensions are too high. The Owls are going to tear apart the Grinning Ravens if they don't hand over Shreya's spear. It's the thing protecting us from corruption out here and they're hoarding it. If Boryevich was here he'd shout 'em down, but I don't have his command or his vocal range. I'll read from the Annals of the Legion and pray I find a precedent for how to resolve this.*

**4/5 Serious Complication:** Way to win enemies and lose friends, future Lorekeeper. You found a passage in the Annals so relevant that both squads had to submit to your wisdom. The passage indicates that you should carry the relic. Now they've stopped fighting each other long enough to hate you instead.

**1-3 Serious Complication:** Maybe you should have tried to use **DISCIPLINE** instead. You read the rambling words from the Annals and both sides decide the text means they should hold Asrika's Blessing. After the first punch is thrown, weapons are quickly drawn.

## RIG

When you **RIG**, you alter how an existing mechanism works or create a new one. You might disable a trap. You might repair a damaged siege weapon. You might set an alchemical bomb to explode. You might build fortifications. You might fieldstrip a rifle. You might force a door open (though **WRECK** may be better).

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What do you **RIG** with?
- ◆ What tools are usually required?
- ◆ What are you trying to make it do?
- ◆ What do you hope to accomplish?

When you **RIG** mechanisms, you take apart a device, add clockworks or alchemical features, and replace parts. It covers the mechanical and physical parts of a device. When a device is damaged, you usually use **RIG** to work around or repair the problem.

Use **RIG** to physically make a device do what it's supposed to, but outside of expected parameters. You can open a lock, or bypass a complicated trap blocking your way. You might alter a rifle to fire an unusual round or hastily construct a rope belay to move a large load.

You can also use **RIG** to disable or destroy a device, causing it to malfunction or simply make it impossible to fix. Planting explosives is done with **RIG**, though tossing them as weapons in combat is **WRECK**. You can also **RIG** a bomb or other planted explosive to be detonated using an alchemical timer. Almost all traps are set or disarmed with **RIG**.

In order to **RIG**, you need physical access to a device, and at least a plausible facsimile of the tools required. You might be able to pick a lock with a hairpin instead of a set of lockpicks, but you can't cut through a wall without a saw, maul, or explosives of some sort.

Consequences of **RIG** vary, from the mechanism seizing up, to fingers or tools getting caught in the gears, to complications from traps and additional time or tools required.

The Long-Term Project campaign action often makes use of **RIG**. If you can get access to the right materials and put in the effort, you can use **RIG** to make almost any physical device you might want, though you may need to **RESEARCH** a design first—another Long-Term Project—depending on the complexity of the device. Just as common is using **RIG** to fix gear that breaks while on a mission.

## CONTROLLED

*We've captured and dismantled the clockwork assassin Lugos. The brass wants to turn it back on, but before we do that I'm going to affix a bomb to it. If we can't control it, I want to be ready to blow this thing to pieces.*

**4/5 Minor Complication:** You set up the bomb, but to make sure it's effective, you'll have to double the explosives, which means your interrogator will be in the blast radius if things go wrong.

**1-3 Withdraw or Press On:** The dense, alchemically-treated armor plating that surrounds the assassin also protects from charges, but you could pry up the plating if you want. Sure hope there aren't any countermeasures in there.

## RISKY

*I'm going to use my fine wrecking tools and carefully dismantle Lugos's chest plates, so that we can see how this contraption works.*

**4/5 Complications:** Good news. No poison gas. Also, no explosion. Bad news. You set your charge firmly between a few sacks of alchemicals, shriveled organs, and clockwork pieces. As you push it into place, the machinery activates. You must have triggered a failsafe. Clockwork turns and cables tighten, trapping your hand. I'm also putting two ticks on the clock for Lugos to reactivate. Want to resist either or both of those?

## DESPERATE

*No way am I dying like a chump with my hand wired to this thing. I'm going to slam a spike into the mainspring and rip my hand out before the clock runs out. If anything starts moving, I detonate the bomb!*

**1-3 Serious Harm and Serious Complication:** It all happens so fast. Lugos flicks to life as you drive the spike home, and its mainspring bends until it snaps. As the machine leaps for your commanding Officer, you press the button. The core explodes and the blast catches Boryevich dead-on. He takes level 4 harm and everyone else in the tent is hit with exploding metal bits. Everyone else takes level 2 harm "Shrapnel." Lugos is on the floor in pieces. All that work and nothing but a mess of blood and gears!

## SCOUT

When you **SCOUT**, you move or observe without being noticed. You might watch an undead's creation while hiding in the shadows. You might lift a key off an undead guard. You might sneak up behind someone to attack them by surprise (but **SKIRMISH** may be better). You might try to climb up the side of a building (but **MANEUVER** may be better).

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you **SCOUT**?
- ◆ How do you conceal your actions?
- ◆ Whose notice are you trying to avoid?
- ◆ Where do you want to end up?

When you **SCOUT**, you conceal your movements and intentions. The environment can play a large effect on your position. More secluded, shadowy environments can be much more controlled to move in. But **SCOUTING** is more than just “sneaking around”—it’s also sleight of hand or other misdirections. For general athletic ability (running, climbing, jumping, swimming, etc.), you should use **MANEUVER**.

You might use this movement to ambush an enemy. If an enemy can be taken out with a single clear blow, then **SCOUT** can be used in place of **SKIRMISH**. For powerful or well-armored targets, you might **SCOUT** to set up an attack (improved position). You can also use **SCOUT** to create an opportunity that wouldn’t otherwise be possible. For example, you might **SCOUT** to move into position to **RESEARCH** the undead’s behavior.

When a **SCOUT** roll goes awry, it doesn’t always end catastrophically. Instead of a character immediately being discovered as a consequence, you can start a clock like “Discovered” or “Alert” and tick a segment or two. Patrols might investigate something they think they saw, but they don’t raise the alarm at the first sign of a flitting shadow. Unless the opposition is ready and alert, the clever Legionnaire has a bit of leeway before they’re out in the open, fighting for their lives.



### CONTROLLED

*I'm going to try to slip past these half-asleep bandit guards.*

**4/5 Minor Complication:** You get past the guards, but your Legion boots leave distinct tracks. They'll notice the boot prints and it'll get back to the camp. I'll tick the "Alert" clock by one.

**1-3 Withdraw or Press On:** You get past these guards, but their replacements are walking up the path right now. You can backtrack, but there's no obvious place to hide. What do you do?

### RISKY

*This is a group action and I'm taking lead. I know it means possibly taking stress but I've got to get the squad inside the city gates without the undead taking notice. We're staying in the trees until I see an opening and the moment we do, we're all rushing to get inside. Rushing quietly, that is.*

**4/5 Reduced Effect:** The gaps never get big enough to move as one, so you move one person at a time. You have a good rhythm until it's Marchioness Rodano's turn. Her armor is just too bulky to fit through the hedge without alerting the sentries. You can try again to lead her in, or proceed without your Heavy. What do you do?

**1-3 Complication and Desperate Position:** A group spots you crossing and moves to raise the alarm. You only have moments before everyone knows you're here. Do you shoot them or try to race them to signal fire? Either way, someone will notice something. What do you do?

### DESPERATE

*I just need to sneak into Viktoria Karhowl's study, grab her new schematics, and get out. If I'm fast and quiet, neither she nor the two Horrors she has will know I was there until I'm already gone. Simple!*

**4/5 Serious Consequence:** You did it. You've got Karhowl's plans and correspondence, complete with various sigils of the living she's made deals with—including the sigil of your Commander. What do you do?

**1-3 Serious Harm and Serious Consequence:** She didn't have two attendants, she had three! The third, hidden Horror lunges from behind the stacks and grabs you with its massive hands. As it slams your head against the desk, you hear a cracking noise and your ears ring. Over the din, you hear Karhowl returning. Take level 3 harm "Badly Concussed."

## SHOOT

When you **SHOOT**, you fire at a target with precision from a distance. You might fire from a sniper's perch. You might make a trick shot. You might target one enemy in a group. You might clear a jam in your rifle (though **RIG** may be better). You might fire while undead overrun your position (though **SKIRMISH** may be better).

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What are you **SHOOTING**?
- ◆ How much noise does it make?
- ◆ How many shots do you fire?

When you **SHOOT**, you establish the conflict at some range. Though you may be under considerable pressure, you have time to line up a shot and reload between volleys. If your position is overwhelmed, you might bring your pistols to bear but **SKIRMISH** may be a better option for close range.

The consequences you suffer as a result of **SHOOTING** depend largely on whether the enemy you're shooting at can return fire. If not, harm is unlikely. However, many other things can go wrong, from jammed rifles, to using more than one use of Ammo, to **reduced effect** on your shot.

Firing from a completely hidden position will usually grant you a **controlled** position. After the first shot, you will probably need to **SCOUT** or **MANEUVER** before you can re-establish that position. Many Scouts use bows instead of rifles, trading effective distance for stealth.

If you fire a volley alongside your squadmates, you **SHOOT**. If you direct them but you're not engaged yourself, you **MARSHAL** them.

## CONTROLLED

*The Heartless doesn't know I'm here, right? I'm going to line up a shot and see how much I can hurt it before it reacts.*

**4/5 Reduced Effect:** Your rifle clicks down on the fuse, and in the time it takes for the echo of the hammer to cross the field, the Heartless turns. You wing the monstrosity, but mostly in a bit of flesh that nearly seems to have decayed through anyway. I'll start an 8-clock to bring down the Heartless and tick it once. The Gaunt form a circle around their leader. What do you do?

**1-3 Withdraw or Press On:** The Heartless moves at the last second, and your bullet ricochets off its armor. The creature howls out to the Gaunt it leads, and they're heading your way. Do you want to try to fire off another shot? It's risky and you may get surrounded if you're not quick enough.

## RISKY

*I'm going to return fire at the Crows that are shooting at us from the windows. They may have elevation, but we have plenty of wagons and carts to hide behind.*

**4/5 Harm and Corruption:** You fire a shot into a Crow, but from another window, a second Crow fires a crossbow bolt into your shoulder. Your shoulder is burning from the foul ichor the bolt is coated with. Take level 2 harm "Lacerated Shoulder" and 2 corruption. Would you like to resist?

**1-3 Desperate Position:** You're about to sight down on one of the Crows when you hear the thud of an arrow hitting the cart—from behind you. Some of the Crows have repositioned themselves in the building you're in, and you're totally exposed. What do you do?

## DESPERATE

*The Cinder King's interrogator still has a tight grip on the Commander, huh? I want to shoot at it anyway. I know it's a risk, but I want to shoot it right where it's burrowed a finger into the Commander's skin.*

**4/5 Severe Complication:** You shoot it right where you intended, severing the digit from the interrogator and causing it to howl in shock. Its viscous oily blood sprays over the Commander, and you see their skin rippling and mutating, blight occurring right in front of your eyes. What do you do?

## SKIRMISH

When you **SKIRMISH**, you engage in close combat with a hostile opponent. You might brawl or wrestle with your foe. You might use a melee weapon. You might fire pistols at short range (though **SHOOT** may be better). You might ambush an opponent (though **SCOUT** may be better).

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you **SKIRMISH** with your target?
- ◆ What weapons are you using?
- ◆ How do you avoid being counter-attacked?
- ◆ What do you hope to achieve?

When you **SKIRMISH** with someone, it's a fight. You're attacking and defending, whether you're using fists, blades, or pistols. You can **SKIRMISH** to close with an enemy, survive a charge, and to end a fight—but it's always a pitched battle.

If you use fighting as a distraction, you might choose to **SWAY** instead. If you're sneaking up on someone and want to take them out before the fight starts, you should use **SCOUT** instead. If you're placing explosives to bring a building down, you should look to **RIG** or **WRECK**.

Generally, the consequences you suffer when you **SKIRMISH** come from the enemy. The more dangerous they are, the worse your position—and the more dire those consequences will be. More often than not, when you **SKIRMISH**, you're risking harm and corruption as your consequence.

If you find yourself in a melee and you want to do something besides **SKIRMISH**, you might face a consequence first—which you can accept or resist (or perhaps ask a squadmate face for you). Just because you really want to **DISCIPLINE** a Rookie doesn't mean they will stop punching you so you can talk to them. If you've got swords locked with a Knight of the Oak, you may have to **SKIRMISH** to get free before you can **MANEUVER** away (or take a wound as you dart away, perhaps using armor or resisting the harm).

If you fight alongside your squadmates in melee, you **SKIRMISH**. If you direct them but you're not engaged yourself, you **MARSHAL** them.

### CONTROLLED

*I'm in fine armor, and this is just a single Rotter. I'm guessing this is a controlled position? I want to dispatch the creature with a single blow.*

**1-3 Withdraw or Press On:** The creature lurches forward much faster than you expected and comes up underneath your swing. It grabs a hold of your sword as it claws at your face. Do you want to press forward with a risky action? Or you could drop the sword, back away, and draw your pistol for a precise fight-ending shot, but that would be **SHOOT** instead of **SKIRMISH**.

### RISKY

*I want to rush the Gut-Sack with my shield in front, to drive it back away from the squad. I don't need to kill it, but I have to get it away from the Rookies before it explodes.*

**4/5 Harm, Corruption, and Complication:** You drive it back a solid 10 paces before you feel its stomach undulate and hear the tearing sound of its flesh as it explodes in a shower of acid and bile. You take 2 harm (you have the same threat), and the vile acid deals you 2 corruption as well. Finally, the corrosion creates a stinging cloud around you, effectively rendering you blind. At least the Rookies are safe. Do you want to resist any of these effects?

**1-3 Lose this Opportunity:** You rush the Gut-Sack, trying to shoulder check the Rotters between you and him out of the way. One latches onto your shield, another on your leg, while a third grabs your weapon arm, moaning hungrily. By the time you shake yourself loose and whirl, you realize the Gut-Sack is in the middle of the squad. No driving it away safely now.

### DESPERATE

*If I don't face off with this Horror, no one else will. I draw my sword and attempt to lunge past those giant arms to run the creature through.*

**4/5 Severe Harm:** You run it through, but after that, it wrenches back and smashes you with a giant fist. You fly back ten paces, taking level 4 harm. (You're equal threat, but it has scale, so you take one more harm than normal.) Good thing you have that heavy armor!

## SWAY

When you **SWAY**, you influence someone with guile, charm, or logic. You might outright lie to someone's face. You might persuade a sucker to believe you. You might argue the facts with an officer. You might try to influence people's affection or obedience (but **CONSORT** or **DISCIPLINE** may be better).

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ Who do you **SWAY**?
- ◆ What kind of leverage do you have here?
- ◆ What do you hope they'll do?
- ◆ Are you lying?

When you **SWAY** someone, you aren't invested in their thoughts or feelings. You're manipulating them—either with charm, lies, or arguments that can't be easily dismissed. You're trying to get them to do what you want, whether or not they want or need it. You can **SWAY** a friend or contact—they're probably vulnerable to you—but the risks are higher if they figure out what you're doing to them; it might be a desperate thing to try.

Additionally, **SWAYING** someone isn't mind control. You need some reason the target will listen to you. That could just be because you're charming, or it might be good evidence and solid reasoning that backs up your story. Which approach works best depends on the target and circumstance. What works on one person might not on another. If you don't have any leverage, you can try fear or intimidation with **DISCIPLINE**, or genuine connection with **CONSORT**.

It's not possible to use **SWAY** to change someone's mind when the target won't listen to you. No amount of fast talk will convince rank and file undead to overlook your presence. That said, more intelligent undead, in rare circumstances, might be willing to negotiate. Such exceptions are extremely uncommon, and only possible when those undead are separated from their more powerful minders.

You might be able to **SWAY** another Legion player's character. Ask that player if they have some reason they could be **SWAYED** by you—perhaps you're in charge of the squad, or they owe you a favor for when you pulled them out of the fire on a previous mission. If you don't have a plausible reason, you won't be able to convince them.

Note that **SWAY** can be used to deceive or distract. Such actions like dressing up as a Black Oak Knight, or disguising oneself as one of Blighter's Crows, fall under the purview of this action.



## CONTROLLED

*Our supplies are low and I know this guy is holding out of me. The Legion has a good reputation in these parts, so I'm going to leverage that—as well as the undeniable truth that if we fail, everyone here is dead—to get him to give up the Black Shot I know he's got stashed away.*

**4/5 Reduced Effect:** He hands you three rounds and says it's all he can give up. Not all he has, just all he can give up. You can tell from the fear in his eyes that he's looking out for his family and even this loss pains him.

## RISKY

*"Sir, you're in no shape to lead. You need to get off that leg and get some medical attention. Put me in charge and I'll take it from here. You stay with Beih and Marchioness Rodano. I'll lead the others, we'll rout that encampment on the east side and be back before sundown."*

**4/5 Complication:** Boryevich doesn't ever make things easy. He begrudgingly agrees but insists you go with the full complement, meaning he'll be all alone out here in the open while you're on the mission.

**1-3 Complication:** "Who the hell do you think you are Garossi, giving me orders?" You never thought the Zemyati would put pride before the mission, but here he goes. He hops up and signals to move out. Everyone but Boryevich knows this is a bad idea. I'm starting a 4-segment clock called "Morale Failure" with two ticks on it.

## DESPERATE

*"No sir, Rookie Katu was not in my quarters last night when the fire broke out. No sir, I'm not sure how his cookpots got in my tent." Yeah, I'm bald-faced lying but there is no way I'm letting Katu take the fall for this after making me a get-well soup with the Quartermaster's spices.*

**4/5 Severe Harm:** The Officer looks at you and knows you're lying but won't say that. "Our camp is ruined and we need a new one before night. I'm taking the squad out. You are staying here and digging a new trench—by yourself." By the end of this, you take level 3 harm "Crippling Fatigue."

**1-3 Serious Complication:** "Pyre, you lying piece of crap. Fine, you want to cover for Katu, you can both make up for this. You're carrying all of his gear for the rest of the mission so nothing else accidentally spills anywhere. Katu, since you'll be so light on your feet, you're taking point." Damn, Boryevich is mad.

## WRECK

When you **WRECK**, you apply savage force or careful sabotage to destroy a place, item, or obstacle. You might use siege weapons. You might throw or place explosives or alchemicals. You might distract or sow chaos (but **SWAY** may be better). You could try to overwhelm an enemy with sheer force (but **SKIRMISH** may be better).

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What do you **WRECK**?
- ◆ How are you overwhelming it?
- ◆ What do you hope to accomplish?
- ◆ What tools do you use?

When you **WRECK** something, you devastate it so it can't be easily fixed, often creating noise, debris, fire, flooding, or other collateral damage. Careful sabotage hides these byproducts so the damage isn't immediately obvious, but the subject of your attention is no less broken.

**WRECKING** a device ensures that it no longer functions and typically doesn't take long. If you want the device to continue to work, but simply work differently, you should look at **RIG**. You don't have to just **WRECK** devices, however. You can demolish a fortification, bust a door off its hinges, or shatter a corrupted relic with **WRECK**.

**Scale** is important for determining the effect of a **WRECK** action. If you want to destroy an undead's siege weapon, for example, you need explosives or a team of sappers to have any effect. You can find a particular vulnerability of the thing you want to **WRECK** when scale is difficult to overcome. Taking out the key support of a bridge is much easier than removing it stone by stone.

## CONTROLLED

*Okay, I'm opening up this tomb. It's going to take time if we don't want to destroy everything inside. I know a few of us have Wrecking Kits. We're going to take a group action and everyone will push on the door when I give the go. The moment we get it to budge even a little, Beih will hammer a wedge in so we don't lose our progress if we have to rest.*

**4/5 Minor Harm:** You do it but that was a lot of work. Everyone takes level 1 harm "Tired."

**1-3 Withdraw or Press On:** It won't budge. It feels like there's an airtight seal on the inside. Maybe you can try drilling some holes into it to let off the pressure, but depending on how this thing is constructed, the whole thing might collapse. Want to give it a shot or try to find another way in?

## RISKY

*Simple. We just have to plant the charges, set the timers, and get to the protective embankment before the bombs go off. What could go wrong?*

**4/5 Reduced Effect and Complication:** That wall is thick. Everything works but instead of blowing it open, you only make a hole one person can fit through at a time. And it was loud. You waited until there weren't any undead nearby, but I'm still putting two ticks on the "Alert" clock.

**1-3 Desperate Position:** Flash. Bang. Boom. Lots of light, lots of noise. You may have opened a hole. You're not sure. What you are sure about is those two Horrors are going to clear the embankment and be on top of you in seconds. What do you do?

## DESPERATE

*If we don't do something, Render is going to cut our Chosen in half. Remember the ballista hit by Spitters earlier? The crossbow limbs were corroded but I'm going to take my chances. I heave the center beam, aiming at Render and pulling the firing pin. Hopefully this works!*

**4/5 Severe Harm and Complication:** The bolt slams into Render's immense armor plates, piercing them and shoving him to the ground. That's when the bowstring snaps under the strain and flies back at you. Take level 3 harm "Lashed to the Bone." This ballista is totally busted.

**1-3 Serious Complication:** The bolt goes wide, directly at Shreya. It takes off the arm holding her spear, and she screams in agony. Render takes the opportunity and charges at her. How fast can you reload a ballista?



## SPECIALIST ACTIONS

In addition to the regular actions, there are seven Specialist actions. These actions are not rolled though they are sometimes used as traits in fortune rolls. Instead, they grant as many **uses** every mission as their rank. These uses can be spent to gain some advantage. Each of these is described in this section.

These actions are used for fortune rolls when outcomes are uncertain, and not completely within the control of the characters. For example, the GM might roll **DOCTOR** when the Medic attempts to prevent a patient from slipping into unconsciousness during a firefight, but not when routinely stitching up a patient's minor wounds back at camp. In general, when a Specialist action overlaps a regular action, roll the regular action.

*Alice is playing Malendhra the medic, and is attached to the squad on a mission. They find a ravaged village, and the only person who can tell them exactly what happened is a survivor exposed to Blighter's foul alchemy. He's choking and goes into convulsions, and Malendhra attempts to stabilize him. How much can she do, and what effect do her ministrations have? Can medicine save this villager? Can it revive him enough to tell them what happened?*

*Sam, the GM, suggests they make a fortune roll to find out how much medical procedures can help him. Remember that fortune rolls start with a pool, and are modified for advantages and disadvantages. Sam starts with Malendhra's **DOCTOR** Specialist action for a base pool, and removes one die. Blighter's alchemy is nasty.*

*Alice asks if spending one of her Medical Kit uses for supplies would influence the roll. Sam adds a die. Alice also asks if the assistance of the Rookies will make a difference, and if using special disinfectants from Malendhra's Orite alchemicals for the tools will help. Sam suggests that both help define a worthwhile environment for operating—the Rookie players describe clearing a slab in the church they're in, boiling water and the like.*

*Sam makes the fortune roll (four dice) and gets a 4/5—she explains that the procedure is successful. Malhandra manages to stabilize the villager, but they're weak and unconscious and will be out until morning. Unless Malhandra's willing to toy with her patient's life by spending more medicines trying to wake him up, the squad will have to wait until morning to hear what happened. The Legionnaires decide to play it safe, and spread out to look for supplies and a safe place to rest for the evening while Malendhra monitors the villager.*

## AIM

When you **AIM**, you use careful timing and cool nerves to improve your shot. **AIM** is the Specialist action for Snipers. Each **AIM** use allows you to increase the **effect level** of your shot, one-for-one.

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you feel when you **AIM**?
- ◆ How does your focus shift?
- ◆ Does time seem to slow for you?
- ◆ What's the most difficult shot you've ever made?

When you spend **AIM**, your action changes from one of brute force to timing and focus. Describe (or have the GM describe) the vulnerable area that you identify, and explain your action in terms of capitalizing on that vulnerability. There can be some back and forth here.

*"I'm going to spend **AIM** to increase my effect here. I'm going to **SHOOT** this Horror in its foot and hobble it."*

*"Its 'foot' is made of at least four separate limbs. It might be easier to go for a knee here. Would that work?"*

*"Sure, just as long as I'm bringing it to the ground."*

As with many Specialist actions, **AIM** is used in conjunction with another action. Most typically, this is **SHOOT**, but some versions of **WRECK** (such as lobbing a grenade), **SKIRMISH** (such as firing pistols in a melee), and very rarely **RIG** (such as firing a siege weapon) are options as well.



## ANCHOR

When you **ANCHOR**, you use your size and training to clash with more numerous or far superior foes. **ANCHOR** is the Specialist action for Heavies. Each **ANCHOR** use allows you to fight as a small group.

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you **ANCHOR**?
- ◆ How do you fuel your force on the battlefield?
- ◆ How did you learn to fight with the strength of half a dozen warriors?

When you spend **ANCHOR**, you act on a larger scale. Describe (or have the GM describe) your increased movements, your reach, and your effect on all who surround you. There can be some back and forth here.

*“I’m going to spend **ANCHOR** to fight as a small group. I’m going to hold off these half-dozen undead, slamming some with my shield and some with my sword.”*

*“Alright. Are you looking to intercept them or do you want to cut them down as they stream by?”*

*“Maximum carnage. I’m willing to risk being hurt.”*

As with many Specialist actions, **ANCHOR** is used in conjunction with another action. This is almost always **SKIRMISH**. In cases where raw physical power matters far more than facility with a blade, you can use **WRECK** instead.

## CHANNELS

When you use **CHANNELS**, you leverage connections, social capital, and authority to acquire supplies beyond your allotment. **CHANNELS** is the Specialist action for Officers. Each **CHANNELS** use allows you to acquire an asset for the squad in a flashback. A **SWAY** roll determines the quality, and additional uses can be spent to improve that quality.

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What **CHANNELS** do you leverage?
- ◆ Who is your source?
- ◆ How does your rank and importance manifest in acquiring the materials you need?
- ◆ Do others in the Legion resent your reallocations or are you supported by them?

When you spend **CHANNELS**, you acquire material things for your squad. Describe (or have the GM describe) the social interaction that got you what you're looking for. This is effectively a very specific flashback, except you expend a **CHANNELS** use instead of stress.

*"I really wish we had brought some alchemicals. Going into a dark cave with lit torches just sounds like asking to get eaten. I'm going to spend **CHANNELS** to acquire some Owlsight Oil that'll allow us to see in the dark."*

*"Alright. You'll need a 6 on your **SWAY** roll to pull it off. Who's your source for these alchemicals?"*

*"Grand Alchemist Aether Magnus, of course. Good thing we pulled off that special mission. Oh, I only rolled a 4!"*

*"Okay, Aether Magnus has some concoctions that will work, but getting enough for the whole squad is going to take a bit more from you. Do you have another **CHANNELS** use to spend?"*

*"Yeah. Better than some half-brewed experiment. I'll mark the extra use to improve my result."*

As with many Specialist actions, **CHANNELS** is used in conjunction with another action. In this case, **SWAY**. You cannot use another action here—if you had the authority to **DISCIPLINE** someone to give you what you want, you wouldn't need to use **CHANNELS**.

Poor rolls on acquiring rare materials might mean you get limited supplies (only one) or an inadequate product (it may have side effects, or drawbacks). Your GM can tell you what's possible beforehand.

## DOCTOR

When you use **DOCTOR**, you use specialized medical training to soothe and treat a soldier's wounds. **DOCTOR** is the Specialist action for Medics. Each **DOCTOR** use allows a Legionnaire you treat to ignore wound penalties for a scene.

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ How do you **DOCTOR**?
- ◆ What is your demeanor to your patient?
- ◆ Where did you pick up your skills?
- ◆ Is your practice of medicine a calling or a trade?

When you spend **DOCTOR**, you patch up a squad member long enough to make it through a scene. Describe (or have the GM describe) the medicines, alchemicals, or first aid you apply to let the squad member return to battle.

*"We're never going to make it across the field if we have to carry Pyre the whole way. I'm going to dose him up with whatever painkillers I have on hand and get him to run with us."*

*"Alright. That'll let Pyre ignore the level 1 and level 3 harm he has and it'll last for the scene."*

**DOCTOR** is unusual among Specialist actions. Simple uses do not need a corresponding action roll. They are simply spent, described, and then the effect is applied. For situations where it's unclear if the patient will make it, you can use a fortune roll with someone's **DOCTOR** rating. (See page 44 for more on fortune rolls.)

## GRIT

When you use **GRIT**, you use the hard lessons taught over the course of your soldiering career to weather the worst the war has to offer. **GRIT** is the Specialist action for Soldiers. Each **GRIT** use allows you to add +2d to a resistance roll. The **GRIT** use must be spent before the roll, but it can mean the difference between survival and death. You may only spend one **GRIT** this way per roll.

## GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What lessons allow you to **GRIT** through this?
- ◆ What have you experienced before, worse than this?
- ◆ What do you cling to in the moment you endure great traumas for the Legion?
- ◆ How did you find the toughness to endure like a soldier?

When you spend **GRIT**, you lean on your training, upbringing, and resilience to get through anything. Describe how your commitment to the Legion or your experiences on other missions get you through this moment.

*“This soldier isn’t really set up to deal with corruption, and this will push me over into blight. I don’t want to deal with Shreya after the mission, but I’m high on stress and might trauma out if I try to resist. I think I’ll spend some **GRIT** to increase my chances of getting through this. That should give me 3d to resist instead of 1d.”*

*“No problem. What do you call on to help you fight this off?”*

*“I’m a Star Viper. I imagine we were trained for this. I can hear my former drill sergeant yelling at me to focus and single-mindedly hold on and never give in to something like this. I clutch my Bartan family charm, and yell fiercely as the corruption washes over me, and just refuse to let it change me.”*

**GRIT** uses are simply spent, described, and then the effect is applied. This Specialist action isn’t often used in fortune rolls (frequently **PROWESS** is sufficient for the same scenario).

## SCROUNGE

When you use **SCROUNGE**, you repurpose the environment around you to find shelter or source items. **SCROUNGE** is the Specialist action for Scouts. A **SCROUNGE** use will find you safe and secure shelter for an evening or one load of gear for everyone in the squad.

### GM QUESTIONS

- ◆ What do you **SCROUNGE** up?
- ◆ Where do you find it?
- ◆ Do you tend towards clever repurposing or are you more a mindful observer of your environment?
- ◆ What's the strangest thing you've ever acquired?

When you spend **SCROUNGE**, you acquire food, shelter, or items for your squad. Describe (or have the GM describe) how you find what you're looking for. While this can let you acquire items in the field, it can't let you acquire things that don't exist.

*"If we want to wait for the undead to break camp before we hit them, we need to stay here an extra day. I'm going to spend **SCROUNGE** to make sure we have food for the evening and another for finding us a safe place to camp."*

*"No problem. You find a good camping spot behind a copse of trees where a modest fire pit could escape notice. Then you hunt down a deer in the forest and bring back its carcass. The Rookies whistle appreciatively at the first fresh meat they've had since camp."*

*"That's good, because I'm not cooking. I collapse in a bed roll and tell them to wake me when dinner's ready."*

**SCROUNGE** can let you repurpose your environment to cover a shortage of gear, but it can't create items out of nothing. You may want to resupply your squad with ammo, but if there's no plausible source for that ammo, you're out of luck. Contrast that with **CHANNELS**, where you can find almost anything but need to roll to acquire the item and you don't automatically equip the entire squad when doing so.

Flashbacks can be useful in establishing fictional justification for your **SCROUNGE** uses. Perhaps a scouting party came this way and left a weapons cache nearby. Perhaps you can weave a bunch of vines together into rope and you've been working on it the whole time you've been in the forest. And some items are very plausible in specific settings. If you're crossing a battlefield from earlier in the war, it's very reasonable to find Soldier's Kits or Hand Weapons.

## WEAVE

When you use **WEAVE**, you invoke arcane powers to change the world around you. Doing so is not without cost, and should always be considered extremely risky. **WEAVE** is not a Specialist action for any playbook in this book. It is the purview of Alchemists and Mercies and others that have bound themselves to the divine. A **WEAVE** use will allow you to identify if something is an artifact, or to detect divine presence.

**WEAVE** is an exceptionally rare skill, and should not be introduced lightly into your campaign. It represents a deep connection with a divine being, usually after having sacrificed something of yourself. That very connection is what allows a **WEAVER** to recognize other sources of mystic power.

*"I've filled up my Specialist clock. I'm going to take a rank of **WEAVE**."*

*"Actually, before you do that, we'll need to talk about how you'd bind yourself to a god, what sort of powers you might gain access to, and what it costs. Are you prepared to do all that?"*

*"I thought I would just get to do some cool miracles."*

*"Dedicating your life to a god's purpose is not so easy. We should really talk more before you do that."*

*"Can I have unwittingly bound myself to our Chosen? Or to some sort of nebulous force?"*

*"No, it needs to be to a specific god or goddess. It could be the same one as your Chosen, but these sorts of sacrifices are always intentional. Do you want to have pledged your service to your Chosen and have them do a ritual on you that you didn't fully understand?"*

*"Yeah, let's do that. I'm fine with whatever that might cost my character. I don't feel like they think through all their choices."*

*"Awesome. Let's workshop this between sessions and we'll figure out what kind of sacrifice it requires of you and what kinds of special abilities you might get access to in the future."*

Again, if you're not prepared to make your own playbook, you may want to avoid **WEAVE** altogether. It is not required for using artifacts, experiencing the divine, or dealing with mystic effects (though it may make any of these things easier). Its presence here is for completeness in describing the world.





# LEGION PLAYER BEST PRACTICES

## THE LEGION CHANGES YOU

Life in the Legion can be a brutal and exhausting struggle. The band of sellswords has been in and out of conflicts for hundreds of years. No soldier goes without seeing combat at some point in their career. More than a few have lost friends on the field of battle. Tradition and discipline are the pillars those in the Legion cling to when everything else seems lost.

This is a very different world than ours, and we follow the story of characters fighting a retreat against impossible odds. We experience that story vicariously, but at a distance. We advocate for our characters and we look forward to their triumphs, but just the same, we look forward to their challenges and setbacks. We're not here to keep these characters safe, or to have the best possible outcome for each of them all the time. Instead, we're here to see them push through the mud and watch them fight to make it to Skydagger Keep.

Don't struggle to keep your character safe or static. Let them chase their dreams, even to ruin. We get to see them risk everything to get what they want. And if we're lucky, we get to watch them succeed.

## ALL MISSIONS INVOLVE RISK

Humanity's latest offensive was a daring risk against the forces of the undead, and it went poorly. But the cost of not acting was even higher—guaranteed extinction. Every mission contains within it a possible victory and a definite cost if it is ignored. This is the very nature of what it means to be a Legionnaire.

In practice, this means that you will need to put yourself in harm's way to get what you want. Nothing in the game will happen without some sort of risk, so just accept that this is the life you've chosen and don't pull your punches looking for false safety. There are plenty of mechanics to bail you out when things inevitably go wrong, from resistances, to armor, to squadmates pulling you out of the fire.

While you don't want to be completely cavalier about the consequences of your actions, you also don't want to plan around every contingency. You have flashbacks available if you need an out. Otherwise, rely on your squad to pull through in the end. Each mission is an opportunity to see what you and your squad can do.

Rolling a 4/5 on an action means you get consequences, yes, but it also means you succeed, at least in part, in doing what you were trying to do. Most actions end up with at least one consequence, but with just two dice you can have a 75 percent chance of succeeding at what you're doing. Simply put, if you need the job done, trust a Legionnaire to do it.

Interrogate the fiction before your roll to find out what your outcomes might be. Don't shy away from a roll simply because you might get consequences! Deciding what your character is willing to sacrifice for what they believe in is a big chunk of the fun of the game. Welcome the opportunity to shine through adversity.

## DESCRIBE THE ACTION FAITHFULLY

When you choose an action to roll, you have a lot of latitude. With the permission to choose comes a responsibility to choose the action that matches what your character does and not the action you would simply like to roll.

For example, when you roll **MANEUVER**, it's because you're moving into position or traversing obstacles. When you **SHOOT**, it's because you're firing a weapon. If your Rookie is showing off a family weapon to impress the Heavy, they use **CONSORT**, not **SKIRMISH**, to impress them. The things you do have to match the action you roll.

Of course, you can do a setup action with **RESEARCH** to learn what kinds of weapons the Heavy would be impressed by (thereby increasing your effect or position). But when you get to the part where you're showing off your ancient blade, roll your **CONSORT** action.

Again, don't be afraid of rolling small dice pools. Even a single die gives you a 50 percent chance of having a positive effect. When you really need the extra dice, there are pushes, assists, and Devil's Bargains to help you out.

## ADVOCATE FOR THE STORY YOU WANT

You get to inject the themes and style into the game that you'd like to see. It's not just on the GM to determine them for you. The game is about collaboration and discussion. Advocate for the elements you'd like to see. You'll spend a number of hours playing the game, and what you want to see should be part of it.

Maybe you want to showcase how insidious corruption can be, so you accept it whenever it applies to your character. Or you want to highlight the Legion's interactions with faith, so you choose a heritage that puts it central in your story. Flag these choices so your table knows what you're interested in.

## USE YOUR STRESS

Stress is a feature unique to PCs. Stress represents the ability of your characters to push through circumstances that would be untenable to most people. Don't be afraid to spend stress.

Maybe you have zero dice for an action, but you push yourself for 2 stress, and a squadmate assists you for 1 stress, and suddenly you have 75 percent odds of success. Or maybe a nasty complication comes down and you resist it, spending stress in the process. Stress is how you fight the impossible war you find yourself in.

## PLAY TO HAVE FUN

You're playing this game to have a good time, so push for plans that are interesting and exciting, even if they aren't the wisest option. This extends past just plans. If something fits with the story and promises a fun time, go with it, even if it's a risky idea. When you're choosing missions, pick the one that sounds the most interesting to you, even if a boring approach has mechanical advantages. The worst thing to be is disinterested. As previously mentioned, armor, stress, and teamwork can bail you out of most tight jams.

## START FRESH, ADD DETAIL IN PLAY

Your character begins as a few sketchy ideas about their past. You come from a Bartan farming family or are an Orite knight. You used to be an academic, maybe studying to become an Officer. You're from Panya. You know how to **SCOUT** out trouble and **MANEUVER** your way around it. At the beginning, that's about all we know.

But every session is a chance to learn more about who your character is—to learn their beliefs and drives, what forces in their background pushed them into this life, and how their heritage shapes who they are today. We fill in these details through play. Are you the kind of person to disobey your corporal? Are you going to give up the mission to save people caught in the crossfire?

And it's explicitly expected that you wait to make those decisions until you're in the moment. Start with the vague idea of your character and create the details on-screen. You may have a notion about where your character comes from, but maybe you discover in play that you were once a serious contender for a position as a Mercy. You're never beholden to an earlier idea, just to the things that are actually said at the table.

## NO PLAN SURVIVES CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

When is the last time you saw a movie where a bunch of soldiers sat down and just talked about their plans for the raid for most of the film? It's not something that plays well in any medium. The reason is that planning usually means preparing for a lot of little details that frequently never come up. You may consider half a dozen approaches and spend hours of time at the table trying to protect yourselves from things that will never become problems, only to encounter issues you never expected to see.

Instead, cut to the action and use flashbacks or campaign actions to “plan” for the contingencies you need. Your engagement roll goes south and suddenly there's a fiendish array of traps between you and the villagers you're rescuing? If only you'd done more planning! Don't panic, just call for a flashback.

*“I want to flash back to the prior evening where Red Striking Pyre is **SCOUTING** the camp, watching where they've laid these traps. I'd like to use a setup action to get us better position to **MANEUVER** across the field. Undead are pretty uncreative. Maybe there's a pattern in where these traps are put that lets us slip through more safely than we'd expect.”*

Instead of planning for every contingency and using a ton of time to scout ahead and take all the surprise out of the scene, we address the problems as they come up. You wait to see what you should have planned for, and then flash back to the way in which you had prepared for this specific problem. Stress lets you buy your way out of the drudgery of examining all the possible ways things go wrong, and into the awesome way you get around the problem.

Now, your flashback can't undo the roll itself. There's still a field full of traps, and you're still in a worse position. But it can give you the tools you need to overcome that situation—recontextualizing that problem and showcasing your skills. All it takes is a little bit of stress and a good idea and you can mitigate the worst of a bad roll.





# CHAPTER 8

## BEHIND THE SCENES

If you've run other roleplaying games before, you might find that running this game is a bit different—mainly in the distribution of authority in the game. In lots of ways, all the players have say over how the rules are applied. That said, running the opposition on the missions is the purview of the GM, and demands some extra explanation.

This chapter breaks the GM Role down into several key areas to help demystify it a bit. First, we'll cover **duties**, then **random mission generation**, **goals**, **actions**, **principles**, **best practices**, and **bad habits** to avoid.

### GM DUTIES

- ◆ **KEEP THE RULES.** Keep track of what phase of play you're in. Answer rules questions. Call for rolls when the characters take actions that are difficult or dangerous. Consult fortune rolls when answers are uncertain.
- ◆ **SPEAK THE WORLD AS IT IS.** Keep the fiction and tone consistent. Pour fear and disgust into the undead. Keep the gods mysterious and incomprehensible. Make the people the soldiers meet real. Show the terrible consequences of war. Show that there are no magical solutions to the problems of the Legion.
- ◆ **MAKE CHOICES MATTER.** If the players choose not to cure a plague, the disease spreads appropriately. If they negotiate a treaty, reflect this in the Legion resources appropriately. Always consider what the enemy is doing in response to the Legion's actions.
- ◆ **GENERATE MISSIONS.** Whenever necessary, generate the next batch of missions. Consult the mission generation charts for inspiration, but you must breathe life into them. Make the fiction of the missions tie into the story of the journey and previous actions. Make the objectives interesting, and the consequences of not doing missions count.

	ASSAULT
TYPE	1 People.
	2 The Wild.
	3 Undead.
	4 Undead.
	5 Powerful Undead.
	6 Powerful Undead.
REWARDS	1 +2 Morale.
	2 +3 Morale.
	3 +4 Morale.
	4 +2 Morale. +1 Supply.
	5 +2 Morale. +1 Intel.
	6 +2 Morale. -1 Time.
PENALTIES	1 +1 Pressure. +1 Time.
	2 +1 Time.
	3 -1 Supply.
	4 +1 Pressure.
	5 +1 Pressure.
	6 +1 Pressure.

MISSION COUNT
1 3 Missions.
2 3 Missions.
3 3 Missions (one +1 Specialist).
4 2 Missions.
5 3 Missions (one has Favor).
6 3 Missions (1 Special Mission).

	RECON
TYPE	1 Area Recon.
	2 Route Recon.
	3 Troop Recon.
	4 Infiltration.
	5 Exfiltration.
	6 Pick above + Danger.
REWARDS	1 +2 Intel.
	2 +2 Intel.
	3 Asset. +1 Intel.
	4 Asset or Troops. +1 Intel.
	5 +1 Intel. -1 Time.
	6 +3 Intel.
PENALTIES	1 +1 Time.
	2 2 Deaths.
	3 1 Death.
	4 +1 Pressure.
	5 +1 Pressure.
	6 None.

MISSION TYPE
1 Assault.
2 Recon.
3 Religious.
4 Supply.
5 Commander's Focus.
6 GM's Choice.

	RELIGIOUS
TYPE	1 Escort.
	2 Cleansing.
	3 Defense.
	4 Unearth.
	5 Pick Above + Favor.
	6 Pick Above + Favor.
REWARDS	1 -1 Time. +2 xp.
	2 +2 Morale. +10 Points.
	3 +1 Intel. +2 Morale.
	4 Fine Asset.
	5 Exceptional Asset.
	6 Specialist.
PENALTIES	1 -1 Morale. +1 Pressure.
	2 +1 Pressure.
	3 +1 Pressure.
	4 -1 Morale.
	5 -1 Morale.
	6 None.

FAVOR
1 Holy.
2 Mystic.
3 Glory.
4 Knowledge.
5 Mercy.
6 Wild.

	SUPPLY
TYPE	1 Scrounge or Trade.
	2 Scrounge or Trade.
	3 Rescue Supplies.
	4 Rescue Supplies.
	5 Mercenary Work.
	6 Mercenary Work.
REWARDS	1 Asset. +1 Supply.
	2 Asset. +1 Supply.
	3 +2 Supply.
	4 Asset. +2 Supply.
	5 +3 Supply.
	6 +3 Supply.
PENALTIES	1 -1 Morale. -1 Supply.
	2 -1 Supply.
	3 -1 Morale.
	4 -1 Morale
	5 None.
	6 None.

SPECIALIST
1 Heavy.
2 Medic.
3 Scout.
4 Sniper.
5 Officer.
6 Alchemist or Mercy.

## RANDOM MISSION GENERATION

It's the GM's duty to create the missions available to the Legion. Most missions will be generated by consulting the random mission charts (except special missions). Special missions appear when you roll a **6** on the Mission Count chart (see page 312), or the Commander spends intel (which simply supersedes the roll and sets the Mission Count result to **6**).

The first step to generating missions is to confer with the Commander. They'll tell you what types of missions they are looking for.

Next, decide how many will be available. Consult the Mission Count table. Typically, there will be three missions, though sometimes there is a dearth of available missions or pressures, and only two are available. The chart will also tell you if one of the missions is special, has additional deploy requirements (like extra Specialists, which there is a random chart of requirements for if you don't know in your gut which type should be present), or if it has an element important to the Chosen (favor). Special missions have writeups in the appropriate location the Legion is camped at; the rest should be rolled up randomly.

When you generate a mission, consult the Mission Type table to decide what kind of mission it is. Each of the four mission types appears on this table, as does a stand-in for whichever mission type the Commander focused on, and a wildcard, where you decide on the mission type. If you roll a mission type that's not available, choose the next highest number. For instance, if you roll 4, supply, and no supply missions are available in that location, check 5. After generating the type of mission, you can then generate the subtype, reward, and penalties for the mission.

*Sam rolls on the Mission Count table and gets a 5. She will generate three missions for this mission phase, and one of those missions will grant favor. Sam decides to generate the mission with the favor first, and rolls the mission type, getting a 2—a recon mission.*

*Then she rolls on the Favors table and gets a 1: Holy. So the recon mission will be concerning some holy place, person, or thing significant to the Chosen of this Legion. Sam then rolls for the sub-type and gets a 5. Looks like an exfiltration, probably to rescue a member of the faith. Generating the rewards, Sam gets a 1 for +2 intel, and for penalties, she gets a 1 for +time. This holy person has valuable intelligence, and not recovering it will cost additional time.*

After you get the basic frame of the mission, take some time to flesh out the details. Each of the mission types has a distinct feel, and you can bring them more fully to life by understanding what their essential nature is.

## FAVOR

Missions with **favor** usually mean that there is something slightly supernatural or tied to the Chosen present. If the Chosen's favor is tied to the mission, they may request the Commander pay special attention to it. If a favor you didn't select for your Chosen is present, feel free to use it to inspire the mission, but your Chosen doesn't gain mission favor from mission completion.

- ◆ **HOLY:** Elements concerning culture, practices, or religious sites. Notably not magical. **Examples:** Religious texts. Pilgrims on the way to shrines. Holiday observances.
- ◆ **MYSTIC:** Supernatural elements clearly in play. **Examples:** Relics, rituals, or cults. Pieces of an ancient Chosen.
- ◆ **MERCY:** Domain of Asrika. Missions concerning saving innocents, or relics and holy sites specific to Asrika. **Examples:** Protecting innocents a Broken is planning to kill en masse. Saving a holy site with unarmed holy attendants. Dealing with Mercies or doctors.
- ◆ **WILD:** Domain of the Horned God. Elements concerning a mystic imbalance in the weather, wild animals, or nature. **Examples:** Sacred beasts. Corrupt weather. Blighted animals.
- ◆ **KNOWLEDGE:** Domain of the Orite gods. Traits of alchemy, mechanical wonders, history, and Old Empire technology. **Examples:** Academics. Recovering ancient knowledge. Finding Empire tech.
- ◆ **GLORY:** Domain of the Living God. These are tests of strength, courage, and endurance. **Examples:** Fighting superior foes. Risking a squad when it might be wiser to walk away. Fighting impossible odds.

## SPECIALISTS

If on the mission count chart you roll "+1 Specialist," this means that one of your missions both requires an additional kind of Specialist, and you may deploy up to 3 Specialists on this mission.

An extra Specialist on a mission is tied to the mission's nature. It might be easier to roll up the mission and see if an obvious Specialist type presents itself, but if you need more inspiration, roll on the Specialist table. You may need an extra Heavy for difficult battles, a Sniper for targeting specific powerful undead, a Medic for relief or rescue missions, an Officer for negotiation, or a Scout to find difficult paths or navigate dangerous areas.

## ASSAULT MISSIONS

Assault missions are about conflict, typically head-on. It's rare for an assault mission not to end in gunfire, drawn blades, or explosions.

In an assault mission, always ask: Where is the enemy weak and where are they strong? What avenues of attack are they prepared for? How would they react if a fight breaks out? What major opponents are present, and how do they enter the theater of battle?

Mission objectives will involve destruction and fighting. Sometimes the objective will be to kill a particular person or creature, but often it is to fight for a specific tactical objective. Sometimes the goal is to destroy an alchemical lab Blighter is using, or a smithy Render is forging new troops or weapons in. Sometimes it's to hold a pass, or collapse it.

### ASSAULT MISSION TYPES

The conflict in assault missions isn't necessarily about the enemies present. People might be locals raiding, sure, but it can also be a rescue operation. People are either the challenge or the objective, but they'll play a key role in the mission. The Wild is a force that changes the battlefield, provides an opportunity for the undead, or causes the Legion to race to acquire their target.

- ◆ **PEOPLE:** Bandits, cults, village elders, soldiers. Insular communities. Opportunistic raiders. Hungry soldiers raiding as they flee.
- ◆ **THE WILD:** Inclement weather, wild animals (possibly blighted), wildfires, strange terrain (such as the warding stones on the Long Road or the mystical woods of Talgon Forest).
- ◆ **UNDEAD:** Engaging at least a squad and one Elite of undead, either head-on or opportunistically.
- ◆ **POWERFUL UNDEAD:** Contesting at least one Infamous (possibly a Lieutenant in the later session) and trying to derail their plans.

### REWARDS

Assault missions always improve morale, and may also reward intel, supply, or time. See Mission Rewards (page 322) for more details.

### PENALTIES

Assault missions often increase pressure if they are failed or not completed. They may also cost time or supply. See Mission Penalties (page 323) for more details.



## RECON MISSIONS

Recon missions are about discovery, and operate far away from the Legion. These missions are about learning what the enemy is up to, finding and rescuing someone or something, scouting paths, and learning what the source of a problem is.

In a recon mission, ask: What thing is not what it seems, or how it is hidden? How will you reveal that truth? Is the intel that the mission provides from encountering a specific undead, or are there plans and schematics to recover?

Mission objectives should be about gaining intelligence from a place and learning something that isn't known. Sometimes through observation, sometimes through stealing or acquiring things that are written down (such as schematics or maps), and sometimes through finding local sources with vital intelligence you need.

### RECON MISSION TYPES

Recon mission types are always about the thing being reconnoitered.

- ◆ **AREA RECON:** Investigate an area for a resource, group, or person. You might have heard of undead moving into the area, or want to make sure the Legion isn't passing by an infested wood. You might look for resources.
- ◆ **ROUTE RECON:** Find a path through an area that leads from or to a place, or through the theater of war.
- ◆ **TROOP RECON:** Spy on and record troop movements, activities, and numbers. Figure out their movements or strategies.
- ◆ **INFILTRATION:** Going behind enemy lines, usually to recover some information.
- ◆ **EXFILTRATION:** Rescuing a person from behind enemy lines, usually to recover some information.
- ◆ **DANGEROUS:** Also include an Infamous or higher threat opponent.

### REWARDS

Recon missions always provide intel, but can also provide assets, troops, or simply time. See Mission Rewards (page 322) for more details.

### PENALTIES

Recon missions are among the more dangerous missions, and can lead to deaths in the Legion, loss of time, or increased pressure if they are failed or not completed. See Mission Penalties (page 323) for more details.

## RELIGIOUS MISSIONS

Religious missions are about culture, typically in a religious context. These missions are often a way to showcase the world or its history.

In a religious mission, ask: Whose culture is this part of? Is this from Aldermark, one of the Eastern Kingdoms, or a legacy of the Old Empire? How does that culture display its faith?

Mission objectives should be about recovery of religiously significant things, practice of religious rituals, restoration of past glories, and protecting the faith and practices of the people. The objectives are almost never about engaging with the enemy. They are about finding historically important or culturally significant assets, and unexpected allies tied to such elements. Of all the mission types, religious missions are probably the most varied in both design and objectives.

### RELIGIOUS MISSION TYPES

Religious missions are about performing one of the following, or protecting people who are doing such things.

- ◆ **ESCORT:** Someone holy or significant must be brought safely to or from a place.
- ◆ **CLEANSING:** A holy place is befouled and must be purified, which may include performing a ritual or simply driving out the undead occupying it. This may also require finding an object or place that might fix a befouling (recovering holy waters that might cure a disease, or a wound your Chosen got in a battle with the Broken recently).
- ◆ **DEFENSE:** Something of cultural significance must be protected from the corrupting influence of the undead.
- ◆ **UNEARTH:** A valuable artifact or historical object must be unearthed to serve use in the war.
- ◆ **FAVOR:** This mission will grant the selected mission favor and should incorporate that favor's themes and elements.

### REWARDS

Religious missions have the most exotic rewards, including everything from morale, to xp, to more points at the end of the game. See Mission Rewards (page 322) for more details.

### PENALTIES

Religious missions usually increase pressure or reduce morale if they are failed or not completed. See Mission Penalties (page 323) for more details.

## SUPPLY MISSIONS

Supply missions are about sourcing material things or occasionally trading mercenary work for wealth and resources.

In a supply mission, ask: What is the supply physically? If it's a big item, how will they get it back to camp? If it's wealth, how does that wealth get traded for other things?

Mission objectives could be assets to reclaim (such as carts or goods left out in the field, or caches of weapons secreted away in the past). Sometimes it's mercenary work (clearing out undead, or fighting other humans), finding something someone values highly (a noble's paintings in a villa overrun by undead), or protecting someone during travel. It's often not glorious work, but the Legion recovers and grows through careful allocation of supplies.

For mercenary work, always come through with the payment. The game is hard enough as it is, don't short the payment unless the actual playthrough of the mission is just getting paid.

## SUPPLY MISSION TYPES

These missions are mostly about how you acquire the supplies that the Legion needs.

- ◆ **SCROUNGE OR TRADE:** A valuable resource must be recovered, or can be traded for with another group. Many of these missions can be social.
- ◆ **RESCUE SUPPLIES:** A source of supplies has fallen into enemy hands, or is guarded by undead, but can be liberated.
- ◆ **MERCENARY WORK:** A person or group wants to hire the Legion for a job in exchange for wealth and materiel.

## REWARDS

Supply missions provide either supply, assets, or both. See Mission Rewards (page 322) for more details.

## PENALTIES

Supply missions have the most variable severity of penalties, but may cost supply or morale when failed or not completed. See Mission Penalties (page 323) for more details.

## OBSTACLES

On any mission, there will be impediments to just accomplishing the mission objectives. There should be about three major obstacles on each mission, but how you create them is up to you, as a GM. There are a few different approaches that give avenues for interesting challenges:

### ENVIRONMENTAL OBSTACLES

If a mission is about infiltrating or assaulting a place, it can be fruitful to think about the physical layout of the location. You can provide environmental obstacles (a dangerous climb, a sealed grate, finding a pass through the mountains to the bandit camp, bad weather conditions). Don't overuse these (players can often overcome them with a single roll) but always consider how they may interact with other challenges. Will breaking the grate alert the undead? Climbing the hill is hard enough, but are there patrols below that might spot you?

Missions may take more than one day. Think about obstacles on the road. Sometimes something as simple as finding enough food to make the trip can make for an interesting obstacle. Will you pack extra supplies, take level 1 harm from hunger, or raid that abandoned village knowing undead lurk there?

If you need to sneak into a camp to destroy an alchemical laboratory, you might have the obstacles Perimeter Security, Laboratory Security, and Laboratory Destruction. Then you can think about what sorts of problems might lie in each of these—what sorts of Perimeter Security does this mission have? Are they undead stationed at the edge of town, or are there gas traps that line the streets? Do Crows peer down from rooftops and periodically scan the horizon?

### ENEMIES

Enemies (usually undead) are a common obstacle. For instance, if your mission is to defend an ancient shrine, you might imagine a squad of cultists with their leaders, and a swarm of blightbeasts they've chained.

When you inject a monster as an obstacle, you need to know what threat level they operate as. If you're at a loss, look at some other monsters and see if you can find one about the same toughness. If you can't, remember that threat 1 monsters are rank and file threats, threat 2 monsters are a respectable challenge, and threat 3 monsters outmatch a Specialist all by themselves. Threat 4 challenges are usually too much for a squad to handle directly without incredible luck, and usually require creative solutions.

Threat 5 or higher challenges are reserved for the Broken, the Cinder King, and brigades of soldiers.

For example, you might decide that the cultists the Legion is facing are potent threat 1 fanatics, strengthened by their zeal and some choice alchemical drugs. Their head cultist may be threat 2, as is the dark champion blessed by their god (but make sure to detail what makes them more threatening than the average cultist). The swarm of their trained blighted animals might also be threat 2, with scale.

## STAGES

Sometimes, a mission is easy to break down into conceptual stages. Each of these stages could be an obstacle. If you've heard about a prisoner the undead are keeping, you might have the following stages: first scout out where the undead are keeping the prisoner, then break the prisoner out, and finally return to camp. In each case, consider what blocks the objective from straightforward completion—are there several buildings and you have to figure out which one holds the prisoner you care about? What makes getting back to camp difficult? Are there Hounds that will chase you down?



## MISSION REWARDS

Make rewards concrete. Always interrogate the rewards—if a mission gives a boost to morale, is that because a number of the troops actually care about the people you’re rescuing? Are they family members of people in the Legion? Or is there a strong desire by the troops to be active instead of reactive? Is there someone in the Legion who is particularly agitating for an aggressive approach?

This is especially true of abstract rewards, such as intel or supply. In these cases, turn the rewards into something physical and see if you can inject it into the mission. It’s much better to steal a book of alchemical secrets or the plans to some terrible project of the Broken than to simply gain an intel. It also gives the squad a more concrete goal than “spy on the enemy.” The mission then becomes to find the schematics to Blighter’s brewing labs or a communiqué from the Cinder King to his minions.

- ◆ **MORALE:** Something about this mission is emotionally important to the Legion, and success will improve how they feel about the war.
- ◆ **SUPPLY:** There’s a valuable resource in the mission, such as rare art that can be sold, trade goods that can be exchanged, or arms and armor that can help bolster the Legion. Alternatively, someone might be willing to pay for the Legion’s help.
- ◆ **INTEL:** There are plans, schematics, or designs to be found on the mission, or key information that might help the war effort.
- ◆ **TIME:** Completing the mission will reduce the “Time” clock, because it puts the Legion at a significant advantage or gives the undead a significant disadvantage.
- ◆ **ASSET:** An asset of standard quality, such as Black Shot or Horses, is available on this mission, usually, but not always in enemy hands.
- ◆ **FINE ASSET:** As with asset, but fine quality, such as alchemicals or a Siege Weapon.
- ◆ **EXCEPTIONAL ASSET:** An exceptional quality asset is available on this mission, such as an Alchemist or Mercy. Perhaps a relic.
- ◆ **XP:** This mission has significant lessons for the Legion; success grants additional xp to the Specialists partaking.
- ◆ **POINTS:** At the end of the game, the disposition of the Legion during winter will depend on their final score. This mission provides a significant boost to their chances.
- ◆ **SPECIALIST:** A well-trained soldier is available to be recruited or rescued, or is willing to join the Legion in exchange for a favor. Create as a starting character, but they may have additional actions or special abilities to allocate.



## MISSION PENALTIES

Just as with rewards, these need to be concrete too. If a mission increases pressure, determine how that happens in the story—are there extra undead that have flanked the Legion, or is there simply less help in the region now? Is there a time penalty because it takes longer to get through an area or because the undead have pushed up their timetables? These fictional conclusions can be built upon in later missions and will inform what campaign actions the Legion takes.

- ◆ **PRESSURE:** Failing this mission bolsters the undead threat in some way, giving them aid, letting them increase numbers or threat in the area, or making their presence worse for the Legion.
- ◆ **TIME:** Failing this mission represents a large material advantage for the undead, making it less likely that the Legion get to Skydagger at all. Ask—How are the undead advancing or gaining significant ground? How is the Legion losing ground?
- ◆ **SUPPLY:** Representing either increased expenditures or reduced resupply options for the Legion, this mission costs supply. Ask why supply will vanish—Are you paying for medicine? Is it being plagued in some way?
- ◆ **DEATH:** A Legionnaire dies as a result of the consequences of the mission failing, generally the Marshal's choice. Ask—Why will they die? Is it poison, curse, disease, wounds? Are they lured away to die without the Legion's protection or is it an assault on the camp?
- ◆ **MORALE:** Something about this mission is emotionally important to the Legion and failure will discourage them further. Ask—How do things look grim? Who does the Legion care for that they might lose? How does the Legion have to abandon people in need, and why does this bug the average soldier?
- ◆ **NONE:** For once, there are no consequences to not performing this mission. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, however.

## EXAMPLE RANDOM MISSION

Sam looks at the mission she's generating: a recon mission to exfiltrate a member of the faith with valuable intelligence. Failing the mission will cost the Legion **time**, so Sam makes that concrete. The undead have cut off the main road, and finding another way past them will take time, unless the Legion can rescue this priestess.

Sam decides that at least 1 point of the **2 intel** the mission grants should be in the routes around the undead. Perhaps this priestess knows a number of high-mountain routes, and travel between them would be much safer. The other intel could be something found in the undead camp.

This is a recon mission, so Sam considers what thing is not what it seems: the reason why the undead haven't just killed this priestess. Perhaps this priestess has some sort of ties to the Broken. Were they a priestess of one of the gods that became the Broken? If so that Broken may want to try to turn them personally, to create a unique Elite. That could be fun. She adds that to the penalties.

Sam looks at the obstacles that might be in play here. Clearly this is going to be sneaking into some sort of camp. She decides the camp is in a small village the undead have repurposed. The priestess will be held securely, in the old constabulary, seen to by an Infamous with orders and a map of local undead outposts (the second intel point). Dealing with that guardian (luring it away or distracting it) and breaking and overcoming the lock on the cage are one obstacle together.

Sam considers that second challenge, and decides that the perimeter security is not terribly difficult to bypass. Getting to the constabulary means creeping about a town crawling with several units of undead. She makes a 6-clock to represent getting to the building and makes notes about obstacles this clock stands for: Finding a route and sneaking through town, or engaging a squad blocking a path quickly and quietly. There are too many undead about for a single unit to take head-on, so she makes an "Alarm" 4-clock as well. This will represent exactly how much hot water the squad is in (when those **SCOUT** rolls shift to **MANEUVER** rolls as they sprint for their lives).

In order to add stakes and spice things up, she makes a larger 8-clock to represent a powerful servant of the Broken approaching to take the priestess back to their master. Actions that delay (waiting for patrols, taking a while to fight, waiting for night to come) would put ticks on this clock and create a sense of tension and pacing to the whole endeavor.

Sam sketches out a loose map of the village for later presentation to the group.

## STORY-BASED MISSIONS

Not all missions need to be randomly generated. Sometimes the players will push heavily to do another mission. Sometimes, the story will call for a specific mission to be available to the Legion, despite what the random charts suggest. In these cases, you can generate the mission that feels appropriate for your Legion.

You should be rolling most of your missions randomly, but when the story calls for it, you may elect to replace one of these missions with one of your own choice. You should consider the rewards and penalties carefully. Usually, you'll want to look at the charts for random mission generation and pick one that feels appropriate to the mission you're designing.

## FICTIONAL CONSEQUENCES

Always consider the story of the missions and their consequences. If you only take the missions for their rewards and penalties, the game will feel tedious and dry. Instead, find the stories each mission tells.

For instance, if your players choose not to go on a mission to destroy one of Breaker's Pillars of Skulls, you should talk about how Devourers have made travel on the main roads deadly and how people traveling the countryside are disappearing in droves. Add additional Devourers in future missions (perhaps in pairs instead of the single monster threat they usually are). If your players fail to accomplish a mission to cure a mysterious illness that has befallen some of the troops, make sure to worsen that illness in some concrete way. Perhaps one unit is ill and cannot deploy. And if untreated over longer periods time, this may spread, or cause death.

On the other hand, let the players roll forward with their victories. If they kill off Viktoria Karhowl, the Macabre Scientist, you can make reference to the shortage of Spitters that the Legion has encountered in recent days. Perhaps a later mission might be about Blighter attempting to recreate some of Viktoria's formulas. Every mission, successful or not, has a consequence to the story that should be reflected going forward.

## FAIRNESS

An unstoppable army of undead. The breaking of the Chosen. A grueling march east. And in the center of it all, the seemingly unstoppable Cinder King himself. In the context of the setting, the idea of fairness may seem strange. But in order for **Band of Blades** to remain fun, the game must remain fair for those playing it.

Fair here doesn't mean nothing bad happens to the players (or that they are guaranteed to survive or make it to Skydagger). Fair means that problems will appear and grow throughout the campaign, and only the actions of (or lack of action by) the Legion will change the course of this. Fair means that players understand the difficulties and risks, and know how their decisions will reflect on the characters they're playing.

The first step is to communicate clearly about rolls. Ensure that everyone at the table is clear about the sorts of results that might come up. Sometimes that means communicating as to what the different results (1-3, 4/5, and 6) might mean for the character, including some outcomes that might happen as a result. Sometimes that might mean unpacking your reasoning a bit and negotiating with your players. Sometimes it's being clear about what is and isn't possible.

**PLAYER:** *Can I intimidate these undead into giving us a bit of space? I have a spear and can swing it in a big arc around us...*

**GM:** *No, I'm sorry, undead don't care about their bodies or really about much other than their orders. I could see skirmishing to create that space though—though it feels pretty desperate since they outnumber you so heavily.*

**PLAYER:** *Yeah, it's fine, I'm sure I'll roll a 6.*

**GM:** *Before you roll, let's just be clear. On a 1-3 here, they overrun your whole squad and severely harm everyone involved, including you. On a 4/5, you take severe harm, though the squad is safe, for the moment. Are you sure you want to take those odds?*

**PLAYER:** *Is there any way we can make it less dangerous?*

**GM:** *Sure, a group action here could mean you're fighting at scale, which would bring it down to risky, though that exposes the squad to danger. A few of them might get dragged off by the undead as you establish your line.*

Another place you'll want to be careful about fairness is in resistance rolls. Give players an option to make resistances for most things, and consider whether the methods they're resisting with eliminate the threat altogether. The balance here is to allow players to be clever without losing the threat you've established.

**GM:** Okay, roll a maneuver roll to get up the cliff. It's risky—if you fall, that could be a pretty nasty injury.

**PLAYER:** Risky? I mean, I have a rope and a grappling hook. It seems like the worst that happens is it goes slowly, right?

**GM:** With the rain, and the height of the cliff, I still think it's pretty risky. If this were a normal day, sure, but the Transformed have been chasing you and you can't afford the time to find a way out of this ravine.

**PLAYER:** I guess it's a good thing I have three dice here. Looks like...4/5.

**GM:** No problem. You get about halfway up and you catch the eye of a Transformed looking over the cliff at you.

**PLAYER:** Oh no! Uh, is there any way it might not spot me?

**GM:** Sure, that could be a resistance roll. Since it's a physical consequence and you're probably clutching the mountainside to hide under an overhang, that's a **PROWESS** resist.

Players have small stress pools to start, and you should be mindful about the scale and number of consequences you apply to them. Even a relatively “safe” resistance roll can end in trauma. In many cases, limited effect or losing the opportunity to act can be an appropriate outcome. Alternatively, a player might offer a creative flashback. This can be a good way to haggle down the resistance cost into a fixed number.

**PLAYER:** Could it be an **INSIGHT** resist instead? I think we might've spotted them earlier and chosen a better spot. Or see it first and hang close to the cliff to avoid being seen.

**GM:** If you flash back to having scouted the area, then sure. I'd say that's a 1 stress flashback, though—finding a safe spot in the rain. Let's make a **SCOUT** roll as a fortune roll and on a 1-3, we'll say it took 2 stress instead. Does that sound fair?

Above all, the key is to establish agreement about the fiction and to work out what is the most reasonable outcome in the story. Not necessarily the one best for the players or the Legion, but the one that makes sense in context, given the story so far. Introducing more severe consequences is appropriate if the story has built up to them.

Specifically, Lieutenants (threat 4), should be saved for later in the story. They are mighty forces organizing troops and working in the background, rather than line troops sent on every mission. Keep them offscreen until after the Legion has advanced four times. This gives time for the players to get used to the Infamous and lower ranks. When introducing a Lieutenant, flag its presence in the mission briefings, or hint at it in the missions leading up to its introduction.

Though a Rookie can take on a line troop, and most Specialists can face Elites on even footing, an Infamous is quite dangerous, and a single Lieutenant can often shred a whole squad on their own. When presenting powerful foes, remind the players what the mission objective is—it's usually not directly attacking the foe—and that retreat is always an option. For Lieutenants, more clever solutions will have to be deployed, reducing their threat value by negating their advantages, and showcasing their weaknesses. Hitting someone with a ballista after bringing them into a carefully calculated target zone, or removing the finest horseman's steed are all ways to offset threat. Adjudicate appropriately.

The same goes for threats within a mission. If you intend to hide the presence of a threat, think about how that threat should be foreshadowed, and make sure it's not impossible for the players to tackle that threat. For example, if Render has just gotten the ability Shredders (which gives him shrapnel grenades), you might reveal them after a bad engagement roll, with a soldier having stepped on a shredder and the squad needing to make a **RIG** roll to disarm the trap. You might reveal their presence in a field before the squad crosses by having a woodland creature set one off. If one goes off without previous notice, make sure it's hitting a squad member not being played, and be ready for people to resist the outcome by hearing a sound, and leaping to push friends out of the way.

Remember that fairness is also following up on your threat. If you put a camp full of bandits into play, and the players engage all of them at once, this means they have zero to no effect (and they should expect this). A sizeable force will likely shred their abilities and resources quickly, and you should adjudicate harm appropriately. High threat opponents might act quickly, with the players having to resist their blows to get close enough to attack.

In this game there is armor, but there is no plot armor. Soldiers dying are a part of every war story. Sometimes this happens suddenly from a bad resistance roll. Sometimes they die dramatically as they push themselves past massive harm for one final action. Sometimes it's a grand moment as they stay behind to set off the alchemical explosives and seal their squad's escape. But soldiers die.



# HORROR

The unique constraints of the horror genre present equally unique challenges for GMs. Attempts to manufacture the anxiousness or inject terrifying moments can fall flat—what works for one will not work for all. While GMing **Band of Blades**, keep these key points in mind.

- ◆ **You can't tell people to be scared.** Focus on showing over telling. Saying “this is scary” doesn't work. The best you can do is describe something that scares you and hope that they too are scared.
- ◆ **Failure isn't scary.** Just making things hard isn't scary. Fear comes from tension, helplessness, and the hope that just maybe you might make it. Don't have everything just kill people. They won't be scared.
- ◆ **Consume media.** Read stories written in the style of horror you're trying to emulate. Try different descriptions that make you shiver. Watch horror movies, and study how they frame shots. Remember that jump scares are a visual and auditory trick, and not something for roleplaying games.
- ◆ **Set the mood.** Lower the lights. Leave light spooky music on in the background, but don't let it disrupt the game.
- ◆ **Respect boundaries.** You're never sure where anyone's limit is. If folks get uncomfortable, take a break, check in with them, and make sure to respect anything that's off-limits.

## MISSION NAMES

1	Azure	Arrow
2	Amber	Citadel
3	Broken	Fire
4	Chosen	Hawk
5	Crimson	Light
6	Diamond	Mountain
1	Emerald	Peak
2	Flying	Storm
3	Grasping	Thorn
4	Screaming	Tiger
5	Shattered	Wing
6	Western	Wolf

*If you like naming your missions, pick from the list to the left, or roll 1d6 four times to determine the name at random.*

*The first die determines if the first half of the name will come from the top of the table (if you rolled 1-3) or the bottom (if you rolled 4-6). The second die determines the name itself.*

*The third and fourth dice determine the same for the second half of the mission name.*

*So if you wanted to randomly name a mission, you might roll: 6, 5, 5, 4.*

*You get Operation: Shattered (6, 5) Tiger (5, 4)! Remember to say it dramatically.*

## GM GOALS

When you run the game, try to accomplish these goals:

- ◆ **Play to find out what happens.** Don't steer the game toward certain outcomes or events. Be curious!
- ◆ **Convey the fictional world honestly.** When it's time to say what happens, or what's in the world around the PCs, look around the vision of Aldermark in your head and say what you see. Don't play favorites. Make the world seem real, not contrived.
- ◆ **Bring Aldermark to life.** Give each location a specific feeling (despondent, cold, wet, chaotic, etc.). Give each NPC a name, detail, and a preferred method of problem solving (threats, bargaining, violence, charm, etc.). Give each action context—the charge is over a rain-swept hill and soldiers are slipping in the mud, the squad descends the reverberating caverns while in the distance an underwater stream echoes, the Rookies smell of desperation and a dozen-mile march.

To achieve your goals, use GM actions guided by your GM principles (detailed on the following pages).



## GM ACTIONS

In the same way that player characters have actions they can use to get things done in the game, so do you have a set of GM actions. When you need to contribute to the story and you are unsure of what to do, look at this list of actions and pick one.

### ASK QUESTIONS

Always ask questions. The majority of your work as a GM is to ask questions and build on the answers. Sometimes the answers come from the dice, sometimes they come from a player, but in any case, simply asking the question primes the pump for interesting play.

- ◆ **Ask establishing questions** to paint the details for the scene and action. *Is your Scout taking point, or do you have the newest Rookie do it? Which of you is leading the charge? Who's carrying the satchel charges for the bridge? Is your Officer friends with the squad or do you keep yourself more removed?*
- ◆ **Ask evocative questions** to provide an opening for players to express their characters. *Are you actually lying here, or do you believe what you're saying? Can you really bring yourself to leave the Rookie behind? How do you react to getting a commendation when other squad members died?*
- ◆ **Ask leading questions** to highlight what you're thinking about. *Do you think you can sneak up on a half-wolf abomination? Does anyone want to **RESEARCH** to find out what this device does? If you light the alchemicals on fire, this whole place could go up, right?*
- ◆ **Ask trivial questions** to fill Aldermark with color. *Have you ever ridden a firemane? Have you ever been in an Aldermani shrine? Do you miss your home? How long have you been in the Legion?*
- ◆ **Ask the players for help when you're uncertain or stuck.** *What's a good Devil's Bargain here? That seems like lethal harm, would you all agree? This could be desperate or just risky—what do you think?*

### ASK QUESTIONS

#### FOLLOW THE FICTION

#### CUT TO THE ACTION

#### TELL THEM THE CONSEQUENCES AND ASK

#### TELEGRAPH THE TROUBLE BEFORE IT STRIKES

#### FOLLOW THROUGH

#### INITIATE AN ACTION WITH AN NPC

#### TICK A CLOCK

#### OFFER A DEVIL'S BARGAIN

#### THINK OFFSCREEN

## FOLLOW THE FICTION

As a GM, you need to create the missions that the Legion players will choose from but still follow the story where it leads.

Creating missions is straightforward: At the end of each campaign phase, generate missions that match up with the story so far and the location the Legion is currently in. (See Mission Generation, page 314.) Aldermark is designed to provoke the kinds of stories **Band of Blades** tells best. Draw from the locations and their challenges for inspiration, and add your unique ideas about the war, guided by your goals and principles.

Not all missions are equal. Sometimes you get a perfect mission—an ideal opportunity for your Legion, just when you need it. Other times there will be nothing but hardship as far as the eye can see. Most of the time, this distinction comes directly out of the story itself. Look at which missions the Legion players have passed up. Who's benefiting from the lack of Legion interference? Which Broken is in a position to make a move?

At the beginning of the mission phase, the Commander and sometimes the Spymaster have intel questions they can ask. Listen to what they ask about for clues as to what concerns them most about the mission. Be forthright and complete about giving information to the players. There's always something that goes wrong—but in almost all cases, the squad should go into the mission having a firm understanding of what that mission is about.

Mission briefings are a good time to get people into character and excited about the missions. A good mission briefing presents each mission as a small story:

*“Alright, our first mission is Operation Emerald Hawk. Local villages have been hit this last week by a series of undead blitz attacks. This has cut off supplies coming to us from the north and civilian casualties are high. We know there's a resistance group operating along the road to Plainsworth, but we haven't been able to make contact until today, when a band of survivors was sighted hiding out in a village that was razed a few days ago. We need to link up with this group and get them to divulge their routes out of the area. They're our only hope of resupply between here and Plainsworth.”*

This pattern to a briefing is formulaic and works very well:

- ◆ **First, the situation is presented:** undead blitz attacks.
- ◆ **Then the opportunity:** making contact with the resistance.
- ◆ **Then the problem that you know about:** they're exposed in enemy territory.
- ◆ **Then finally objectives:** find, protect, and negotiate with them.

Each of the different mission types has information about what details to focus on. (See pages 316-319.)

The idea for missions should come directly from the story so far. For instance, if the Legion passes up a mission to stymie some new alchemical plague that Blighter has been working on to gas and raise entire villages, you can make a later mission take place in one of those villages. If the Legion elects not to deal with a mission where Shadow Witches are fighting amongst each other, introducing the new Infamous Shadow Witch that emerges from that conflict with new powers is completely acceptable. Always push forward on the fiction and make the Legion responsible for its choices.

## CUT TO THE ACTION

Once the engagement roll is made by the Marshal, that's your cue. Your job is to push forward to the first interesting event on the mission.

*"Alright, so you're coming up on the village that the resistance fighters are in, and your engagement roll is 4/5. You're marching down the main thoroughfare and you hear rifle fire nearby. On the other end of town is the resistance group, and they're being pinned down by a group of undead. That's when the other undead squad notices you..."*

You don't always have to jump this quickly into the action—this might be too quick for some groups—but try to aim towards this point. There are ample tools for dealing with problems traditionally dealt with via planning—flashbacks can cover a lot of ground, as can resistance rolls. That time spent planning is better spent fighting the undead.

In the same way, whenever you cut to another scene, cut to the meat of that scene, where the action happens. If you're describing sneaking into a camp, cut straight to the moment the characters overhear some crucial bit of intel, instead of deciding on how the characters get to the camp at all. Momentum is key. You can always address questions as they come up.

## TELL THEM THE CONSEQUENCES AND ASK

*"This cave is collapsing. You can run in and grab the relic, but if the roll doesn't go your way, you may get buried here. Still willing to do it?"*

*"Charging into melee with something twice your size is a good way to get killed. Do you want to just resist getting hit on the way in? Or you could have your squad try to set you up so you can close safely, but then they won't be firing at the undead coming over the hill."*



## TELEGRAPH TROUBLE BEFORE IT STRIKES

When you describe a scene, show the threat that's present, then ask the other players what they do. Strong characterization and clear description will make it easy to deliver consequences that players care about.

*"You're coming up on the site when your Scout pulls you quickly behind a tree. The crunch of shambling iron boots is only feet away. What do you do?"*

*"The Horror opens its maw impossibly wide before keening a chilling howl. It slams its giant meaty hand down at you. When you dodge away, you hear the sound of stone cracking under the force of its blow. What do you do?"*

*"Your spy is in the center of the ritual circle. His eyes are cloudy—he's clearly lost in an sorcerous haze. The ritual chanting continues to grow louder and your sense of dread with it. What do you do?"*

Contrast those with these vague versions:

*"You have to deal with an undead patrol before you get to the camp. How do you do that?"*

*"The Horror is really strong. How do you attack?"*

*"Your spy is feeling the effects of the ritual. What do you do?"*

Without telegraphing the trouble and obstacles and giving context to the action, the outcomes can feel undefined. You might feel like you're creating something out of the blue when they roll a 1-3 or a 4/5. If you strongly imply the consequences before the action roll though, it becomes obvious what the consequences should be (your squad is discovered, the Horror smashes you, the spy is sacrificed)—because they follow directly from the fiction described.

## FOLLOW THROUGH

Once you've telegraphed your threat, follow through with that threat when it hits. There are several tools for players to use to soften the blow for themselves. They might make an action roll to react in time. They might make a resistance roll to mitigate the damage. Give your fiction teeth.

*"You try to cross the path without the patrol seeing you, but one of the undead was straggling behind and spots you as you dart across. The alarm is raised!"*

*"The Horror connects directly with your shield, shattering your arm and sending you flying. Take level 3 harm."*

*"Your spy's mouth opens, and his body distends in horrific ways. You watch him transform into a monster in front of your very eyes."*



This same idea applies to the Broken and their forces. If they're able to do something without anything getting in their way, they can just do it. Go ahead and say, "Render knows you're behind the raids. He assembles a squad of Elites to hunt down your people while they're out on missions. You find out when your almost mortally injured Scout comes back from patrol. They describe the skull-shaped crests those Heartless wear on their pauldrons before collapsing and being rushed off to the medical tent. What do you do?"

## INITIATE ACTION WITH AN NPC

This is similar to the previous GM action, just more specific. Your NPCs can initiate action on their own, instead of having to wait for the PCs to act first. More dangerous NPCs will act first more often.

*"Lugos, the Clockwork Assassin, fires a bolt out of a wrist launcher into your leg as it flees. It fires another, a grappling hook, into the shadowy rafters as it escapes. In the shadows, you hear the soft clicking as it winds its gears."*

*"The Commander will be livid if I just let it get away. Can't I dodge or something?"*

*"Sure. You can resist with **PROWESS** if you want to. If you do, you'll dodge the bolt completely and have the chance to act before Lugos escapes."*

This is a very effective technique, but it can be overused. Save it for Lieutenants and Infamous, or for particularly dire situations when an NPC has a serious advantage.

## TICK A CLOCK

Keep a piece of paper or stack of index cards handy to draw new clocks on. Ticking a clock allows you to draw out an extended sequence, such as infiltrations, as well as tracking long-term attitudes, such as the growing concerns of the rank and file with their leadership.

## OFFER A DEVIL'S BARGAIN

Consider what complications or dubious choices characters can make that you want to see on-screen and offer them dice for making those things happen. If you can't think of one, you can always offer gear breaking—war is as hard on items as it is on people.

## THINK OFFSCREEN

Consider what might be happening elsewhere and whether it has an impact to what's going on right now. Did Blighter's research produce a new alchemical the Crows might use here? Are the Broken fighting, leading to more than one kind of undead on the mission? Whatever it is, bringing in offscreen problems can make the world feel more organic and rich.

## GM PRINCIPLES

When you pursue your goals and choose actions, use your principles to guide your decision making.

- ◆ **Be a fan of the PCs.** Present the world honestly—things really are stacked against them—but don't make yourself the enemy of the PCs. They have enemies enough. Be interested in the characters and excited about their victories.
- ◆ **Always follow the fiction.** The game's starting mission will put things in motion. Ask how the characters react and see what happens next. NPCs react according to their goals and methods. Events snowball. You don't need to "manage" the game. Action, reaction, and consequences will drive everything.
- ◆ **Pour fear and disgust into the undead.** The undead are a terrifying force that threatens to drive humanity to extinction and they make a mockery of life as they do it. They are not misunderstood creatures with a deeply complex rationale. The living may have feelings about the people that were once dead returning to murder them, but those feelings are in no way reciprocated.
- ◆ **Keep the gods mysterious and incomprehensible.** They care about humanity, but do not care about humans. They follow ancient traditions, and are bound by strange rules. Relics are sources of long-forgotten power and have abilities no one can explain.
- ◆ **Make the people the Legionnaires meet real.** If everything the Legionnaires encounter are monsters, we only see a portion of the Legionnaires. They are warriors, but they are not only warriors. They have lives back home, they each come from their own culture and values. They agree about what they're fighting for, but they may not agree about the way in which to fight. Bring that out with fleshed out and real characters for them to interact with.
- ◆ **Show the terrible consequences of war.** There are no magical solutions to the problems of the Legion.
- ◆ **Address the characters.** Ask, "Blue Rising Iron, are you taking point?" not "Juan, does Blue Rising Iron take point?" This puts Blue Rising Iron front and center—their preferences, desires, and style. They come to life as a character.
- ◆ **Address the players.** "Juan, how do you want to handle this? Should we do a whole scene or just make a roll real quick?" This puts Juan front and center—his preferences, desires, and style. He can consider what he wants, rather than what the character wants.

- ◆ **Consider the risk.** Think about the dangers inherent in what the Legion does. A risky roll is the default. When they're building on successes, they might make controlled rolls. When they have to improvise or are clearly outmatched, they're probably making desperate rolls. Go with your gut. Call the positions as you see them, but be open to revision.
- ◆ **Hold on lightly.** Rewind, revise, and reconsider events as needed. This is not a "no-take-backs" kind of game. You can always say, "Actually, no, on second thought, they really aren't prepared for you sneaking into the camp, so let's do away with the clock." This can be a hard principle to internalize but being flexible enough to revisit the situation with a new perspective can really improve the game.
- ◆ **Check in with the other players.** Especially as you describe horror and tragedy, it's your job to ensure that the space is safe and enjoyable for those at your table. Sometimes, even a quick question of "Is this too gruesome?" can be enough to make people feel okay.



## GM BEST PRACTICES

**Play to find out and encourage others to do the same.** Instead of making something specific happen, ask questions about what might happen. *Will Blighter deforest Talgon? Will the Grinning Ravens accept being folded into another squad? Can the Hexed be cured?* Don't make up your mind about these questions—let the players surprise you.

**Uphold the integrity of the game.** It's on you to portray the world as it is, not to contrive events or set up particular outcomes. The players should trust that when you tell them things they don't know about the world, there's no secret agenda behind your words.

**Get everyone's input.** This game is a structured conversation, and you should always be pushing to include everyone in that conversation. Ask questions and prompt ideas. Discuss your thoughts with the players and keep unilateral decisions to a minimum.

**Find your own interest in the game.** Your game is a chance to watch the military fantasy show you always wanted. Be that show's biggest fan! When you want to know something about the characters, ask the players. *"Are you really going to court-martial him? Or are you bluffing?"* These questions will give you insight into what the characters want, how they're trying to get it, and when and what to roll to make that happen.

**Be a fan of the characters and help the players pursue their characters' goals.** Ask them what they want and point out opportunities they might have to achieve those goals. Work with them to create opportunities. Help them with the system to get the most out of the risks they're taking.

**Bring up character feelings and thoughts.** Talking about a scene and living that scene are two different experiences, and only focusing on the tiny fraction of concrete events will make the game feel flat. Share with the characters things they might suspect or think. Ask them if they want to gather information and dig deeper.

**Portray the NPCs fully.** Even if they aren't the main characters, the NPCs have interests, capabilities, and opinions of their own. Don't let them get pushed around! When the PCs want to go head-to-head with an NPC, remind them of the NPC's capabilities. *"Pyre is in charge of your squad. I don't know if you can really just DISCIPLINE him to drop it. What's your leverage?"* When the PCs have NPC allies, make sure those allies take actions to help their friends out, and come to the PCs with info and troubles.

**Ask the players what they want.** Find out what the squad cares about. Who do the players think are their friends, and who do they hold a grudge against? Ask players in the moment: What do they want out of this action? If you know their goals, you can have a conversation about opportunities, actions, and effects. Sometimes, clarifying what the player wants is enough to highlight the correct approach, or make it clear what sorts of opportunities they're looking for. It can also make clear what actions they might perform and what consequences might come from those actions. Get the players to do the heavy lifting of determining where to go next.

**Cut to the action.** Once you get the players to tell you what they want and how they're going to get it, cut to the action and use dice rolls to move things along. It's okay to try big things! If they want to kill Render, and then they go and somehow do it, despite the poor odds and immense dangers? Good for them! It's done. He doesn't mysteriously escape. Keep the action and the story moving.

**Separate possible ideas from facts.** Everything in your head that hasn't entered the story is in a nebulous state of potential. Those ideas may come to light, or they might never come to pass, depending on how the story evolves from the players' actions. For example, when the PCs infiltrate an undead field chirurgery, you may have ideas of what might happen:

- |                                                                   |                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| ◆ <i>Front of the Camp (Crows? Rotters? Patrols returning?)</i>   | ◆ <i>Experimentation (Viktoria Karhowl? Alchemical vats?)</i> |
| ◆ <i>Hillside Approach (Storage? A Horror?)</i>                   | ◆ <i>Armory (Crossbows and swords? Shields and armor?)</i>    |
| ◆ <i>Main Chirurgery (Blighter's Doctor? New troops in vats?)</i> | ◆ <i>Commander's Tent (Field notes? Maps and plans?)</i>      |

When they decide they're assaulting the main entrance, you can think about the possible ideas in your head and add more details when you need them.

As the characters proceed with their plan, reach for these ideas and make them fact by describing them in the scene. This gives the players something to wrestle with, obstacles to overcome, and opportunities to leverage. Until you put them in the story, you should think of them as just possible ideas, not facts to be discovered. Take them or leave them as the fiction needs. It's also okay to weave in player expectations and descriptions.

The feel of the game should be jumping from one gritty cinematic beat to another—a driving sequence to get the mission done. Let the dice dictate where trouble comes up. When it does, use your pool of ideas to carry you forward. Use clocks to track progress and introduce ideas you have when you need them. You may have thoughts about the details of the chirurgery in your head, but treat them like a menu to order off of, rather than a to-do list.

**Gloss over or dig into details to focus on the interesting parts.** Each roll occupies the same amount of screen time on a show but might cover more than that in terms of actual time in the story. For instance, a climactic battle between your squad and a clockwork assassin that's been haunting your last few missions might take many rolls because we want to experience the payoff of that buildup. We want to see more of the characters rising to the challenge and kicking butt. On the other hand, a roll taken in the campaign phase might reflect days of work.

Effect levels and progress clocks are another version of this idea. If an obstacle really deserves multiple actions to overcome or is especially tough (such as most threat 2 or higher undead), make a clock and tick it using the effect system. Each roll will change the story in some way. Since each roll has possible consequences and risks, the bigger an effect they can make on their target, and the fewer consequences they'll suffer.

But not every action deserves a clock. You can collapse an entire day of **RESEARCHING** the undead siege for a weakness down to a single roll, to match how much screen time you really want to spend on it. Let your interest as a table be your guide for when to dive into the nitty-gritty and when to skip over the tedious details.

**Turn it into fiction.** A lot of the game requires you to apply mechanical results, either to the players as consequences, or via their actions, or because of the results of fortune rolls. Each time, remember to bring those results into the story. When they **RIG** their way past a door, what does it look like? When the character botches a **SCOUT** roll, what goes wrong? How does a Broken's actions during the campaign phase change the story for the players in the mission phase?

**Write it down.** Whether you use index cards, a notebook, or some more advanced system, write down important things that come up and draw attention to them. If there are a bunch of missions on index cards, the Legion players can easily see what they have to choose from. If you need to remember a detail about a squad member, what better way than to look at a list of NPCs?





## GM BAD HABITS

### DON'T CALL FOR A SPECIFIC ACTION

If you've GMed other games, you may find yourself calling for specific rolls. You might say, "You'll need to **SCOUT** to get by him," or "Cracking this lock is a **RIG** roll." Resist this impulse.

Try to instead ask the player how they accomplish their goal. "How are you going to get by this undead?" or "The door's locked. What are you going to do about that?" The player decides what action to use. Then you tell them the position and effect level that you see in this situation, using that action—as well as why you think that.

*"I want to steal the jailor's keys."*

*"Okay. But how do you do that?"*

*"I...**SCOUT** him?"*

*"Sure, but what's your character doing? What would we actually see 'on-screen'?"*

*"Oh, right. Blue Rising Iron crouches behind the guard and gently lifts the iron key from its decaying belt. Maybe I should throw a rock as a distraction first?"*

*"Okay, I see where you're going with this. I think that's risky, standard effect. If you want though, you can use **SWAY** to throw that stone as a setup action."*

Maybe you would make a different decision in the scenario above (desperate position or limited effect, if you think the guard is a much greater threat than it seems). That's fine! Your game of **Band of Blades** is your own. And even when you say "desperate position, zero effect," the player can still figure out a way to make it work. They can push themselves for more effect, get a squadmate to set them up for a better position and assist them, or tell you how they see the risk and possible effect. They can even change their mind and take a different action or approach.

You want to give the player a chance to describe their action—to give their roll context and give everyone a clear idea about how things might go. You may have to discuss whether what they're describing is really that action (talking to someone is not **RIG**) but encouraging that description first and having the player match their skill to that description goes a long way towards avoiding arguments at a table.

## DON'T MAKE PCS LOOK INCOMPETENT

When a player rolls a 1-3 on an action, things don't work out for the character, but not because the character was incompetent. Even if the character has a zero in the action they're attempting, failures should be framed as "if only this hadn't gone wrong" or "what you didn't realize."

*"You jump from your perch in the trees above, knives raised and dropping towards what you think is the Shadow Witch below. As you bury your knives in its flesh, you see the sigil of a Hexed—just someone dressed up to look like the witch! That's when you feel her hex start twisting your bones."*

When the character fails, talk about how things went wrong.

*"Oh, maybe something in the siege weapon gives out when you fire the ballista?"*

*"Could the bowstring have snapped?"*

*"Yeah! There's a whining snap as the bolt goes wide and the string is torn in two."*

Or you might bring up their traumas or blight in some way.

*"You remember when Blighter gassed you and something inside you changed and now you're always hungry for blood? Yeah, as this undead grapples you to the ground, your eyes glaze over and you're consumed with the need to feed."*

## DON'T OVERCOMPLICATE THINGS

If you're describing the fiction before the roll, consequences will usually be obvious, because the action has been established clearly. Sometimes you'll draw a blank though. Not every consequence has to be a pulse-pounding problem. Some can just be broken gear or ticking a related clock. If all else fails, you can inflict harm like "Exhausted." Go with what's obvious and ask the players for ideas if you feel stuck.

## DON'T LET PLANNING DRAG ON

Because so much can go wrong, it can be easy to get carried away planning for all contingencies. The system is designed to skip over those steps and jump straight into the action. Don't linger on prepping for things that may or may not happen. Have the Marshal get to the engagement roll and start the mission. Use flashbacks and resistances to backfill what you really need to talk about.

## DON'T HOLD BACK ON WHAT THEY EARN

Once the players do all the work of getting into position, making a roll, and determining their effect, let them have the success they've earned. Don't pull out gotchas like "It was an illusion all along!" Even if you feel like the squad got off easy this time, let them have that small respite. It won't be long before they're in the muck again. This goes the same for secrets. If the players find something out, tell them straight how things are; don't let them "find out" lies.

## DON'T SAY NO UNLESS YOU HAVE TO

Sometimes you have to say no. Just because a character wants to cast a magic spell doesn't mean they can spend **WEAVE** to do so. You have to convey the world as it is, honestly and without bias. But just saying no halts the conversation, and there are often better ways to answer.

*"So you want to **DISCIPLINE** the Heartless to attack you instead of the squad. That sounds desperate, with limited effect. But if you want to spend an **ANCHOR** use, I don't think you'd even have to roll."*

Instead, you might propose that the action has zero effect as a baseline.

*"I know I'm just a Rookie, but I want to **SKIRMISH** with the huge Devourer."*

*"Okay. It's desperate and you'll have zero effect."*

*"I'm gonna push myself to get limited effect, then."*

Same thing with clockwork locks, or improbable acrobatics during combat. You can set zero effect as the baseline for an action—instead of saying no—and the players can modify the effect by pushing themselves or using teamwork. Or you can tell them to start the first phase of a Long-Term Project clock.

*"You want to equip the Legion with fine weapons and armor? Sounds difficult. Start a 4-clock for the first phase: 'Find a Master Blacksmith.'"*

## DON'T ALLOW ONE ROLL TO NEGATE ANOTHER

When a PC makes an action roll, they often experience a consequence from their action, and can usually roll to resist the worst of those outcomes. But you don't want to roll twice for the same thing.

*Marchioness Phaera Rodano is in a desperate melee with a Horror atop the bridge over the Tigeria. The Horror drives her to one edge, and there's a real risk of falling into the raging river below. The Marchioness's player makes a **SKIRMISH** roll to see how it goes and rolls badly. The Marchioness goes over the edge! Her player can roll to reduce the damage from the blow, but not being pushed off the bridge. She could, however, flash back to tying herself to a nearby pillar, to keep her from falling all the way down.*

Because the player rolled, the Marchioness suffers the consequence in some way. This is not about mechanical effects as much as fictional ones. The story has to change. If you inflict level 3 harm on a character, but their resistance gives a great reason why the damage would be completely prevented, feel free to adjust the harm. If her player describes having tied herself off on the bridge and wants to make a **PROWESS** resist to dive off the bridge instead of taking the damage, that's an exciting turn of events.

This can get a little confusing when you push actively. When you describe an NPC acting first, there's no roll, and you can push really hard. *"The archer plants two corrupted arrows directly into your chest before you can close the distance; take level 4 harm!"* In this case, since there's been no roll, a **resistance roll** can interrupt this fiction. Perhaps the PC drops under the shots with a **PROWESS** resist, and doesn't get clipped at all. That's fine. Just don't allow a roll to prevent the result of a previous roll.

## DON'T GET CAUGHT UP IN MINUTIA

There are moments we focus on when we talk about the Legion and the lives of the characters. Skip the ones that are overly tedious or without meaning. When the players say, "We're going to go rescue a squad," you could talk about the miles of forest they have to cross, and have them make **RESEARCH**, **SCOUT** and **MARSHAL** rolls at each step. Or you can cut straight to the moment they find the prisoners, describing it all in passing. *"It takes a solid day of following the trail through the forest, crossing a ravine, and dodging undead, but as sun sets, you finally come on the camp."*

If the players want to step in or inject something in that description, that's fine. *"Wait, I want to **SCROUNGE** up some food while we travel, since it's clear we're going to be here overnight"* That's totally okay. Ask them how they want to resolve their action, then move on to the next thing.

# STARTING THE GAME

## PREPARING FOR THE FIRST SESSION

During the first session, the group will create their Specialists and embark on their first mission. Afterwards, they'll choose Roles and create the rest of the Legion. You might be able to finish all of this in the first session, but you might not, depending on how quickly the Legion and characters come together. Either way is fine.

To prepare, read over character and Legion creation, starting on page 59. You'll help everyone walk through those steps and answer their questions as you go. Make sure everyone is comfortable with the decisions that are being made in this step. It's easier to change things now than it will ever be later.

Skim through the Broken and Chosen (starting on pages 182 and 160, respectively) and decide which ones you want to feature during play. Also look at the starting mission for the Chosen you select and think through the obstacles the Legion players will encounter.

It can sometimes help to get in the mood by reading or watching a touchstone of the genre (see page 7). Prime your imagination with dark fantasy and war.

Finally, print out the game sheets (available at <http://offguardgames.com/bandofblades>). You'll want at least two of each Specialist (in case two people choose the same one) and one of each Role. Also print the rules reference sheets, the GM sheets, and the location sheets.

## SETTING EXPECTATIONS

After everyone is together and you're ready to play, you'll want to kick things off with a punchy description of what's to come. This is true even if everyone is already on the same page—this just helps signal the shift into getting set up.

*"You're all soldiers of the Legion, desperately retreating from a failed offensive with the undead hot on your heels. Let's make some characters and form a Legion! Here are the playbooks. They're the different types of Specialists you can play. Let me go over them briefly..."*

Provide enough context to let the players understand their decisions, but don't drown them in details. If they ask questions, that's good! But you don't need to explain all the rules at once—teach them as they come up during play. Don't spend too much time on Aldermark and its history. Keep everything as simple as possible.



While they're looking over playbooks, talk about what the Legion players do in the game and set expectations for what you're going to do together as a game group. Among the many things that might come up are:

- ◆ What kinds of horror are we interested in exploring? Where are our lines of comfort?
- ◆ Is the Legion out for themselves or do they genuinely have humanity's interests at heart?
- ◆ Is our goal to spend time with these characters and their difficult lives, or are we mostly just trying to get to Skydagger?

When these questions come up, feel free to come up with answers that suit your table and style of play.

## CREATING SPECIALISTS

Follow the procedures on page 60. Ask the players some of these questions while they do it:

- ◆ How did you come to join the Legion?
- ◆ You both come from the same country. Did you know each other before the war?
- ◆ Were you in any other militaries? Which one(s)?
- ◆ Have you ever killed anyone? Has anyone you cared about been killed?
- ◆ Who do you trust most in the Legion? Who do you trust the least?
- ◆ Do you have a life outside of being a Legionnaire? Do you dream of retiring?

You don't need to know every detail about the characters before you start—play to find out most of them—but everyone should be excited about this group of characters. If someone seems frustrated or disinterested, talk about how to change things so they're more involved. Buy-in now is important.

If a player gets stuck and can't make a decision, go into more detail on a rule or aspect of the setting. Some players really want to know all the possibilities before they can make a choice. Reassure them by saying that their choices aren't set in stone; if they don't like something about the character or Legion after the first couple of sessions, they can change it to something else.

## INTRODUCE CHARACTERS

Go around the table and have everyone introduce their character. They should say their name or alias and pronouns, their playbook, look, heritage, background, and starting and special ability. Feel free to follow up with questions, like "How noble is your Orite Officer?" or "How did you end up being a Heavy?" But leave space for the answer to be "Let's find out in play."

## THE STARTING MISSION

After the Specialists are introduced, throw the PCs into the starting mission and start the game in earnest.

A starting mission is the beginning of a mission based on the selected Chosen, and evokes the themes of the Chosen to start the campaign off with a bang. The starting mission explains the situation the Legion is in and lets the players get right to the action addressing that problem. This gives the players an immediate goal and direction, and helps resolve the aftermath of Ettenmark. If this were a TV show, the starting mission is the pilot episode. Have fun!

## THE FIRST SCENE

Read the description of the starting mission. This starts in the middle of some action as though they had rolled an engagement roll and gotten a risky result. Players may want to ask questions about the mission, and you should feel free to let them tell you why they specifically were chosen for the mission, or flash back to previous preparations and planning that had occurred before the mission began.

Play out the sequence and keep the action moving. Make this an opportunity to paint a picture of the world of **Band of Blades**. Ask them how they respond to each new change in the story.

## AFTER THE MISSION

After you've gotten through the starting mission, the Legion players will select Roles, and ask you questions that concern their initial setup. Answer these questions with the information found in the starting mission of your Chosen.

You'll finish out the mission phase with bookkeeping and a Back at Camp scene. For the starting missions, the payoffs can be modest—a few morale, a supply or asset, perhaps a time reduction. These missions are done more of necessity than choice.

Set a Back at Camp scene to introduce the Legion and life outside of the mission. If you have a Lorekeeper, they will set the scene instead. If you picked Shreya as your Chosen, there's a preset first Back at Camp scene. (You don't have to mark off one of the existing ones, effectively extending the number of available high or medium morale scenes.) This scene is a good time to reprise themes that were brought up in the mission itself. If someone died, bring them up. If the squad failed, describe the desperate looks on the faces of their fellow Legionnaires.

After the Back at Camp scene, time passes. The Legion performs its campaign actions and then advances to the Western Front. (Note that the Legion will always advance after the starting mission.) Roll pressure and mark time as appropriate. (See page 254.)

Proceed next into the campaign phase to finish out the session. Have the Commander set the mission priorities. Generate new missions randomly and think about how they might tie to the options and story that came out of the starting mission. (See Mission Generation on page 314.)



# CHAPTER 9

## THE LARGER WORLD

*The Lorekeeper asked me to fetch an old volume for her, and to that end entrusted me with a key to the chest the older Annals were stored in. As I opened it, I found scrolls beside the books, and curious, I took a look. Before me were hand-drawn maps of varying sizes and differing ages. I tried puzzling out where we were and where we were headed—and then I sought to figure out how far I had marched with the Legion.*

*The Lorekeeper found me many hours later, surrounded by maps, having sketched some of my own, reading a book of the Annals and trying to puzzle out the Legion's previous route half a century earlier. I had completely forgotten about the volume she'd asked me to bring. I looked at her, crestfallen, but she only squinted at the thin red line I had sketched across my makeshift map, and sitting down, pointed out a correction and asked me to look up a passage to confirm.*

*By the early light of dawn we had before us a piece of vellum with a rough map well beyond regions I had seen with my own eyes, and the whole history of the Legion following a thin red trail. Great battles were marked with flags, and long stays with dates and notes beside them.*

*It is one thing to know that the Legion had a history. It is completely another to see the miles and years drawn across the world, crossing the continent many times over.*

*The next day the Lorekeeper gave me a rare honor. I read to the Legion a passage from old Annals. I remembered being among the soldiers, feeling connected to something older and greater than myself, but with that map behind me, it was more real. The battle I read about happened scarce weeks away from our location. I spoke, trying to hear the voice of the Lorekeeper that had recorded this. I hope I did it justice.*

*—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire*

## SETTING

There isn't an extensive primer on the world, so the game relies on you to fill in details, and make up facts past what is known. Keep the following in mind when writing the setting and establishing tone:

- ◆ **THERE ARE NO DRAGONS, NO ELVES, NO DWARVES.** There are only people, with differing cultures. The world has some large, strange animals (called Beasts or Great Beasts), but they are still animals. They may be giant boars, or car-sized snakes. They won't talk, or hoard gold, or know spells.
- ◆ **THIS IS AN OLD WORLD.** There are ruins of the past, remnants of past Chosen, Great Beasts, and wounds on the land from troubles that came and went. Most of it was forgotten until the Old Empire discovered alchemy and codified writing. But the ruins of the past litter the world. Explanations for some things are just forgotten.
- ◆ **MAGIC CAUSES AS MANY PROBLEMS AS IT SOLVES.** There is never a spell that will just fix your problems. Often trucking with the supernatural will have unexpected consequences (like corruption or blight), or have a limited effect that only somewhat solves a problem.
- ◆ **THERE ARE NO WIZARDS.** Magic (as it exists in most fantasy settings) is not a thing in Band of Blades. The only source of miracles are the Chosen, and people tied to the gods (like Mercies). Their power is localized—they cannot will things to happen on the other side of the world, and they cannot perform large-scale acts.
- ◆ **ALCHEMY IS SCIENCE.** There are properties of the world that are not the same as ours, but they can be studied and understood. Alchemists are not performing miracles so much as they are using scientific principles that work in this world.
- ◆ **PRAYER DOES NOTHING.** You'd think in a world with gods that embody and walk the land, prayer would be a thing that could change the world. It doesn't. The gods do what they want for reasons that are largely incomprehensible, and they don't spend a lot of time explaining themselves. People still interpret, build religions, and fight over their beliefs.
- ◆ **STRENGTH AND COURAGE SOLVE PROBLEMS.** With big enough armies even Chosen may die (as the Godswar proved). Chosen need troops as much as the troops rely on them. Strength, training, and steel make more of a difference than superstition, supernatural power, or hope.
- ◆ **THERE IS NO PROPHECY.** Nothing is written. Nothing is preordained. There are no words carved into stones that say what will be. There is no fate. You make your own destiny. There is no special hero protected by plot. Anyone can die. This also does not stop people from believing otherwise.



## LEGACY OF THE OLD EMPIRE

The Legion was once a military unit of the Old Empire. It's reinvented itself many times, sometimes flush with the strength of thousands, and sometimes barely surviving as a band of a dozen warriors. The flavor of your Legion—its morals, customs, and practices—will be up to your table, and emerge during play. There are however a few facts that are always true:

- ◆ **THE LEGION DOES NOT PROMOTE BASED ON MONEY OR SOCIAL STATUS.** A noble's child may be guaranteed command elsewhere, but in the Legion only loyalty, service, and strength in arms advances your position. That doesn't stop family members from joining together, or siblings from looking out for each other. The extent this is tolerated is up to your table.
- ◆ **THE ANNALS OF THE LEGION ARE THE MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION IT HAS.** The Legion has fought monsters and amassed relics and various useful trinkets over the years. But no amount of wealth is as prized as the Lorekeeper's Annals. They tie the Legion to its roots and maintain a written history of the past. When things are the darkest for the Legion, they save the Annals first and worry about themselves second.
- ◆ **THE LEGION IS A MERCENARY BAND, AND NOT BEHOLDEN TO A SPECIFIC COUNTRY OR PEOPLE.** The officers in charge choose what missions to go on. Most of its members are misfits from the four Eastern Kingdoms. The Legion doesn't discriminate based on anyone's gender, ethnicity, or customs. If you follow orders, adopt the Legion's unusual battle strategies, and can get the mission done, you're family.

## A BRIEF HISTORY

**0 OEF** **Old Empire Founded:** Many cultures existed previously, but only those created after the First Emperor standardized writing are widely known. Historical texts are written using OEF notation—the founding of the Old Empire being set as the year 0.

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**408 OEF** **Tantarus Ascends:** The Seventh Emperor takes the throne of the Old Empire.

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**422 OEF** **Legion Founded:** Emperor Tantarus establishes the Legion as an elite unit trained to fight supernatural or existential threats under his personal banner.

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**566 OEF** **Empire Shattered:** The Last Emperor is killed by several Chosen and the seat of the Empire is shattered. The Legion becomes a mercenary unit. They sell their services to nations and people that can afford them.

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**658 OEF** **The Godswar:** The Chosen battle each other. Terrifying artifacts are created by the gods to fight the gods. Many bound to the gods (such as Mercies or Alchemists) are slain or destroyed. The Legion is reduced to a mere handful before rebuilding.

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**838 OEF** **The Cinder King Appears:** The Cinder King gains a nine-pointed crown of True Fire and emerges in the west. He uses powerful sorceries to slay a city and build his first army.

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**840 OEF** **The First Breaking:** A Chosen manifests far in the west to face the Cinder King. The First Breaking occurs.

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**841 TO  
842 OEF** **Conquest of Royin:** The Cinder King conquers the Confederacy of Royin. Their Chosen does not manifest. Aldermark marshals its armies, and the twin gods of Aldermark Choose.

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**843 OEF** **Battle for Aldermark:** The Cinder King faces Aldermani armies. When one of the twins is Broken, nine Chosen appear in the Eastern Kingdoms. The Eastern Kingdoms marshal their armies.

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**841 TO  
844 OEF** **Conquest of Aldermark:** The Cinder King pushes east. The Aldermani fight a retreating battle, buying time. The undead cross the Tigeria.

845 OEF	<p><b>The Great Breaking:</b> Mass production of Black Shot allows the Eastern armies to drive the Cinder King back. In a decisive battle, five Chosen are Broken, but the line holds. When the Chosen of Nyx is Broken, the moon in the sky shatters. Some scholars start marking the calendar as “Years After the Breaking” (YAB)</p>
845 TO 847 OEF	<p><b>New Muster:</b> Shreya returns to the Eastern Kingdoms for fresh levies. She posits a new plan and is granted an army. The Eastern Kingdoms dig deep, hiring mercenaries and warbands to fill these ranks. A Bartan general enlists the Legion from their contract in the Isles. The Legion marches with the Eastern Kingdoms.</p>
848 OEF	<p><b>Ettenmark Fields:</b> After the Cinder King’s retreat, the Broken began creating new, powerful undead. These new terrors devastate the Eastern Armies west of the Aldermark capital. What remains of the Eastern Armies retreats in disarray, hoping to regroup and hold the line at the Eastern Kingdoms. The Cinder King hurries behind them with the majority of his forces.</p>

## CULTURES OF THE EAST

### BARTA

Barta is the largest of the Eastern Kingdoms. Once—long ago—they fled a disaster from distant shores, landing in the Eastern Kingdoms as invaders from across the seas. They have been part of the region since before the Old Empire. Barta is a fertile land and provides food for most of the Eastern Kingdoms. They are a republic, with each major subregion electing a religious and civil head, which together comprise their ruling body, the Circle. They value age and wisdom.

Bartans are tall, dark-haired people, with skin of varying shades of brown, with red or black eyes. They have strong kinship and family alliances. Their dress favors wraps and flowing cloth, where they show off their mastery of brilliant dyes. Many Bartans decorate their skin with complex tattoos and detailed, painted designs. Most Bartans wear jewelry displaying tokens granted to them by family and people they have forged strong friendships with. Contracts and alliances are sealed with such tokens. Many Barta tales start with such a token being used to gain hospitality or ask for favors via ancient alliances.

There are seven major deities, including the temple of the blue-skinned Goddess, where the clergy attempts each day to invoke a Chosen. This Choosing is often how the call of danger is heard across the East.

Barta names use the Old Empire format of given name followed by a family name. Family names are always passed on through the mother.



## BARTAN HERITAGE TRAITS

- ◆ **WARM:** Barta is known for its hospitality. Strangers are welcomed, and sharing mint tea and sharp drink is frequently suggested shortly after introductions. Even the smallest village has a tea house, and the smells of cooking communal meals fill the air before dawn. Bartan recipes and spices are well regarded outside their borders, and Bartans are taught to share food with others from a young age.
- ◆ **PIOUS:** Not every Bartan is deeply religious, but theirs is a land rich with deities. Most roads are dotted with shrines and most households have altars to whichever deity the family views as their protector. Many Bartan families keep relics. These are entrusted to family members leaving home in need of luck and protection. Bartans may not proselytize as much as the Orites but their faith is deep and frequently practiced.
- ◆ **STOIC:** In Barta, silence under the hardships of life is seen as a mark of strength and character. There is a well-known Bartan saying: “Happiness is shared, pain is held in private.”
- ◆ **EDUCATED:** Unlike most of the nations, Barta has a public education system. When they first arrived, they held to an oral tradition. Singers and tale-tellers are still well regarded, but now the Circle funds academies, where students pay their way by writing and copying texts for future classes. Where Orites employ tutors, and education varies by wealth, Bartans strive to make it available to all in their republic.



## OR

Once a group of tiny, disparate city-states, Or was unified by a religious order of their three Gods of Civilization—the Maker, the Shaper, and the Builder. They forged a nation by proposing an unheard-of accord—instead of a unified monarchy and noble structure, Or would recognize all of them at once. In return, the order would give to each equal advantages. Hence most people in Or have one noble title or another (such as being a prince of a principality the size of a village). Families powerful in trade and holdings are well known among their peers. Orites first meeting often ask each other probing questions to determine lineage and title.

Orite religions study alchemy and other sciences, and have created many of the wonders seen in the world today. From a variety of clockwork inventions, to steam-powered engines, to precision-ground lenses, to meticulously machined guns, Orite achievements in metallurgy, math, and science are renowned well past their borders. Their port capital hosts ships from many nations seeking these wonders.

Their cities are cosmopolitan, and Orites are people of many different skin, hair, and eye colors.

Orites prefer complex inlays in their metalwork and armor, and garments of linen and velvet cloth. As a matter of fashion, Orites prefer to wear masks to hats—skilled mask makers are often very distinguished and Orites go to great lengths to retain their services.





## ORITE HERITAGE TRAITS

- ◆ **NOBLE:** Many, if not most, Orites claim a noble title. Nobility is heavily involved in the Orite military, so many who don't fit their military stereotype end up in the Legion. Those with this trait don't just have a title, they bring with them some of the perks of holdings and a noble background. These Orites often have stipends, guaranteeing finer wines, better medicines, and the funds to bribe whomever is needed. This can cause resentment until the Orite in question shares with their squad.
- ◆ **CONNECTED:** In Or, status can be a function of who you know. Orites love to make connections, and learn to climb the social ladder and observe social niceties from an early age. An Orite often speaks several languages, and has the ability to drop a quote by a famous poet or writer of a local area to accentuate a point.
- ◆ **VENGEFUL:** So the saying goes, "There is no grudge like an Orite grudge." The revenge novel is a popular staple of Orite literature, and they claim to have perfected the art of getting even. The principle of returning the ill will you've been given is deeply ingrained in Orite culture. When an Orite is crossed, other Orites will think poorly of those who refuse to return the favor.
- ◆ **STERN:** As a culture, Orites view a stern demeanor as a good way to encourage discipline and structure. This seriousness is important within the firm social strictures of their nobility-obsessed culture. Orites are known for their cutting remarks in arguments, and the ability to curtail argument with a harsh glare.



## PANYA

The land of Panya is considered blessed by the Panyar and cursed by everyone else. It's a deep forest, peppered with ancient ruins. Dangerous beasts roam, and paths appear and change with the moon cycles. Its inhospitality is why Or and Aldemark haven't invaded each other since the fall of the Old Empire.

The paths about the ruins do not shift much, and the Panyar take advantage of this, building their cities around them. They often take stones from the ruins, reusing them in building construction—extending their stabilizing effect on the forest. They decorate their homes with beautiful, intricate carvings.

Being Panyar isn't a question of an ethnicity, but of habitation. Anyone that lives a dozen or so years in the forest gains the mark of an animal—cat-like eyes, striped or spotted hair, fangs—and once they do, the more dangerous beasts of the woods tend to leave them alone.

The Panyar recognize two divine beings: the Horned One, god of the forest, and Nyx, goddess of the moon. These divine beings are more tangible and embodied in the physical realm.

Panyar names have three parts. The first name, a color, is granted by a mother, though some have special meaning. For example, silver is the color of Nyx, and means the Panyar is an orphan. Black is the color of exiles and treaty-breakers.

When a child's mark appears, they gain their second name if they can get three adults to agree on what it should be.

The Panyar have deeds outlined in folklore, which they perform for their third name. The third name is fluid and can change after another great deed. Though these names are drawn from nature, they never use the names of animals, as they consider those to belong to the Horned One.



## PANYAR HERITAGE TRAITS

- ◆ **ARTISAN:** Panyar number many great architects and craftspeople. The detailed work on the wood and stone of their homes is renowned. It's said that the first Emperor traveled in person to Panya to kneel before a master architect and ask him to build the imperial palace. Panyar often teach sculpture and architecture at Orite universities, and Panyar Legionnaires often whittle to pass the time.
- ◆ **TRAVELER:** One of the most common deed names in Panya is Wind, and it is earned by taking a journey away from the forest on foot for over a year. This means that many Panyar travel far and wide, becoming great explorers and traders. The sight of a Panyar with a well-packed bag is common even outside the Eastern Kingdoms. Footraces, climbing, and traversing the forest are common activities inside Panya but those in distant lands will often organize competitions. If you find a footrace track in a major town in the Eastern Kingdoms, it's a good bet a Panyar was involved in its construction.
- ◆ **SHREWD:** "You can't surprise a Panyar" is a common adage in the Eastern Kingdoms. Panyar often play riddle games with each other at an early age—the ability to foresee problems and construct solutions in advance is considered valuable. Whether this arises from living in a forest with deadly giant predators is unclear, but many Panyar are taught to value quick wit as much as quick reactions.
- ◆ **MARKED:** The Panyar animal traits are known far and wide. This isn't genetic—those who stay in the lands of Panyar for a substantial time will, in the eyes of the Panyar, gain a connection with the Horned One. Such things can't be passed on, and parents and children often have different traits. Though corruption is a new problem, the Panyar do not seem surprised that those with more prominent marks are protected from the worst of its effects.



## ZEMYA

The Zemyati are a pale-skinned people inhabiting the mountain region of Zemya, to the north. They are organized into clans and often raid to supplement their food, supplies, and treasure. They tend to wear heavier cloth with high collars, usually detailed with embroidery in gold and silver. Both men and women wear jewelry of braided metals, and decorate clothes with forged pieces reminiscent of armor.

Each Zemyati bears a small dagger on their person for swearing blood oaths and sealing contracts. This knife is used in many of their rituals, including their ritual of mourning. Each clan has planted a tree that they water with the blood of all who would become clan members. Each family in turn grows a tree by (or sometimes in) their family home cut from their clan tree. The Zemyati believe each tree is an abode for their Living God, who answers no Zemyati prayers but who they believe curses those that break rules of hospitality or oaths sworn before such trees. Trees growing inside houses and caves are signs of Zemyati holy places.

Zemyati surnames are always tied to their clan. Since all clansfolk share the same surname, they identify each other by patronymics/matronymics and monikers. A patronymic or matronymic is a parent name with an ending. So Vikei, son of Boryev, could be Vikei Boryevich. Kariya, daughter of Eleya, would be Kariya Eleyovna. Monikers (Vikei One-eye, Boryev Keen-axe, Eleya Fire-hair) are also common.



## ZEMYATI HERITAGE TRAITS

- ◆ **TOUGH:** The lands of Zemya are harsh and the weather biting. Zemyati value the ability to shrug off minor aches, pains, frostbite, and the like—toughing out what needs to be done. Their culture has many tests of strength and endurance, such as sitting in ice cold waters or walking barefoot on snow. Those that can prove their toughness are worth investing in as friends.
- ◆ **BOLD:** The courage to take foolhardy action is valued strongly among the Zemyati. Dares are common game both to children and adults. Zemyati are known to list all the foolish elements of a plan, then do it anyway, as if in defiance of the odds. Many of their folk heroes are daredevils that risk incredible odds and become legends only because they survived.
- ◆ **LOYAL:** If there is one trait the Zemyati prize above all others, it's loyalty. This is taught from an early age, when they swear blood oaths to clan and chosen family, who they are expected to hold above all. This trait is reinforced by doing activities communally in unison. Whether it's dancing, weaving, or battle, the Zemyati often perform these group activities, taking turns leading and following. If there's one Legionnaire that will insist that nobody be left behind, chances are it's a Zemyati.
- ◆ **STUBBORN:** Coaxing food from stony soil, staying in the highlands despite harsh weather, and fighting for everything that's yours all require exceptional stubbornness. The Zemyati would call it holding true to one's beliefs. Those who are too quick to give ground in a discussion are sometimes viewed as poor leaders in the Zemyati tradition. Those that can hold to what they believe despite the setbacks thrown at them can be trusted to protect those in their care.





## CULTURES OF THE WEST

### ALDERMARK

Aldermark was glad to lose the yoke of the Old Empire and looks down on those that still venerate its remains. Somewhat xenophobic, they value their own culture and twin gods above others. They're olive-skinned people with brown and black hair. Though ravaged by the undead, they remain a proud people, using their own language whenever possible, and priding themselves on surviving. They're known for the powerful cavalry from the southern plains and their great hunters in the northern woods. They've invested the money they earn via trade into Orite inventions, having black powder technology, good roads, and primitive steam engines fueled by their many forests.

**Given Name:** Anjika, Ennika, Erela, Grisynn, Idlin, Joha, Karona, Katriza, Kola, Lenia, Sarina; Aldke, Buren, Deikart, Fulon, Haghulm, Hanar, Janton, Zigfren

**Family Name:** Beher, Jeiker, Pober, Scharel, Schmeker, Skeider, Weidt, Weyer.

### DAR

An ancient cataclysm broke Dar. Now, deadly shadows are bound to its confines and walk the ashen wasteland, with few arable cities and paths warded by ancient stones. North of Dar is the Gap—a pit so deep the ocean flows into it at high tide and it has not filled. At the center of Dar is a basalt throne, which once had a 10-pointed crown of True Fire floating above it.

Why would anyone stay in such a hellish land? The pale-haired, pale-skinned Dar can't leave. After a few years away, the bodies of those born in Dar start bleeding until they either die or return to the cursed land. Many refuse to take the Dar black coinage, and are superstitious about catching the curse of the pale folk. The Dar are haunted, but iron-willed, and do what they must.

**Given Name:** Akara, Oroscha, Gada, Beila, Hikata, Mekuna, Okona, Paya, Sakara, Zagona; Basar, Birosh, Garanj, Hirem, Kibak, Mekan, Okosh, Pogan, Sarkar.

**Family Name:** Bekatief, Lahazar, Mehalsun, Omonar, Royota, Siharun, Zohitar.



## **OTHER PLACES**

West of Aldermark are some notable areas that are written of in the Annals.

### **THE CONFEDERACY OF ROYIN**

A theocracy that worships a single god, but whose Chosen often leave offspring that bear powers, which can be passed on through bloodlines. Many tales are told of these Blooded heroes, but most were killed when the Cinder King razed the country almost a decade ago.

### **THE GREAT CITIES OF THE WASTES**

The Bone Wastes are considered an inhospitable desert land, except for the Great Cities. Each boasting a unique culture, they exist as treasured stops and the backbone of the trade routes through the Wastes. Each has a powerful ruler claiming a different title. Stories abound of Sorcerer Kings and Queens, and chained Wastes beasts. But they must surely be tall tales.

### **THE PRINCIPALITIES OF ANDRASTUS**

Nobody is sure how many tiny city-states are part of Andrastus at any given time. The Andrasti Great Families war constantly, and these cities are annexed or conquered regularly. The one thing known about this war-torn land is that they will band together if outsiders try to claim territory. The Cinder King has sent one of his Broken to conquer them. (This is not one of the three Broken featured in this campaign; he commands others as well.)

## ALCHEMY

Alchemy—also called the Craft or Aetheric Science—studies certain mysterious properties of the world. The practice of alchemy is intrinsically bound to the Orite Crafter god, whose Chosen is now the Broken Blihter. As such, its practice produces **corruption** and many have died from that alone.

Alchemy transmutes substances. The result of this transmutation will be a physical object: a gas, liquid, or solid. It's not a spell, invisible field, or an effect that covers vast distances. People are still required to make use of these substances; they are merely tools.

Most alchemicals have drawbacks. They may be habit-forming, hazardous to handle, or simply involve rare components not found in the field. Formulae take years of experimentation to stabilize—some never do. A concoction made on the road may work, explode, or expire before you need it most. Much of the art of alchemy is in finding acceptable drawbacks. Black Shot, a cornerstone of the war today, was once a useless curiosity—a substance whose only useful property was to quickly kill things that were already dead.

Despite the expense, danger, and current corrupting state, alchemy is still incredibly useful. Here are some things alchemy can produce:

- ◆ **UNGUENTS:** Liquids or pastes applied to the body. **Example:** Owsight Oil. Placed on the eyes, it allows you to see in the dark. User will be blind the next day when it wears off, and get headaches if exposed to bright light.
- ◆ **OILS:** Liquids used on a surface, such as acids or balms. **Example:** Fire Oil. Volatile oil that ignites when exposed to air and cannot be put out by water.
- ◆ **POTIONS:** Liquids that are drunk or injected. **Example:** Rage Venom. Injected into veins, it grants potency in melee. Users must engage in combat with friends or foes alike, or resist to do anything else. Addictive.
- ◆ **TRANSMUTATION:** Harder and better-processed metals, often worked with to a higher degree of precision. **Example:** Fine weapons and armor.
- ◆ **AETHERIC:** Gases, inhaled as vapors, or contained in goggles and vials and used to filter light through for detection or testing. **Example:** One Eye (see Sniper playbook, page 96).
- ◆ **CLOCKWORK:** Timers. Springs that enhance lifting. Small mechanical marvels. **Example:** Orite Grapnel. A cable inside a cylinder, with a harness. Fires at high velocity as a grapnel. Can pull troops up the cable. Takes an hour to wind once the spring is spent before being reused. Fairly rare.

While alchemy is a boon to the troops in the field, it's worth noting that the presence of alchemy is not enough to turn the tide of the war. The Legion may have finite supply and only one or two Alchemists, but the nation of Or has vastly larger resources. If there were an alchemical solution to deal with undead, humanity would have already won the war.

## MERCIES

The practice of medicine has been refined by the Bartan physicians over hundreds of years. For those wounds that exceed even their care, they have Mercies. These supplicants have sworn themselves in sacred ritual to Asrika, the healing Goddess. Each of them bears the mark of their pledge, a sigil of folded wings and a weeping eye branded into their flesh.

The process of becoming a Mercy is long and complicated, and involves sacred rites performed in special places at certain times of the year. Barta makes fewer than a dozen of these disciples a year, and being chosen for the process is considered a huge honor for the person and their family.

By these ancient rituals, they are infused with some of their Goddess's healing powers. Less than a Choosing, but far more than a mortal shell should be expected to handle, this process irrevocably changes the petitioner. Most take new names afterwards, or simply go by their title. All take their duties extremely seriously.

When a Mercy tends to a wounded person, they are able to absorb some of the damage from the injured into themselves. The process is extremely unsettling to those unused to the treatment, and patients have recounted in horror hearing their attendant's bones snap as their own knit together. The healing powers of Asrika ensure that the Mercy recovers far faster from these injuries than a normal person, but that makes them no less painful.



# CHAPTER 10

# LOCATIONS

*We spent the day in the town. The Quartermaster had sent me with the Ember Wolves to pick up supplies for the Legion. I don't have the patience for haggling that Harish does so after selecting some metal for us to purchase for weapon and armor repairs, I left him to negotiate the prices.*

*I sat by a fountain in the city square, listening to its quiet burbling, sketching life as it bustled around me. A little Aldermani boy watched me draw, and I sketched his portrait and offered it to him. He snatched it gratefully, and ran off to show a parent or a friend, no doubt.*

*I smiled as I watched him run, and looked at my sketches. I wondered if someone else was at this moment making drawings in my hometown to try and remember the city as it is now, rather than as it would be after war passed through it.*

*I was melancholy guiding the cart back towards camp.*

*—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire*

The **Band of Blades** campaign plays out across several months on the move, where the remnants of the Legion retreat across the nation of Aldermark. This is done during advancement (see Campaign Phase on page 252, and the Commander on page 117). What follows is the detail of each location, including a write-up, special rules, and special missions available.

When reading this chapter, it might be handy to have a few things available for quick reference. The Commander (page 117) deals with advancement and time. The Quartermaster will reference the location's assets rating (and corresponding special rules) to Acquire Assets during the campaign phase. Special Missions are outlined in Chapter 5 (page 215) including their common extra requirements. Finally, Chapter 8 discusses the details of missions and how to bring them to life.

## ALDERMARK

The Legion's retreat and the entirety of the first campaign take place in the nation of Aldermark. This nation has suffered greatly in the multiple conflicts with the Cinder King and his forces, though some parts of the country still cling fiercely to the belief that this kingdom will somehow stand against the wave of undead battering against it.

### HISTORY

Little is known about pre-Empire Aldermark. The First Emperor annexed the land, unified it into a single province, and elevated the head of the city of Karlsburg to the newly created position of Karl (ruler and overseer)—something the fiercely independent Aldermani resented.

Hundreds of years later the empire fell, but Aldermark largely kept its borders and the Empire-organized system of nobility and governance. The position of Karl became elected, officially every ten years. In practice, elections can occur when the Karl dies, advances in age, or more seldomly, when the politics of the voting body change.

Aldermark is less a unified nation and more an alliance of independent groups and cities, which has caused some issues in the recent war with the Cinder King. Many of their component pieces—such as the City of Westlake with its Old Empire walls and fortifications—believe themselves to be strong enough to withstand the threat, where others have failed.

### LAND

Aldermark is a large nation, dwarfing many others in size. It has multiple biomes and varied land and no single explanation will capture it. The nation is known for its abundance of natural resources, and poems of its landscapes reference tall, gray mountains (with pine trees at higher elevations), wide tallgrass prairies, and the mighty Tigeria River to the west. The weather is cold and snowy in winter, and rainy in spring and autumn.

### PEOPLE

Aldermark was glad to lose the yoke of the Old Empire and looks down on those that still venerate its remains. They are somewhat xenophobic and they value their own culture and twin gods above others. In general, they're olive-skinned people with brown and black hair. Though ravaged by the undead, they take it as a point of pride that they have not yet fallen to the Cinder King. They're known for their powerful cavalry from the plains and their great hunters of the northern woods. They've invested the money they earn via trade into Orite inventions, having black powder technology and good roads.



## GODS

The Gods of Aldermark are Mattiar (the Smith) and Gerholtz (the Hunter). They've always Chosen at the same time, never appearing independently. Being a twin is considered very lucky in Aldermark.

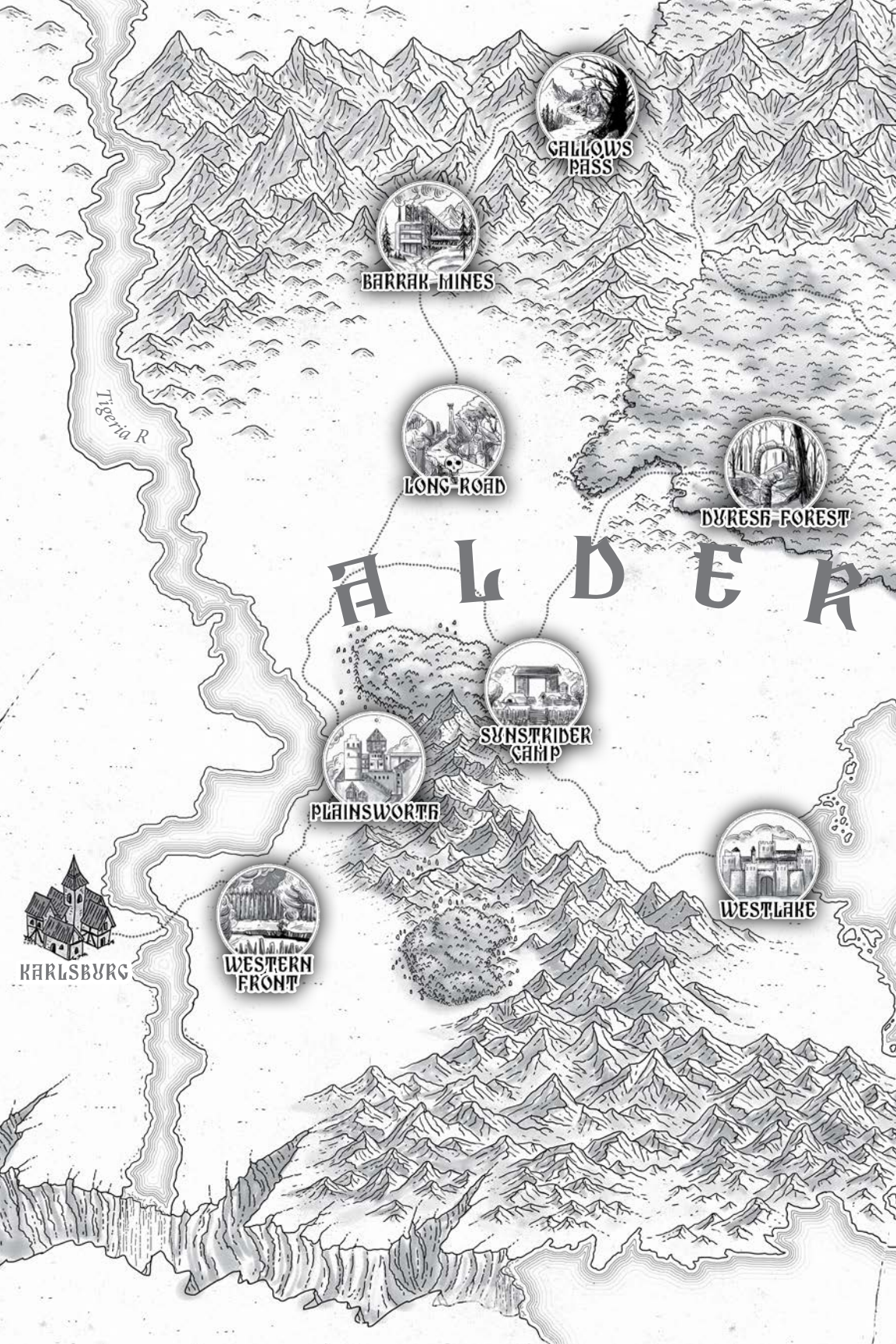
The Aldermani claim that Mattiar taught people to smith—sometimes putting them at odds with the Orites—and consequently their churches of the twin gods are often made of the local gray mountain stone, with heavy, black, hand-smithed metal ornamentation. Most of the churches to the Twins either have a smithy inside or are near one.

Mattiar traditionally crafts two weapons immediately after Choosing for his sibling. If not killed performing the task they are Chosen for, Mattiar's Chosen has frequently spent the last few years of their existence crafting a few marvels that are scattered throughout Aldermark to this day. The most notable such object is the statue of an ancient Chosen of Mattiar found in front of the Church of the Twins in Westlake. It's known for weeping tears when danger looms, but recently Westlake has had to build a basin around it to contain the continuous stream. The Church of the Twins teaches that Mattiar prizes self-sufficiency, ruggedness, and wisdom.

Gerholtz is known for slaying Great Beasts, a few legendary ones of which roam the forests or descend from higher elevations. There are ancient carvings at high elevations showing Gerholtz wielding the god's traditional weapons of twin spears and leading groups of hunters against massive beasts. The church teaches that he prizes fitness, quick thinking, and courage.

## SPOILER WARNING!

Many players enjoy the sense of exploration and surprise that comes from playing the game without knowing all the details of every location. If you want to discover the shape of this war as the Legion does, you may want to stop reading here. There is nothing secret or magical about the locations, or information that is forbidden to know, but playing it without knowing all the quirks of the setting and missions is a fun experience for many people.



GALLOWS  
PASS



BARRAK MINES



LONG ROAD



DYRESH FOREST

ALDER



SUNSTRIDER  
CAMP



PLAINSWORTH



WESTLAKE



WESTERN  
FRONT



KARLSBURG





TALCON-FOREST



FORT CALISCO



HIGH-ROAD



THE MAW



SKYDIGGER  
KEEP



EASTLAKE

MARK

PANGA





INDS



# LOCATION WESTERN FRONT

Three years ago, a notable Aldermani battle against the Cinder King's troops happened here, and more recently the armies of the Eastern Kingdoms built their fortified camp here before advancing to Ettenmark Fields.

The area remains marginally fortified and is a good place to regroup before pushing on. The few soldiers remaining here are exhausted and on edge, but know better than to start trouble with the well-armed and disciplined soldiers of the Legion. If you were hoping to find other Chosen that survived the offensive at Ettenmark, they are not present. Rumors abound that they've gone a grueling alternate way, taking the southern path to fight on a different front.

The main fortification of the front is the previous army's rear camp. At night, you can still see the orange hue of the still-burning Karlsburg—the old capital of Aldermark—reflected on the clouds above it.

A few soldiers hold out behind the makeshift walls, pits, and barricades—most barely holding it together, with a few having fully given up. There's a few days' worth of supplies remaining for the handful of people left in the fort, with lots of talk in the shadows of abandoning the camp.

In the surrounding areas, undead have been crossing the Tigeria in increasing numbers. They test the camp defenses under cover of darkness, looking for a weakness to exploit. A brutal intelligence underlies their movements, looking to cut off avenues of escape.

*The Western Front is not a front at all. The battle passed west from here weeks ago, yet now brews on the horizon again. The area now houses scared soldiers and refugees from further west that look at me out of hollow eyes. There are not enough folk to clear up the remnants of the battle and the stench is significant. My leg, wounded at Ettenmark, pains me. I follow the Lorekeeper now, who bids me use my hands to draw, if I cannot fight. There's little else to do, so I'll lend my meager skills.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## WESTERN FRONT



**ASSETS RATING:** 0

**MISSION TYPES:** Assault, Recon

**PATHS:** Advance to *Plainsworth*. The Sunward mountains and the Gap make advancement to the east and south impossible with carts and siege gear. Plainsworth is the best resupply point for the Legion in the region.

### SCENES

Smouldering and burnt ground blasted by flame and touched by blight. Twisted leafless trees, standing silent above half-devoured corpses, broken spears, dead soldiers, and horses. Dust clouding the air and obscuring undead forms shambling in the distance. Wreckage of siege weapons and encampments hastily uprooted weeks ago. Wide-eyed, traumatized infantry standing and staring into the distance. Soldiers huddling in corners, talking in hushed tones of retreat and escape. Refugees staying quiet—as scared of the soldiers as they are of the undead.

### CHALLENGES

Squads of undead shambling throughout the land, feasting on corpses of soldiers and hunting the living. Routes watched, escape cut off. Small, desperate civilian convoys still in the area, looking for shelter and protection. Decaying walls and trenches that withstand each evening's raid on the rear camp.

### SPECIAL RULES

When advancing, add +1d to your pressure. The undead are plentiful and move to cut off all paths of egress from the front.

The troops remaining here are shell-shocked and have trouble processing what's going on. You can bring them along, but they're in no shape to fight. The Quartermaster may make a 4-clock Long-Term Project to feed and rehabilitate them. When it's complete, the Marshal may add up to five Rookies to the Legion.



## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Mercy, Glory

An officer of the Orite First Battalion, Contessa Herminia, defended a village to allow the escape of refugees. Your Chosen believes the main intelligence guiding the undead, along with several Elites, have now trapped the Contessa. Bring two squads and your Chosen on this dangerous rescue mission.

**MISSION REWARDS:** Specialist: Officer (+2 Actions). 5 Rookie recruits. +2 Morale.

**MISSION PENALTY:** -2 Morale.

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**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** All

In the middle of the Tigeria is Watershed Cathedral, also called the Chapel of the Waters. The cornerstone of the chapel was brought from the Asrikan Cathedral in Barta. Cut ages ago by a Chosen of Asrika, the stone retains substantial power. Properly handled, it could be used in Reliquaries. The church is behind enemy advance troops, who are currently defiling it. Expect heavy resistance.

**MISSION REWARDS:** 2 Religious Supplies (6 uses). +2 Morale.

**MISSION PENALTY:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Recon

**FAVOR:** Glory, Knowledge

A daring Scout remained behind to study Broken plans during the Legion's retreat. They're now hunted by a powerful Elite or Lieutenant in Karlsburg—the still-burning capital of Aldermark. You've spotted their signal requesting help. Survive the city and get them out. The mission takes three days. Bring supplies. Good luck.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Intel. Specialist: Scout (+2 Actions). The Commander asks any two intel questions.

**MISSION PENALTY:** -1 Morale.



# LOCATION PLAINSWORTH

Plainsworth was once a small, prosperous town, owing its bustling commerce to sitting on an intersection of several Old Empire roads. Situated in the heart of the Aldermark breadbasket, the bounty of nearby villages flowed through it until it was on the verge of becoming a full-fledged city.

Now the hushed tones and shuttered windows of the residents project a sense of growing unease. Its inns, streets, and alleyways have refugees trying to keep out of sight and families fleeing the Cinder King's advance.

The town has a small garrison, its own well, and the crumbling but serviceable remnant of the old Tantari wall made in the heyday of the Empire, providing a strong defensible position to the west and south. They've erected makeshift fortifications where needed, and trust the mountains and the Blackwood to help protect against assaults from the east and north.

As a small, provincial village, Plainsworth holds some of the Aldermani superstitions and dislike for Old Empire things, and this wariness extends to the Legion, whose roots are from there. The townsfolk have had problems with bandits and retreating soldiers taking what they want by force, so the populace is unsure if having a small, well-armed force is a blessing or a curse.

Nearby plains and villages may have supplies that may have to be wrested from undead. The forest and mountains to the southwest are dotted with a few crumbling holy sites. The roads leading into the village have a sporadic stream of families and a mix of straggling soldiers fleeing the front.

*Unease is the feeling I get in this town. The population hides indoors, and even the refugees take shelter in alleys and beneath structures, as though hiding from sight will somehow keep them away from the Cinder King's wrath. I miss riding out with my squad. My leg still aches, though I can walk well enough that the Marshal has me standing my turns at watch. The Lorekeeper tells me to keep drawing and writing these journals. I don't see the point, but I've never disobeyed orders since joining the Legion.*

*—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire*

# PLAINSWORTH



**ASSETS RATING:** 2

**MISSION TYPES:** All

**PATHS:** Advance to *Sunstrider* or the *Long Road*. The path east gives the Legion multiple route options and better supplies. The only reasons to risk the longer and supply-deprived northern route is the slim hope of shaking the Broken in the mountains, and supplying the Legion with powerful artifacts and blessings that the Annals say are found in the temples there.

## SCENES

Nervous youths heading out to walk the wall at dusk. Town elders going, stone-faced, to the local inn for a meetup every night, maps under their arms. Refugees looking wide-eyed with fear from alleyways. Children playing as if nothing is wrong. Gabled houses with shutters closed, sitting impassive across deserted cobblestone lanes. Two men arguing a long-standing feud, held back by kinfolk, standing in front the statue of the town's hero.

## CHALLENGES

Roving bands of undead—some scouts, some marauders. Mountain and east-plains bandits preying on targets of opportunity. Village and town ritual observances, now seen as more important than previously. Squads of other military units, turning to pillaging. Food and supply shortages. Summer rains, unconcerned with the current crisis, flooding critical routes to other areas.

## SPECIAL RULES

Plainsworth was part of the Aldermark breadbasket. Acquiring Food and Horses assets at Plainsworth is at +2d.

## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Mercy

An Infamous-led undead patrol has been doing nighttime raids on local settlements and capturing people, keeping them in cages. A nearby village that Plainsworth used to regularly trade with is currently being used to hold these captives before they are taken for undead conversion. A rapid raid would reunite local friends and families, likely net volunteers for the Legion, and provide insight into what the Broken were planning for them.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. 5 Rookie recruits. +1 Intel.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** -1 Morale.

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**MISSION TYPE:** Supply

**FAVOR:** Glory, Knowledge

Nearby is a storied place from the Legion's history. The Tantari banner—the original symbol of the Legion's authority—was lost when the Empire fell. It was granted to the Marshal of the Legion by the first Emperor. After the Breaking three years ago, one of the Broken set up a dig site to look for it. Undead have been spotted returning there. The mission is to finish the dig, while fending off any challengers.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. **Relic:** Tantari banner (the Marshal may choose to ignore the morale penalty of up to five deaths).

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Holy, Mystic, Mercy

Voyis Kariyevich, the Kingfisher Knight, is renowned for his skill in battle. He's said to be cursed, and rather than inflict this on others, he retired nearby to the southern mountain range to spend his days in contemplation, tending a local holy site. If he could be swayed to join and be cleansed, his expertise in combat might surely be a huge benefit to the Legion.

**MISSION REWARDS:** 1 Religious Supplies. All Specialists on the mission mark +2 xp. Specialist: Heavy (+2 actions).

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.





# LOCATION THE LONG ROAD

This Old Empire road has long been neglected, with the blight and decay pushing in from the west. The road is exposed and winding, but is lined by ancient Empire warding pillars along its path. These pillars are filled with ancient protections that seem to be proof against the undead, stopping the blight from spreading where their line holds. But they are too few, and many are broken down and destroyed by simple age and lack of upkeep.

The glory days of the Empire long gone, the road's fallen to disuse with lack of maintenance over the centuries, and Aldermark has not provided upkeep. Nature in the area is taking over, leading to sections where the road disappears and has to be found again. Needless to say, traveling too far from the protective pillars is fraught these days.

Weather on the plains is fickle. Sudden rainstorms and hail coming down from the mountains before the sun has even set force travelers to seek shelter early, and start their journeys even earlier.

Occasional villages crop up now and again—with meandering paths leading off the main road—but they're never in sight of the road itself. These small enclaves are the home of distrustful communities, religious sects, or long-isolated clusters of farmsteads.

All hold their autonomy above all else.

*It feels like we've been traveling this road forever. Hoofbeats and cart-wheels sound strange on whatever the Empire did to the stone of their roads, but the path has mostly held up through centuries of weather and use, so who am I to complain. The lands west seem to be in winter, but the trees are leafless due to blight, not snows. At least making these entries buys me some time riding on carts. I'm so tired of marching.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## THE LONG ROAD



**ASSETS RATING:** 0

**MISSION TYPES:** Assault, Recon

**PATHS:** Advance to *Barrak Mines*. The road only leads north. Though the Legion could attempt to turn east towards Talgon now, they would not only have to cut fresh paths through the plains while racing the undead's endless stamina, but also access Talgon with no roads or paths from this direction to guide them.

### SCENES

Long stretches of uneasy quiet. Flat open grasses for miles, swaying in the wind and growing out through ancient cobblestones. The hum of warding stones, only felt in your bones. The roar of *baerngard* (large, scaled, and furred plains predators), distant, but carrying over the plains. Smashed and burned carriages of travelers who didn't make it. Wandering undead, still around from the Cinder King's first push into Aldermark three years ago. Stormy weather that swells suddenly, drenching the plains in rain.

### CHALLENGES

Wildlife, driven mad and ravenous by the encroaching blight. Sudden, vicious storms in the exposed terrain that start fires, strike apart cobbles, and change temperature rapidly. Difficulty in finding markers or paths, in hundreds of miles of similar terrain. People and animals touched by blight.

### SPECIAL RULES

Consume an additional Food use when time passes here. There simply aren't many resources to be foraged like in other areas, and travel, coupled with digging a new base camp, takes its toll.

## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

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**MISSION TYPE:** Supply

**FAVOR:** Mercy, Knowledge

The Legion has spotted smoke. An Alchemist's caravan bearing rare earths and texts turned east and was assaulted by undead. A few apprentices hide in the wreck. The great Alchemist Aether Magnus is missing, having lured the leader of the undead away. Find him. Treat his wounds. Escort him back. And keep the hunters on his trail from claiming his life. **Requires:** *Medic, Scout*

**MISSION REWARDS:** +1 Morale. +1 Supply. Alchemist: Aether Magnus.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Supply

**FAVOR:** Mystic

The Long Road once forked east, before most of the warding stones on that path failed. Even Chosen don't understand Old Empire tech fully. When damaged, the stones exert strange behavior—lightning storms and driving wild creatures mad. Your Chosen wants to unearth a warding stone and bring it to camp to fashion a ward for the Legion. They will try to contain the stone's damage until you make it to camp.

**Requires:** *Chosen, Supply Carts*

**MISSION REWARDS:** -1 Time. Pressure does not increase. All Legionnaires may clear 2 corruption.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Mercy, Wild

The baerngard of Aldenmark are famous for their massive strength and powerful jaws that can snap a man in half. When they feel the touch of age, they seek the Bruin Graveyard. Fleeing the blight, several nest in this boneyard. Left to their own devices, they will be killed and reanimated by the undead. They must be captured, hidden away, or slain, with any fresh corpses burned.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +3 Morale. If the Legion has an Alchemist and obtains baerngard bones, the Quartermaster gains Rage Venom (3 uses). Spend to equip all Legionnaires on a mission with Rage Venom.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.



# LOCATION BARBAR MINES

Resting at nearly 10,000 paces up in the mountains, the humble town of St. Oysingra was built to mine ore in the Old Empire days. It had remained a small mining outpost until the Cinder King arose and the Orite Alchemists discovered that it was a source of the Black Earth, which was needed for Black Shot transmutation. The mining town boomed once again, until the push of the undead three years ago reached it.

The same Eastern Kingdoms offensive that ended in the great Breaking also liberated the town. Now mostly a community of people from the Eastern Kingdoms, they have come to secure a valuable source of Black Earth for the war efforts. Food and mining supplies have been periodically arriving from the east—though few have been received in a while—and the caravan headed back with the last big shipment of Black Earth has not been heard from.

In the nearby cliffs lie several mountain drilling operations—a dense honeycomb of mines and minerals and industry. Old equipment lies abandoned for lack of people to drive them, while the few mines still open struggle to pull material out of the ground without collapses or worker shortages interrupting—a problem made more difficult by rumors of horrific creatures that still lurk in the mines.

The townsfolk here are optimistic of the Legion's arrival—after all, they've heard stories of the Legion, and they are hungry for news from the front.

*The mining town isn't large, but hearing the speech of my countrymen warms my heart. I hadn't realized how long I've been away from home and how much even the casual banter of workers makes me feel at ease. The furnaces warm this high valley, and I relish the comfort, even though I know it's temporary.*

*I hear the undead are marching from the south. The Commander is trying to wheedle explosives from the Quartermaster to close the pass. I don't know how long this warmth will last.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## BARRAK MINES



**ASSETS RATING:** 1

**MISSION TYPES:** Assault, Recon, Supply

**PATHS:** Advance to *Gallows Pass*. Behind you, the undead hold the lower passes. There is only one safe route out of here, and it leads up before it returns to the lower elevations.

### SCENES

The booming sound of a clockhammer—a large Orite drilling machine—breaking mountain walls. The bustling townsfolk quickly hurrying from house to inn while snow pours down. The unearthly quiet of a land covered in snow. Warm lights pouring out through old glass. Carts rustling into town, carrying loads of minerals, with exhausted workers pushing them by hand. A rousing cheer to the Four Kingdoms in the tavern by loyalists keeping up appearances.

### CHALLENGES

Skittering, many-legged creatures that hide in the dark mountain crevasses, hostile to human and undead alike. A few military stragglers from the Eastern Kingdoms, requisitioning troops and equipment, sometimes by force. Bitter cold temperatures and harsh snowstorms that make passage difficult.

### SPECIAL RULES

When the Legion first arrives, the Quartermaster gains three uses of Black Shot—the last of the supplies still remaining in town.

Acquiring Alchemists and Black Shot are at +2 effect, and acquiring Laborers is at +1d.



## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Mercy, Knowledge

Though the armies of the Eastern Kingdoms reopened the town, there have been undead plaguing the mountains since the Cinder King's first advance. Clearing out the infestation would cover your back, and help with being hunted from multiple angles. **GM:** Choose an Infamous and an associated site that crafts undead from a Broken not in this campaign. The mission is to destroy this source of undead creation.

**MISSION REWARDS:** -2 Time. Pressure does not increase. +2 Morale.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** +1 Time.

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**MISSION TYPE:** Supply

**FAVOR:** Wild

The most lucrative Black Earth vein in the area has been shut down for months. Something has infested the lower parts of the mine, claiming a number of miners' lives. The more credible accounts talk of the creature's impossible number of legs, savage efficiency, and the persistent clicking sound that seems to presage its attack. If the monster could be killed, the mine could be reopened, and supplies refreshed.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Supply. 1 Black Shot (3 uses). 1 Supply Cart.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Mercy, Knowledge, Glory

Almost 300 years ago, Oysingra—a Chosen of the Living God—was entombed. She fought alongside Zora against the Last Emperor, but was horrifically wounded. Details of her death vary from being entombed alive to committing suicide. Regardless, her resting place is worth examining. **GM:** Oysingra is still alive, though weak and maddened (threat 3). She is attended by a squad of Zemyati revenant attendants (threat 2).

**MISSION REWARDS:** +1 Supply. **Living God's Blessing:** Specialists and Soldiers on this mission gain an advance when Oysingra is laid to rest.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.



# LOCATION GALLOWS PASS

This narrow mountain route has been worn into the rock from thousands of pilgrims making their way through this awe-inspiring territory. Some sections of the path have small alcoves for the dead carved into the rock. Huge statues are carved partially into the mountainside, many half sunk in the ground over time. Their origins are disputed. Some claim them to predate the Old Empire, while others speculate they were erected during one dynasty or another.

Much of the path is below the tree line, and gray, leafless trees weather the winds that cut through the mountains and canyons, stirring many ropes hung from their branches. Once, pilgrims would hang offerings from them, but the cold howling winds and the bare rock and trees cast them in a different light—one that's given the pass its name.

The weather on the path is fickle and avalanches, inclement weather, and the occasional disappearance or overgrowth of the path itself makes it hard to traverse. Numerous forks in the path lead towards shrines, sacred springs, caves, and the like. Many such sites can be found here for those hardy enough to reach them.

Even now, pilgrims can still be found traversing this isolated path—though these days, few and far between. Besides travelers, there are few other people who live in the area—the occasional reclusive ascetic, shrine attendant, or goatherd. The area is too barren, and requires resources to be brought in from outside.

*The cold makes my leg ache again. Our food is carefully rationed, and tempers short. Arguments are stopped only by the lack of air this high in the mountains.*

*I look at the statues scattered about here and wonder who would put all the effort in, so high up in these long-forgotten places. Some soldiers jokingly hang up offerings in the old way. I, less jokingly, have raided a few such offerings for sugar for my tea. If the gods mind, they can come down and share.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## GALLOWS PASS



**ASSETS RATING:** 0

**MISSION TYPES:** Assault, Recon, Religious

**PATHS:** Advance to *Talgon Forest*. There is no peak-to-peak path all the way to Skydagger. You have to return to the lower elevations and forge a path to Fort Calisco through Talgon Forest.

### SCENES

A solitary blind traveler, tapping with a crooked staff along the mountainside. A stampede of goats fleeing an unseen, undead presence. Stark, broken statues towering impossibly high in the distance. Giant rock carvings telling tales of ancient Aldermark. The notes of wood and bone wind chimes hung by previous travelers. A large shrine to the gods, now empty of people, but clearly maintained in the summer months. The grim and somber fields of trees, a rope hanging from each one.

### CHALLENGES

Avalanches. Crumbling cliffside paths covered in ice. Ambushes by undead scouts. Dangerous, huge high-peaks snakes, which descend to hunt. Thick mountain mists obscuring more than a few feet of visibility. The exhaustion of fighting uneven terrain, high altitude, and inclement weather for miles.

### SPECIAL RULES

When advancing, add +1 time. There is no clear route, and bridges that would allow for easy access have not been upkept.

Any Legionnaire not wearing Winter Clothing on a mission should wake up in the morning with level 1 harm "Frostbite" unless they take precautions to mitigate this somehow or make a **PROWESS** resist.

## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Recon

**FAVOR:** Knowledge, Mercy

The Annals tell of a nearby keep that the Legion was once assigned to. It won't hold indefinitely without supply lines, but might provide a place to rest or resupply. Travelers on the path say locals are sequestered there and have taken in many recently. News of the war might be found there.

**GM:** These locals are cannibals who eat those travelers they take in.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. +2 Supply. 5 Rookie recruits (prisoners waiting to be eaten).

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

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**MISSION TYPE:** Recon

**FAVOR:** Mystic

Undead have been spotted scaling a cluster of the giant statues, making their way towards the buried head of the largest. Ambush them and find out what they seek. **GM:** The head is a temple, at the core of which is an artifact.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +1 Intel. **Relic:** True Fire. (Brands a forehead. Bearer can mark 2 corruption to push. When they do, they are limned in fire, can see the Cinder King and he them, and gain immense strength.)

**MISSION PENALTIES:** +1 Time. +1 Pressure.

**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Holy, Mystic

Of the holy sites here, none are better known than the monastery of Kevala. Having trained two people who were Chosen in the Quiet Era right after the Last Emperor's death, it's a powerful holy place known to bless all who light its fires and reside within for a week—neither such power nor the flames will stand unchallenged by undead that enter the mountains.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. +1 Supply. **Blessing:** Choose one, and you may mark 1 time per each additional: *All Legion Specialists gain 2 xp—Your Chosen gains 2 favor—Promote two Rookies into Soldiers.*

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.





# LOCATION SUNSTRIDER CAMP

Once a bustling trading post for plainsfolk, pilgrims traveling west, and those heading north, Sunstrider Camp is now choked with refugees from the surrounding areas.

The permanent structures here provided a winter camp for the biggest of the horse clans of the plains, and the Horse Lady Tsaga and her riders have taken charge. They've fortified the winter camp further and opened their doors to the refugees, providing food and shelter for those unable to fight but demanding those that can join the frequent mounted raids on the undead. Many plainsfolk ride into battle on a unique type of local horse known for their speed, hardiness, and unruliness. Tales claim the horse's origin is divine—offspring of the Horned One, or a Chosen blessing their steed when dying. In Aldermark, they're called *furemeen*—firemanes.

While undead top the list of the many problems the camp has, there is also a contingent of mountain bandits using the chaos of war to enrich themselves. Tsaga has been unable to mount a serious offensive against them while the undead threat looms so heavily. There are mountain shrines to the southwest—the people in this area cling to their faith. For some it's all they have left. Many plan to make pilgrimage to seek shelter and the protection of the gods there. The plains east of the camp are full of small enclaves of travelers, and there is no end of news from all over Aldermark here at camp, almost all of it bad. Rumors abound of the Cinder King crossing the Tempest Sea to the south.

*I've ridden since I was a young girl—among the Legion, my prowess in the saddle is well known. My squad is mounted whenever horses are available. That said, I've never ridden a steed like a firemane. I fell in love with them as soon as I saw them, and I am not ashamed to say I cheated one of the local plainsfolk at cards and traded all my winnings back to him for a single ride. The strength and speed of that animal was breathtaking. I'm afraid no amount of winnings would persuade my card player to part with the steed. A shame.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## SUNSTRIDER CAMP



**ASSETS RATING:** 1

**MISSION TYPES:** Assault, Recon

**PATHS:** Advance to *Duresh Forest* or *Westlake*. The northern route relies on the Broken not wanting to risk following you through a fabled forest, whereas the eastern route, while more politically fraught, offers supplies and safety.

### SCENES

Plainsfolk with silver-tipped spears and beautiful red-maned horses riding on patrol. Refugees searching new arrivals for familiar faces, some having tearful reunions. Tsaga at a war table under an open-air tent, reviewing maps with her captains. The sounds of the hoofbeats of riders leaving on a mission. An elderly parent hugging their youth, as riders wait to take them away to join their raids.

### CHALLENGES

Bandits seizing opportunities to loot and pillage those too weak to resist. Undead waiting to ambush those who leave the protections of the camp. Keeping the peace in the civilian areas of the camp. Refugees who are trapped nearby, unable to make it to the camp. Pilgrims praying for aid or support.

### SPECIAL RULES

Due to Tsaga's commands, it's easier to find quality steeds in this location. Acquiring Horses is at +2d.

## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Glory, Mercy

A powerful Infamous was left behind when the Broken crossed east. Now it haunts the mountains, creeping down at night to capture prey. The screams of its victims echo off the mountain faces. Without the support of its Broken, the creature has set many devious traps about its den—it should be destroyed, but not underestimated. **GM:** Choose an Infamous from the Broken you did not pick for this campaign.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +3 Morale. -1 Time. Pressure does not increase.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

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**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Glory

Falka—a self-styled bandit queen—has a camp up in the western mountains. From there, she has access to both the western and eastern roads and preys on many. If she could be reasoned with, the bandits could be an asset against the undead. Dead, her raids on refugees would end, and it would free up Tsaga's soldiers from bandit duty.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. If Falka is killed, gain: +2 Supply. 1 Horses (3 uses). If Falka is allied with, gain: -1 Time. Pressure does not increase.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Supply

**FAVOR:** Glory, Wild

The Horse Lord Nettar has thrown in with the Broken, dreaming of elevated status after they sweep the lands. He hosts a Lieutenant in his own tent, and his riders are beginning to exhibit signs of corruption and blight. Many of them, however, ride the legendary firemanes. Steal a number of these horses either from his corrals or from undead-reinforced scouting parties to supply and reinforce the Legion.

**MISSION REWARDS:** Quartermaster gains: 1 Firemanes (3 uses, like Horses, but reduce pressure by 2 instead of 1 when advancing).

**MISSION PENALTIES:** +1 Pressure.



# LOCATION DYRESH FOREST

The Broken armies have split here, looking to flank and pincer the Legion. One has only left a few squads to harass, while their main force pushes hard east to devour what resources the plains have, their tireless troops hunting down anything they can see in a land offering little cover. The other heads to the woods on the heels of the Legion.

Dyresh is the Panyar word for these woods. In Aldermark this area is referred to as the Hellenwald—the Light Forest. When it starts out, sparse trees pepper gentle hills. But the locals that live within warn travelers to only travel as long as they can see light through the trees touching the ground. Further than that, they warn, humans are not supposed to go. The Heart of the Wood (Talgon to the Panyar, or the Alderhart in Aldermani) lies ahead, hostile to those not meant to be there. Only a Chosen might lead you through safely.

This hard-to-navigate forest is populated by Aldermani hunters, a small number of Panyar families, and all manner of wild beasts. The forest is resistant to paths, often devouring signs of passage in a matter of days. While there are fewer undead here, traveling through the forest itself can be dangerous.

There are a number of Panyar villages here, though they are small and insular. The Panyar have not been well treated by the Aldermani, being regarded with suspicion and outlandish comparisons to folklore creatures. The locals in this area aren't fond of the Legion either, and consider the Old Empire and all its products a mistake.

*The Legion continues north, and my squad waits behind to scout out undead movements. It's boring, but at least the area is shaded and the weather is nice.*

*As I sketch these ruins, I realize that many are Aldermani. One of the keystones on an arch nearby has a date less than a decade old. The forest must have spread suddenly to devour entire settlements. I recall Old Empire warding stones on the road nearby headed into the wood. Suddenly, the weather doesn't seem so nice.*

*—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire*

## DURESH FOREST



**ASSETS RATING:** 1

**MISSION TYPES:** Assault, Recon, Religious

**PATHS:** Advance to *Talgon Forest*. The undead move more quickly through the plains south of the forest. The only way to stay safe while advancing to Calisco is through the parts of the forest even more hostile to the undead.

### SCENES

The gentle sounds of precipitation landing on a carpet of blood-red leaves throughout the forest. A band of Aldermani hunters sighting the Legion, then diverting their path to avoid contact. Walking through a Panyar village, the villagers hiding in their cabins. The horrifying sound of a creature crying out as another beast claims its life.

### CHALLENGES

Uneven and ragged paths. Locals stealing supplies from the Legion under the cover of night. Wild beasts of the forest stalking soldiers who fall out of formation. Convincing locals to aid or at least not hinder your efforts. Rain turning quickly to sleet and icing over everything in sight.

### SPECIAL RULES

The forest of Duresh is hard to navigate. Take -1d to engagement rolls for missions that do not have a Scout assigned to them.



## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Recon

**FAVOR:** Glory

A Broken has been working on a special project. The majority of their research is in their personal camp. Reports indicate they are away from the camp for a few days—a perfect opportunity to infiltrate the camp and destroy their research and destroy any experiments that might be of use to the undead. **Requires:** *Vital (must be selected as the primary mission).*

**MISSION REWARDS:** +3 Intel. This Broken does not gain an ability when the current “Time” clock fills.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Recon

**FAVOR:** Knowledge

The Legion spotted a large patch of blight near a crumbling pillar marked with Old Empire script. Take an Alchemist there to analyze the cause. Stop the blight if possible, or keep it from spreading. **GM:** The blight is coming through a sending-stone—an Empire communication tool linked to two others in Dar and the East. It has to be deactivated to prevent blight from spreading. **Requires:** *Alchemist.*

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Intel. Each Legionnaire on the mission may ask a question about family, friends, and the war, in the linked locations.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Mystic, Wild

The twin gods of Aldermark were part of the war: Mattiar the Smith and Gerholtz the Hunter. Before marching to war, Gerholtz wielded a spear made by his brother to deal with a blight-maddened beast. The Cacophony—a famous beast from the forest, inscribed on the seal of Aldermark—is pinned by this powerful artifact to keep it from rampaging. The Legion could use a weapon such as this—provided they can slay the beast. **GM:** Make a potent, threat 3, many-headed supernatural beast that reanimates once the spear is removed.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. **Relic:** Striking Spear (if anyone or their shadow is hit by this spear, they are rooted in place).

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.



# LOCATION TALGON FOREST

The forest heart is dark and thick and makes it difficult to traverse terrain. The only real place to camp is Harug, a holy site of the Horned One ringed with carved stones. For no visible reason the forest doesn't encroach within. The site itself is made of smooth stone platforms with holy patterns carved into them, small alcoves carved into trees, and the ornate pathways that lead between them. The sole attendant of the site is a dour, robed man named Rowan, who has dedicated his life to the Horned One. Rowan's Panyar traits are more excessive than most, and include goat horns and odd, bark-like skin.

Here, the Broken are at a disadvantage. The forest beasts resent their presence, and are likely to turn their rage on them. Consequently, undead in the forest are few, and are far more likely to mount ambushes than assault a fortified position. The Chosen is too valuable a prize to forget entirely (and defeating the Legion would earn the Cinder King's favor), but it's no easy task to follow the Legion into here.

Talgon is one of the most pristine places left in Aldermark, but that does not make it safe. The forest does not care for intruders, and the Legion are only marginally better than their undead counterparts in the eyes of those things that call the forest home.

*The forest creatures do not look at us with fear. They look at us with hunger. Prowling creatures do not usually dissuade the Legion. A few would show off their rifles or rub their bellies tauntingly when spotting an animal that got too close. Or at least they did, till we saw a wolf-like creature, easily twenty handbreadths high at the shoulder, watching us with silver eyes and deciding if it wanted to end us. I don't know how the Panyar sleep in their homeland if it's anything like this.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

# TALGON FOREST



**ASSETS RATING:** 0

**MISSION TYPES:** Recon, Religious

**PATHS:** Advance to *Fort Calisco*. There's only one clear route to Skydagger from here and it leads eastward through the old Aldermani fort.

## SCENES

Unknown creatures moving among ancient trees. Shadows dancing in the distance. The creaking of forest wood and vine. Undead dismembered by a long-gone animal, left in pieces strewn on the forest floor. Eerie lights in the distance, moving past distant trees, then disappearing into the dark. The overwhelming presence of being watched by countless eyes.

## CHALLENGES

Wild creatures of the forest, overly large, almost supernaturally intelligent and hostile to intruders. Thoroughly overgrown paths that need to be hacked down to make way for the Legion's passage. Undead ambushes and traps left for roaming squads. Sacred sites and their mystic wards, lost in the rampant bloom of the forest.

## SPECIAL RULES

When advancing, roll pressure at -2d.

All **special missions** in Talgon require a Panyar to lead them, or they suffer -1d to the engagement roll.

**GM:** Pick one Broken. All undead encounters must be from that Broken's forces. The other Broken in the campaign is rushing through the southern plains to assault Fort Calisco.

## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Holy, Mystic

One of the ritual observations for the Horned One is the last hunt of the season. One of your scouts spotted a white stag, a full three paces tall, near this place. Its sighting is an opportunity: catch the stag, prepare a ritual meal of it, and the holy site you're camped at will bless your troops.

**MISSION REWARDS:** 1 Food (3 uses). **Blessing:** +2 Morale, and each Specialist may clear all stress or remove all harm.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** -2 Morale if your Legion has any Panyar Scouts.

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**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Mystic, Wild

Talgon Forest was once less formidable. A few hundred years ago, a Panyar sect brought a cutting of the Heart Tree of Panya to take root here in Aldermark. Now, with Panya under assault by the Cinder King, this new Heart Tree may soon be the last of its kind, and its importance to the Panyar people cannot be understated. A cutting of the tree could be of strategic value to the Legion. Brave the wild guardians of the Heart Tree to take a cutting.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. **Relic:** Heartwood Cutting (used in later campaigns), add +10 points to final score.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None now. Consequences in later campaigns.

**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Holy, Mystic

When the moon was shattered, several pieces of the Goddess Nyx fell from heaven. A large piece can be found in the forest, only a day or so out. According to preliminary reports, there are ethereal, silver, and strange creatures, only vaguely humanoid, guarding the site where the stone crashed. **GM:** Creatures are threat 2 and there are a dozen of them.

**MISSION REWARDS:** **Relic:** Lunar Crown. (Worn by the largest guardian, lets the wearer **WEAVE** moonlight, to purify or to reveal the unseen. Donning the crown fuses it to the skull, and turns the wearer's hair white and eyes silver. Using the crown causes level 2 harm "Burns" to the user.)

**MISSION PENALTIES:** Nyx worshippers desert the Legion to continue seeking the relic (two deaths).







# LOCATION WESTLAKE

Though Karlsburg (on the west shore of the Tigeria) was the Aldermark capital, Westlake may be its proudest city. The seat of the Church of the Twins (the gods of Aldermark), it has prospered for years by channeling trade from the coast, up the river, and west into Aldermark proper. Its massive walls are 50 handbreadths high and decorated with the red and gold colors of the city.

Westlake has yet to fall to the undead horde. In the initial push, the undead stopped here. Before the Cinder King arrived in person to bring down the walls himself, the Eastern Kingdoms' reinforcements, with their newly invented Black Shot, drove the undead forces back over the Tigeria to regroup. Now, as the undead forces march east again, the city considers itself an untouchable bastion.

Before the gates is a tent city of refugees seeking the shelter of the walls but stymied by the protocols the council has put in place. Curfew is strictly maintained and entry and egress from the city is tightly controlled, with many aspects of the population's lives regimented in preparation for the oncoming siege.

*The city guards sometimes roam through the camp outside the gates, under the pretext of "protection" or "making sure blight isn't spreading." Mostly, they take what they want and try to provoke people for amusement. Those that react are denied entry behind the walls permanently. They kicked over the stew I was making for lunch today. The Marshal's sharp gaze rooted me to the ground, but I hope they let us past the gate before someone retaliates.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## WESTLAKE



**ASSETS RATING:** 0 (outside), 3 (inside)

**MISSION TYPES:** All

**PATHS:** Advance to *Eastlake*. In times of prosperity, taking river-barges down to the coast would have provided easy access to the Eastern Kingdoms. With the undead heavily controlling that region, Eastlake is the only safe route out—whether that's via boats across the lake, or the Legion fording the river on their own.

### SCENES

**OUTSIDE:** The stench of an overlarge camp without adequate sewage. Laughing guards taking bread meant to be shared by a family. The cries of hungry children, and moans of the wounded emerging from makeshift tents. The buzz of flies everywhere.

**INSIDE:** The perfect quiet of the city streets at night, well lit by lamps and patrolled by town guards. A bustling merchant square, with luxury goods and fine foods for sale. An intense street preacher proclaiming lack of devotion has created the undead plague. Refugees who snuck in living on the streets. The ringing of church bells.

### CHALLENGES

Undead scouring the countryside outside the walls. Corrupt and haughty nobles of Westlake issuing self-serving edicts. Merchants charging excessive prices, claiming additional council tariffs. Numerous political factions looking to use the Legion for their own personal causes, usually against the others.

### SPECIAL RULES

The council's strict rules make getting into the city complicated—the Legion must complete a 3-clock “Entering the City” Long-Term Project before they're allowed into the city.

Until the Legion is inside the city, the assets rating is zero. Travel from Westlake to Eastlake along the shoreline is treacherous. If the Legion advances without the Quartermaster acquiring boats, add 2d to the pressure roll.

## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Glory

**Only available before the Legion is inside the city.** The undead have set up camp in a hamlet north of the city, looking to cook up a way into Westlake. Smashing their position would delay their offensive and ingratiate you to the town. **GM:** An Infamous is heading up this camp, building something to scale walls, bring walls down, or throw over walls to demoralize and turn the populace. **Requires:** *Horses, Three Specialists—one of which must be a Heavy.*

**MISSION REWARDS:** -1 Time. +3 Morale. Two ticks on the “Entering the City” clock.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Supply

**FAVOR:** Mercy

Benritza, a powerful ruling council member, needs an escort for her daughter Maja to retrieve family heirlooms from a country manor a few days’ travel out. These heirlooms have no value to the Legion, but the councilwoman will pay handsomely for them. The manor is secluded but serving as a base of operations for a dangerous squad of undead.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +3 Supply; An additional +2 if Maja is unharmed.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Supply

**FAVOR:** Mercy, Mystic

Westlakers don’t recognize that missing people and an odd disease of the blood are heralds of something more sinister, but the Annals of the Legion do. The Last Emperor was destroyed when practicing similar rites, which use sacrifice and blood drinking to grant great arcane power. A high priestess is doing dark rituals beneath her gothic cathedral, using unwanted and unexpected passers-through. **GM:** Have each player pick a Specialist to play, and investigate these symptoms. **Requires:** *Vital, Only Specialists*

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. +2 Supply. 1 Religious Supplies.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** Two Legionnaires go missing (two deaths).



# LOCATION EASTLAKE

Eastlake is a city that defines itself by its rivalry with Westlake. Whereas Westlakers show devotion through building churches, Eastlakers consider themselves more devout—their council is all anointed church folk and their mayor a deacon, which assures them they are far less corrupt and prone to graft. Where Westlakers channel trade from the coast, Eastlakers pride themselves on trade with the Eastern Kingdoms—the resounding bells that tell the time and raise alarms to the whole city are gifts from Or, who was allowed to build a temple to the Maker in town after promising such a wonder to the city.

Though Eastlake is seen as more refined and cosmopolitan, there is still an air of haughtiness. They are at their heart consumers, appreciating what others offer, but only from the stance of their own superiority.

So far, the war has left Eastlake relatively untouched, but a pall hangs over the city. Fires can be seen across the lake to the west. Rumors of undead pushing hard across the northern plains only compounds the fact that refugees have ceased to stream in from the south and east. The few words that come from the east say that a powerful undead force is at the border of Panya, burning the mythical forest as it advances.

For now, the citizens of Eastlake remain paralyzed, caught between a horde on either side, but so far untouched by the undead. There's considerable debate about how to handle the situation, with some advocating for escape to the north, some arguing for a military response, and the majority wanting to wait, see, and trust in the gods.

*The sky west of us has pillars of smoke. The sky eastward is a gray smear in the direction of Panya. The news is all bad, and even hardened soldiers seem shaken. In times like this some ask to pray with our Chosen. Most of us just shrug and trust in the Commander.*

*The folks in this town stick to their schedules, but you can hear the tension in their whispers. You can see the nervous gossip. I want to warn them what's coming, but I don't know that there's a point. Where would all these people go?*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## EASTLAKE



**ASSETS RATING:** 3

**MISSION TYPES:** All

**PATHS:** Advance to *Fort Calisco*. Once, roads led through Panya to the Eastern Kingdoms from here—but that way lies the Cinder King, with additional Broken and their armies. The only safe route now is to race north to Fort Calisco and take the old trade route into Barta.

### SCENES

Worried citizenry gossiping among silverstone-cobbled streets with window box flowers. Furtive boat launches off the docks as fishermen head onto the lake to bring in food. The mayor holding a town meeting to discuss the state of the war with concerned citizens. Tired scouts arriving from outlying areas, each with worse news than the last. Makeshift fortifications being built on the outskirts of town. Young people signing up to join the town guard, and training in formation in the city squares—in part to reassure the citizenry, and in part to prepare.

### CHALLENGES

Undead packs that patrol the lakeshore, hunting stragglers. Unsettled or possibly riotous citizenry demanding a course of action. Fishing expeditions caught out on the lake by unseasonal weather.

### SPECIAL RULES

Eastlake is cosmopolitan and untouched by war. Mercies, Alchemists, and Siege Weapons are standard quality in this town.



## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Holy, Mercy, Mystic

Against the Cinder King's orders, a Broken has encouraged some people to start worshipping the Cinder King's "divine nature." Calling themselves the Cult of Smoke, they perform rituals to ingest undead flesh so they can be "Chosen" by this false god. **GM:** Mission starts as blight signs in the city. Play out the search. Some of the cultists are badly blighted and count as threat 2/3 monstrosities.

**MISSION REWARDS:** -2 Pressure. +1 Intel (info on the Broken). +2 Morale.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** Two Legionnaires go missing (two deaths).

**MISSION TYPE:** Supply

**FAVOR:** Glory, Mercy

A Bartan corporal and her warband were pinned down while pushing east to join the defensive line at Panya. They are now beset by forces from the front and won't last the night. You need to slip through the undead lines, support the warband, and punch back through to get back to the city. (Bring two squads on this mission and expect heavy losses.) **Requires:** *Horses*

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. 4 Soldiers. 1 Bartan Soldier (+2 actions, +1 special ability).

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Holy, Knowledge, Mystic

Many gods have Chosen before; Reliquaries are remains of those divine-touched bodies. The head of a former Chosen of Vazara was so preserved—it is still infused with divine knowledge and able to answer questions. It's hidden in a monastery a long day's ride from the city. The Mercy Damodi has been guarding the head in the catacombs, unwilling to risk transport—the head is mystically connected somehow to Breaker.

**MISSION REWARDS:** 1 Mercy. **Relic:** Head of a Chosen. (It must answer a question truthfully once per session. It may lie more often.)

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.



# LOCATION FORT CALISCO

Fort Calisco is under siege by one of the Broken's forces. Safe refuge can be found within its walls, but getting in may not be so simple. The fort is well built, and has withstood several attacks, though the undead seem to have a new plan.

Within the fort, Commander Jonakas—a grizzled Aldermani veteran—has set up a crisp defense. Now, this Aldermark hero holds his position knowing this is a last stand—an attempt to divide the forces of the undead and to slow them from their eastern press long enough for the Eastern Kingdoms to mount a response.

There are military units from many nations and areas, some having come here hoping to recuperate, some seeking a place strong enough to withstand the undead assault. Jonakas has kept the peace between everyone, but many unit leaders have strong opinions on how the defense and resource allocation can be handled.

The fort is surprisingly well equipped. Most assets can be found here, and there's no shortage of missions that need doing. A fair number of civilians are here as well, trapped in the fort with no escape in sight.

*The last few days were a haze. I remember the tree line, sitting on my horse. The initial charge. I remember the blood. The roar of the undead. I remember my corporal falling. I remember seeing our Chosen, kneeling and bleeding, and me leaning down the side of my horse, offering them an arm. I remember the gates closing as a few undead made it through, and the defenders descending on them en-masse. I grinned at our victory. I grinned when the Marshal pinned my new rank on my armor. I grinned until I realized we have no way out of here.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## FORT CALISCO



**ASSETS RATING:** 2

**MISSION TYPES:** All

**PATHS:** Advance to the *High Road* or the *Maw*. The only paths forward through the Westwall mountains are a treacherous high-peaks route, or an even more risky ancient passage beneath the mountains written of in the Annals.

### SCENES

Solemn faces of people staring at the Legionnaires as they ride through the narrow streets. Crisp military forces practicing maneuvers in training grounds. Commander Jonakas walking along makeshift catwalks that network throughout the fort. Provisions being stacked and inventoried by official fort quartermasters. Secretive transactions made by enterprising merchants in dark alleys.

### CHALLENGES

In-fighting amongst the fort's trapped population. Diseased and injured warriors quarantined into triage camps. Attacks over the fort walls. Bombardment from the besieging forces.

### SPECIAL RULES

If you do not acquire a route out of the fort (possibly from some smugglers), missions outside the fort are at -1d to engagement rolls, and the Legion can't advance.

When you advance to Fort Calisco, complete the following mission (there is no secondary mission this mission phase):

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Glory

To get into Fort Calisco, you have to break the siege. The best way to do that is to hit the undead in a position and force them to shift forces to defend, while the Legion makes a break out of the forest and into a side gate. Whatever the undead are preparing for the walls (ritual or siege weapons) looks like a good target. **GM:** Make a clock for the Chosen stalling the Broken at this position while the troops light the undead's siege weapons on fire. If the Legion has an Alchemist, the engagement roll is at +1d. **Requires:** *Horses*

**MISSION REWARDS:** -1 Time. +3 Morale. Pressure does not increase.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** You may not advance until you finish this mission.

## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Glory, Mercy

The undead horde arrived before all materiel made it into the fort. A unit buried a supply cache of Black Shot, weapons, and food just in sight of the northern wall. It's sitting completely untouched. Sortie from the fort, deal with the undead crawling over the depot, and bring the supplies back before the siege cuts you off. **GM:** Create an 8-clock for the siege.

**Requires:** *Horses*

**MISSION REWARDS:** -2 Time. +3 Supply. +1d to Acquire Assets this campaign phase.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Mercy

Signs of blight have spread among the general populace. Jonakas suspects the Orite unit named the Garde Mechanique. Heavily injured in the war, their unit was allegedly ravaged by blight, but investigation found no proof of the corruption. Jonakas has asked you to send a squad of Specialists—and only Specialists—to investigate. **Requires:** *Vital, Only Specialists*

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. +2 Supply. **Relic:** Blight Tank. (Moves 1d corruption from subject to victim. Can break blight into 6 corruption. User receives 1d3 corruption.)

**MISSION PENALTIES:** +1 Time.

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Holy

When the tide turned, the Banner Guard—an elite squad of the Legion—was tasked by your Chosen with a priority mission eastward. Your paths cross again. They need help clearing Old Empire catacombs beneath the fort, built centuries ago for honored Imperial soldiers and now overrun with undead. The Guard seeks a map to an artifact, inscribed on the shield buried with the Emperor's lover. You play a squad of Legion Rookies assigned to the Banner Guard Specialists. **Requires:** *Only Rookies*

**MISSION REWARDS:** +3 Morale. +3 xp to each Legionnaire that survives this mission.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.





# LOCATION HIGH ROAD

Largely used as a pilgrimage route and for minor trade in the summer months, this is a route that cuts above the tree line and up to where the air is thin. The lower altitudes possess a stark beauty. Trees shift to coniferous, and eventually stop altogether, leaving mostly lichen-covered rock. Animal life dwindles, until the only beasts frequently seen are small mountain rodents and the birds studying you from above.

Though still traveled, upkeep of the path hasn't been a priority, even more so since the war started. Now the decrepit sky bridges linking the shale and granite plateaus are mostly frequented by refugees escaping the new horrors the Broken have cooked up.

Most passage through these lands is hiking or climbing, due to the uncertainty of the quality of the bridges. It's easy to be ambushed, and the lack of terrain options makes it hard to run from a fight. Food and fuel are scarce, and the cold winds make travel treacherous and slow. Often the altitude and weather are enemies as dangerous as the ones chasing the Legion.

These narrow paths and stone bridges are also a source of strength. Undead will have to follow the same roads, and the sky bridges form natural bottlenecks on which to fight them. Fighting the undead is never without cost, but here the odds are far closer to even, if you can turn the terrain to your advantage.

*The cold is pervasive. When you wake up, it makes your limbs stiff, and just as you've moved enough to shake it off, it's time to set up camp. As we go up the mountain the snot freezes in my nose. They tell me it's not even winter yet. I beg you, if you're reading this, if I die—bury my bones someplace warm.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## HIGH ROAD



**ASSETS RATING:** Unavailable

**MISSION TYPES:** Assault, Recon

**PATHS:** Advance to *Skydagger Keep*. Almost there, Legionnaires.

### SCENES

An old mountain monastery, abandoned long ago, with marks of travelers in its cold halls. Refugees cooking old meat over a fire pit while snow gently drifts down over their blanketed bodies. Howling wind whipping over the top of a butte. Icicles forming along tent ropes. Pilgrimage altars etched into the mountain paths with long-decayed offerings left behind.

### CHALLENGES

Sudden wind and snow storms that bring all safe travel to a halt. Days of travel with no restock in sight. Perilous climbs required to summit the next plateau. Creaky bridges not maintained in years. Undead nightmares scaling the sides of a mountain. Furred, high mountain lizards, looking for bones and flesh to eat.

### SPECIAL RULES

Supplies on the high road are so scarce that you cannot Acquire Assets in the campaign phase.

Any Legionnaire not wearing Winter Clothing on a mission should wake up in the morning with level 1 harm “Frostbite” unless they take precautions to mitigate this somehow (or make a **PROWESS** resist).

## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Supply

**FAVOR:** Mercy

Boryev Natanovich, an elder and famous warlord of the largest of the Zemyati clans, is trapped on an isolated butte, circled by high mountain lizards looking to eat his bones. He won't abandon the small refugee camp he's protecting, but doesn't have enough warriors to shield them on the move. Rescuing a Zemyati elder would mean a lot to the mountain tribes.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +3 Morale. +1 Laborers (a Zemyati elder and refugees). The Zemyati (as a people) will owe the Legion a debt.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** -1 Morale if the Legion has a Zemyati Specialist.

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** All

Archangel Bridge is a stone bridge, 300 paces long, carved with ornate religious imagery, stone railings, and steps leading up and down either side. It's also one of the only direct routes to Skydagger. Deploy two squads, three Specialists, and your Chosen, who suspects that holding here will force an enemy Broken to take the field. Help your Chosen fight off two waves of enemies, and keep them safe from aerial and ranged units while they duel the Broken, to buy the Legion time at Skydagger.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +5 Morale. -3 Time.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Holy, Mystic

The Pedestal Monastery was abandoned years ago, but deep inside its sanctum is an artifact created from the Godswar, which was once fiercely fought over until the ascetics were entrusted with it. Though their order died out, they've left the halls filled with death traps and snares to meet Legion and undead alike seeking the Bell of Keening.

**MISSION REWARDS:** +2 Morale. **Relic:** The Bell of Keening. (When rung, mystic effects in earshot fade. It does not affect alchemy or the animating power of the undead. Each time it is used, a crack in the bell forms. It shatters when rung twice more.)

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.



# LOCATION THE MAW

This expansive cave network was long ago used as part of a trade route to Skydagger Keep before a combination of natural hazards and cave-dwelling people made the passage too treacherous. Once a network of natural caves, many portions of the network have been expanded and worked over time. The path remains traversable, though the passage sometimes requires stooping over, and sometimes crosses through caves whose ceilings are so high that lanterns do not reach it. The Maw is a pit so deep you cannot hear anything thrown in hit bottom. The path wraps around its lip for several long hours.

Carved into the rock are huge pillars more ancient than the Old Empire, covered in a language lost to time. Occasional shrines pepper the sides of the road early on, with small gifts placed before them. Walls often glitter with beautiful mineral deposits, and fungal outcroppings that have grown among the stone give the path an eerie quality both natural and civilized.

The path can be difficult to follow, and becoming lost can mean death once food and light run out. Found about are wrecked carriages of failed attempts to traverse from years ago, and more recent ones of folks who attempted to escape the war this way.

Deeper off the path live Pale Crawlers—a reclusive society of people who resent intrusion on their land, and look for opportunities to harass those who would trespass through their caves. Little is known about them. Though not blind, they scar their bodies and identify each other through touch in the dark. Their expertise with fungal venoms is second to none. Only underestimate them at great peril.

*It hasn't been easy. The dark at some point stops being just an absence of light and gains a weight and substance of its own. Lights are conserved because without them we are lost for good, which means we often walk with only the faintest of shapes shambling about us. The damn things that live here attack us frequently. Mikshim keeps screaming from some poison they used, though the Medic says he'll be fine. I dream about the sky. I can't wait to see it again.*

—Dame Mikila Savrelli, Orite Legionnaire

## THE MAW



**ASSETS RATING:** Unavailable

**MISSION TYPES:** Assault, Religious

**PATHS:** Advance to *Skydagger Keep*. Almost there, Legionnaires.

### SCENES

Pale Crawlers scavenging from a newly wrecked wagon before disappearing into the shadows. Firelight dancing off strange writing carved into a cave wall. Chittering and unidentified sounds echoing from deeper in the caves. A pit so deep, there's no sound if you throw anything into it.

### CHALLENGES

Enormous spiders in the darkness, lurking and waiting. Pale Crawlers setting up ambushes and raiding parties. Cave-ins and treacherous routes making passage difficult or impossible. Undead flanking through the latticework of interconnected caves.

### SPECIAL RULES

The paths of the cave system switch back upon themselves and are hard to navigate. Horses do not reduce pressure when advancing.

You cannot Acquire Assets here.

Squads on missions are well advised to have at least a few members equipped with Lanterns.



## AVAILABLE SPECIAL MISSIONS

**MISSION TYPE:** Religious

**FAVOR:** Holy, Knowledge

While most of the script on the cave walls remains indecipherable, some is recognizable to religious scholars in the Legion. It speaks of the tomb of a pre-Empire hero who wielded lightning—a Chosen from an era little is known about. Brave the tomb's traps and guards, and fetch the corpse to make into Reliquaries.

**MISSION REWARDS:** 1 Religious Supplies (3 uses). **Relic:** Lightning Chain. (Mark 2 corruption to throw lightning at a nearby target, and reveal to Breaker who you are, where you are, and what you're doing.)

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.

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**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Mercy

The Pale Crawlers can be addressed head-on. Scouts tracked some of them deeper into the caves. They sortie from a giant cave that is host to a giant milky white serpent (threat 4) that glows with a pale luminescence. The Pale Crawlers feed intruders to this creature. If you can put it down or appease its hunger, the Pale Crawlers would pull back, giving the Legion much needed breathing room. **Requires:** *Vital, Only Specialists*

**MISSION REWARDS:** -2 Time. +3 Morale.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** +2 Pressure if you attempt but fail, but no penalties if not attempted.

**MISSION TYPE:** Assault

**FAVOR:** Glory, Mercy

The route through the caves merges to a single passage at one point—a vast cavern known as the Hall of Kings. This means that you know where a Broken chasing you must pass through to continue. A volunteer group should place and detonate charges on the supporting pillars to collapse the cave around the Broken, taking them out or burying them until long after the war is decided. **Requires:** *Vital, Explosives*

**MISSION REWARDS:** +5 Morale. -3 Time.

**MISSION PENALTIES:** None.



# LOCATION SKYDAGGER KEEP

Skydagger Keep is named after its tall spire jutting into the sky. Its walls guard the only pass through the Westwall mountains. It is the only thing standing between the Broken hordes in Aldemark and passage into Barta and the Eastern Kingdoms. The Legion has a few precious hours before the bulk of the undead bring their numbers to bear—hours that must be spent readying the old, unused keep to hold a sizeable force amidst the bitter, biting cold.

The keep has some Orite tricks bolstering its old but solid Bartan construction. Pipes carry hot water through the halls, and walkways inside the walls provide movement even when early snows bury the gates and the walls above. Windows hiding under eaves provide a crisp view of the approaching enemies. Vantage points high up give a good angle for siege weapons, for those brave enough to endure the cold to use them.

It's a good bastion, but the undead are many. And tireless. And driven by unholy power...

*Dame Mikila Savrelli died bravely while securing the gates of Skydagger Keep. I enter her last piece of art into the Annals here along with her name. We're holding the keep for now, but will we last? I do not know. Should the keep fall, I will make sure the Annals make it down the mountain. As long as they survive, the Legion survives. If you read this, know that we stood, trying to keep the light that is humanity alive, yet again. Think kindly of us.*

*—Lorekeeper Aswena. Annals of the Legion, third year after the Breaking*

## ENDGAME

There are six objectives that need to be completed before the Keep can hold against the undead during the winter months. Most of these play out as a series of short, one-obstacle missions. Each mission occurs at approximately the same time, so Specialists and squads can only be assigned to one mission each. The Commander decides in what order the missions will be played out, the Marshal determines who is assigned to which, and the Quartermaster decides what resources are assigned to each task.

### MISSIONS

There are five objectives that need to be completed before the final wave of undead assaults the keep. Skip or fail any of these, and tremendous risks will make it almost impossible to keep the Eastern Kingdoms from being overrun. While there's not a required order to complete them, it's recommended that the Legion tackle them in the order presented below:

- ◆ **REINFORCE THE RAMPARTS AND GATES.** Skydagger has not been maintained in decades, and has never been besieged. Start a 10-segment Long-Term Project, and assign a Specialist and a squad to it. Roll once before each other mission. Add +1d to each roll for each Laborers squad the Legion has.
- ◆ **HOLD THE LOWER PASS.** One squad and up to three Specialists must hold the pass. If they manage to hold off three enemy units and an Infamous, the mission is complete. This counts as an assault mission. If any Broken has been defeated already, you need not do this mission.
- ◆ **STOP THE MAIN FORCE.** Assign one squad and two Specialists to a dangerous recon mission that involves climbing the mountain passes and evading undead patrols. The objective is to start an avalanche to stall and stagger the main undead force.
- ◆ **ASSEMBLE THE SIEGE WEAPONS.** There are a few underground routes to siege weapon positions on the cliffs above. Nobody knows if the undead have sent more nimble units to reach them overland, or what might be nesting amidst the tunnels. Assign one squad and two Specialists to this supply mission. Take +1d to the engagement roll if the Legion has Siege Weapons. Otherwise, you must repair the old, unused ones on the cliffs.
- ◆ **HOLD THE SECOND WAVE.** Fight off a Lieutenant and its undead at the walls. Your Chosen will take the field (make a 10-clock for the Chosen and the Lieutenant as they clash). The undead will attempt to scale the walls and get in. If the ramparts and gates mission is complete, add +1d to your engagement roll. Assign one unit and up to three Specialists.

## THE LAST WAVE

This is it. A Broken assaults the wall and the keep must hold. This is the last wave of this campaign, and it's resolved as a fortune roll, to see how the Legion weathers it.

Assemble the dice based on the following:

- ◆ **THE SURVIVORS:** Always start with 1d for making it to the final wave.
- ◆ **THE CHOSEN:** Take +1d if your Chosen is still alive and with the Legion.
- ◆ **THE PREPARED:** Take +1d for each Siege Weapon the Quartermaster has.
- ◆ **THE RESOURCEFUL:** Take +1d if the Legion has both a Mercy and Alchemist.
- ◆ **THE BRAVE:** Take +1d if you lit the fires at Kevala.
- ◆ **THE BLESSED:** Take +1d if someone in the Legion can **WEAVE** moonlight.
- ◆ **THE ANGRY:** Take +1d if the Legion has Fire Oil.
- ◆ **THE GODSLAYERS:** Take +1d if you can ring a bell to end Broken power.
- ◆ **THE GRAVEROBBER:** Take +1d if you have the head or chain of a past Chosen.
- ◆ **THE WARDED:** Take +1d if the Legion carries an Old Empire warding stone.
- ◆ **THE WEARY:** Take -1d if Legion morale is 3 or less.
- ◆ **ENEMY AT THE GATES:** Take -1d if you have 3 or fewer time remaining.
- ◆ **THE ENDLESS FOES:** Take -1d for each Infamous left alive (refer to the lists for each Broken in your game).
- ◆ **THE CRUMBLING DEFENSES.** Take -1d for every incomplete or failed Skydagger Keep mission (see left).

Your final totals are affected as follows:

- ◆ **POOR (1-3, -30 POINTS TO FINAL SCORE):** The Legion is hard-pressed to survive the winter, much less against the undead.
- ◆ **BITTER (4/5, -10 POINTS TO FINAL SCORE):** The Legion may hold, but this will likely be their last stand.
- ◆ **VICTORS (6, NO MODIFIERS TO FINAL SCORE):** The Legion is well prepared to hold the keep, and will have strong footing when it's time to do so.
- ◆ **LEGENDS (CRITICAL, +10 POINTS TO FINAL SCORE):** The Legion scores a massive victory and the undead are cautious to challenge them again.

## FINAL SCORING

Here is how you calculate your final score for the campaign. Although it is fun to see how good (or disastrous) your campaign was, it's most relevant if you want to continue your game in later campaigns. The final score for each campaign is used to set up the next chapter of the Legion's story (such as the defense of Skydagger Keep).

Low scores (less than 100) mean that you'll start weaker in the next campaign and might have trouble catching up as the story advances. It's a metric to have an idea of whether your Legion will be able to survive to the final campaign (or if you feel like jumping into a future chapter to begin with, to let you decide how you want to play). Higher scores of above 200 indicate starting in an excellent position.

**After the final mission at Skydagger Keep**, award yourself the following:

- ◆ **SURVIVORS.** You made it before winter! Gain 20 points.

**Soldiers and Troops.** The Marshal condenses troops into complete squads, then calculates the following:

- ◆ **SOLDIERS REMEMBERED.** For each squad annihilated (zero survivors), subtract 10 points.
- ◆ **FORMATION.** For each wounded squad (fewer than five survivors), subtract 5 points.
- ◆ **SPECIALISTS.** For each surviving Specialist, gain 5 points.
- ◆ **CHOSEN.** For each Chosen advance, gain 10 points.
- ◆ **MORALE.** If your morale is between 4-7, gain 5 points. If it's 8+, gain 10 points.

**Supplies Held.** The Quartermaster assesses remaining resources and calculates the following:

- ◆ **SUPPLIES.** For each supply remaining, gain 5 points.
- ◆ **SIEGE WEAPONS.** You'll need these to hold the keep. For each one, gain 5 points.
- ◆ **LABORERS.** You need these to fortify the keep. For each, gain 5 points.



**Legion Path.** The Commander reviews completed missions and calculates:

- ◆ **SPECIAL MISSIONS.** For each special mission completed, gain 5 points.
- ◆ **RELICS.** Are you bearing any relics found on special missions? For each one, gain 10 points.
- ◆ **LIEUTENANTS.** For each enemy Lieutenant slain, gain 10 points.
- ◆ **BROKEN.** If you slew a Broken, gain 30 points.

**Values.** If your game has a Lorekeeper, add the following:

- ◆ **ANNALS.** If you've kept the Annals faithfully through the end of the campaign, and they've reached Skydagger Keep safely, gain 10 points. As the game designers, we would love to read them.



# CHAPTER 11

# CHANGING THE GAME

## CHANGING THE GAME

In reading this book, you may be inspired to add to the game, or change how parts of the game work, or adapt the game to other genres. The world of **Band of Blades** is wide open for new content, new ideas, and even new rules. As a Forged in the Dark game, **Band of Blades** takes its cues from **Blades in the Dark** by John Harper, and is very literally a result of this kind of adaptation. This chapter covers what we see as some of the critical design elements to help you add more to the game.

The most important piece of advice we can give when modifying the game is for you to experiment with your ideas. When you first start out, you won't know what you don't know. Every piece in this game was the product of multiple rounds of trial and error. Each trial led to a better understanding of what we wanted and how to make that happen. Design and play, because a game only becomes real at the table. The play will show you what you want and let you experiment.

Just as a table collaborates during play to talk through the fiction, it helps to talk your designs over with other people. Sometimes this is your gaming group. Sometimes it's one of the many communities online.

The site <http://bladesinthedark.com> has links to **Blades in the Dark** materials, and also several valuable community sites and other Forged in the Dark games that may inspire or give you tools to further revise your designs.



## EXPANDING THE SCOPE

The easiest way to customize a game is to change details that are already present to emphasize stories you want to tell.

### ALTERNATE HERITAGES

The heritages written in the book are intended to create discussion and engagement, not be the final word of the conversation.

Heritage and culture is a big topic. No nation or set of customs can be realistically reduced to four common traits—though for the purposes of a game some abstraction is important. This is a great surface for discussion and engaging with the world and the fiction, and customizing the game to be your own.

There are other lands in the world besides the Eastern Kingdoms, each with their own cultures and proclivities. You may decide to create a heritage for people from those areas. The Legion is moving through Aldermark, and it would make sense that some brave Aldermani folk might want to join up. In that case you'd need a heritage for some of the locals. For example:

### ALDERMANI HERITAGES

- ◆ **INGENIOUS:** Mark an additional rank of **RIG** when you create the character, up to a maximum of 2. Some Aldermani start crafting as followers of Mattiar the Smith (whose holidays include crafting competitions), others as a family tradition. There's no denying that Aldermani are often very handy with tools, and able to rig up solutions to problems at a moment's notice.
- ◆ **HUNTER:** Mark an additional rank of **SHOOT** when you create the character, up to a maximum of 2. Hunting is considered a way to feed your family, a sport, and a way to show your devotion to Gerholtz the Hunter. With their richness of wildlife in Aldermark, many Aldermani take up hunting, and develop a keen eye.
- ◆ **TRADITIONAL:** Mark 2 xp at the end of a mission instead of 1 for bringing into play your heritage. Aldermani are proud of their culture and values, and strive to exemplify them. Work with your GM and fellow Legion players to define a list of traditions suitable to your game.
- ◆ **SURVIVOR:** Once per mission, you may push for free to ignore wound penalties. Aldermani are a people that have taken the brunt of the recent wars. This is a more recent trait as their culture changes with the war.

Heritages are always four traits with an associated mechanical benefit. Each of these traits is about half the strength of a special ability, so that heritage doesn't dominate play at the table. Find the thing about a culture that makes you excited and turn it into a trait. Remember that traits are not genetic! They come from culture or living in an area for an extended amount of time.

Good heritage traits might give you an extra starting skill, add to resistances, or equip you with gear on missions.

But heritage itself is an even broader topic. Taking a look at the nation of Aldermark, one could argue that not all Aldermani fit those traits. Would you say that the Horse Clans of Sunstrider Camp, the hunters in Duresh forest, and the people of Westlake share exactly those four traits? How might they be different? Would the riders of Sunstrider Camp have a trait that affects their **MANEUVER**? Or perhaps a trait that grants them with a custom steed?

Heritages need not be restricted to geopolitical borders. A culture such as a religious group may have its own traits, and you may make alternate traits for subcultures (such as the Panyar living in Duresh—who are Aldermani).

As designers we aimed to create heritage traits that offer many compelling choices and don't narrowly point to an obvious match with a specific playbook, but we couldn't cover every possibility. If a Legion player would like to play a multicultural character with traits from different cultures, they should talk with the group about how their upbringing created a unique set of traits. There needs to be a discussion of multiculturalism. This isn't as simple as picking two diverse traits and slamming them together on a sheet. It's a broader topic that will also touch on how to gain xp for your heritage, and how the character should be portrayed by various players that may play them.

One important goal that we have, however, is that players do not pick traits from different cultures strictly for their mechanical benefits. This is both unbalancing from a game perspective and it does a disservice to the cultures themselves.

Talking to your table and hashing out custom new heritages isn't a flaw—it's a feature. Anything that drives discussion of culture, or forces people to outline what culture means to them, is a way to engage with the system, the world, and the concept in general.

Whether you use the Optional Heritage rule (page 67), or you take the time with your table to create custom heritage traits (like the ones on the left), these are intended to be just part of the discussion rather than its sum and total. There are far too many cultures, subcultures, and exceptions generated by unique upbringings for us to provide an exhaustive list. Take this not just as permission but outright encouragement to take this discussion further based on your interest in certain areas or groups.

Just remember that culture and heritage is about how you were raised and how those beliefs shape your behavior and approaches to problems. Think about those traits in your own heritage and upbringing and think about how similar traits might be reflected in this world.

## NEW SPECIAL MISSIONS

Special missions detailed in the book need not be the only special missions you provide. The rewards for special missions are about double that of a regular mission, and the danger intrinsic to those missions is commensurate.

Special missions will usually address one of three things:

- ◆ **DISTANT HISTORY:** What happened here long ago that might affect the current course of the war? Was there a battle years ago that there might be weapons left over from? Did a Chosen fall here during the Godswar, leaving valuable artifacts? Are there long-forgotten treasures or temples that can be used to supplement the Legion's stores?
- ◆ **RECENT HISTORY:** What happened the last time the Cinder King pushed this far, and how can we use that to learn about or affect the undead armies now? Are there allies of the undead we can raid? Are there local cultural happenings we can tie into? Which of the Eastern Kingdoms' Chosen rested or fell here, and what of them remains?
- ◆ **THE WAR AT LARGE:** How are the threats and dangers causing the locals to act? How are they affecting the local wildlife?

Special missions focus on the story of the location they're set in: a church that has special significance to this area, a camp of a bandit queen in the mountains nearby, a secret cache of the Legion from when the Empire held this land. These missions are an opportunity to showcase some aspect of the history or culture or place that they occur in. What's listed in the location writeups is tied to the narrative of the war, but adding anything outside of those details can help you make the setting your own.

For example, in Sunstrider Camp (see page 395), you may want to invent a contender to Horse Lady Tsaga's command. Perhaps a rival Horse Lord thinks they can do a better job, and wants to challenge for control of the camp, according to their customs. It's fine to invent some custom that needs to be satisfied that the Legion can help with. Perhaps it's about traveling to the burial mound of the last leader of the tribe and recovering a token of their leadership.

The important part is that the special mission is tied very intimately to the story of the Horse Lords and Ladies and their people. While the undead always complicate special missions, in most cases, these missions are not about the undead. If you want to make a special mission that features the undead specifically, you need to bring in a Broken or one of their Lieutenants to make it personal and fill it with characterization. Raiding an undead camp is not a special mission. Raiding Blighter's lab of alchemical horrors for her personal notes on a serum that might give her the edge over Breaker is.



## NEW RELICS

Relics are material objects infused with the power of a Chosen either by virtue of their mystical power, or because they are literally parts of that Chosen. (Technically, Reliquaries are alchemically prepared Chosen parts that fight off the corrupting power of undeath, not proper relics.) However, several special missions have relics as a reward, and you may decide to make a new one and introduce it into a mission.

As a general rule, relics should have one major thing they do, and a commensurate cost. The Bell of Keening removes mystical power in an area but can only be used twice. The Lightning Chain allows its user to throw lightning, at a cost. Each effect is unique, and no other relics should do what it does.

Think about the specific deity and how their narrative ties to the relic. The Striking Spear is tied to one of the twin gods of Aldermark, and its power comes from Gerholtz's affinity to the Hunt. It's used to pin a giant beast he fought. The Heartwood Cutting found in Talgon Forest is part of the body of the Horned One, transplanted from the forest of the Panyar. These affinities should come out in the description and power of the relic.

Relics break the rules of the world, but they maintain the themes of the game. You should not introduce a relic that allows you to bring back the living or a potion that cures your wounds, because those ideas fight against the core themes of the setting. Instead, you might allow a way to animate a loved one to answer a question or two, at the cost of 4 corruption. When in doubt, give it costs and mechanisms that reassert the themes of the game.

## SIX-PLAYER GAMES

By default **Band of Blades** is designed to be a game for four to five players (three or four Legion players and a GM). Expanding this to six changes the stress economy, but it's not impossible to play with a larger group.

If this happens, the GM should compensate by adding an extra Elite to unit deployments on each mission. You'll likely end up with more Soldiers (as Rookies will be played more frequently) and a higher final score.

There's also a strong suggestion for the GM to focus on multiple objectives, or objectives that require simultaneous actions to complete (one group distracts the front of the lab, while another sneaks in to blow it up). If you divide the players into two groups and switch between them, you'll get a better chance to give everyone a moment in the spotlight (even if it's just a moment sharing punchy dialogue with a fellow Legionnaire).

With more players, the Marshal is encouraged to put a squad member in charge, to allow Specialists to act freely. Good luck!

## MAKING SOMETHING NEW

You might create an original mechanic in order to add a new feature to the game or highlight something that has become a regular feature of your Legion's adventures.

### MEDALS

One way to emphasize the military drama of **Band of Blades** is to award medals for bravery, quick thinking, or sacrifice during a mission. Each medal should have a name, a criteria for earning the medal, and something it gives you when you earn it. It's best when these benefits are social, not mechanical.

#### THE OAK

You are eligible for the Oak medal when you take level 3 harm protecting a squad member on a primary mission.

Whenever issued armor, those who wear the Oak are given fine armor, and may wear a copper oak leaf on their collar for each time they've earned this medal.

#### THE BRONZE STAR

You are eligible for the Bronze Star when you **DISCIPLINE** your squad into completing a primary mission after your commanding officer has fallen.

When deciding who is in charge of a mission, those who wear the Bronze Star count as having Officer status. If an Officer or multiple Legionnaires are present, the Marshal decides who is in charge.

#### THE SWORD OF VALOR

You are eligible for the Sword of Valor when you bring down an Infamous or Lieutenant. If multiple troops are involved in the action, the Marshal chooses the one they feel most influenced the course of that fight. This medal is only awarded to Rookies and Soldiers.

Those who wear the Sword of Valor may always choose what squad they belong to, even over the Marshal's objections.

## MISSION CREEP

When three or fewer squads remain at camp, the undead threat could overpower the camp's defenses. Make a fortune roll to decide the outcome, starting with zero dice. Add +1d for each squad with full, uninjured members. Add +1d if the Chosen participates in the defense.

- ◆ **1-3:** Three deaths, and you must sacrifice two uses of Black Shot, Food, Horses, or Religious Supplies.
- ◆ **4/5:** Two deaths, and you must sacrifice two uses of Black Shot, Food, Horses, or Religious Supplies.
- ◆ **6:** One death, and you must sacrifice two uses of Black Shot, Food, Horses, or Religious Supplies.
- ◆ **CRITICAL:** You defend the camp with no losses.

On occasion, the Legion may decide that it has a third priority during the mission phase. In these moments, you may decide that the reward outweighs the risks, and send three units into the field. By default, the game doesn't handle this situation, but if you decide as a table to make it happen, this rule gives you a way to proceed.

## SQUAD SPECIALIZATIONS

Each of the Legion squads has a unique history, personality, and specializes in handling different scenarios. When rolling for the squad as part of a group action, or for a fortune roll apply the following:

- ◆ **EMBER WOLVES:** +1d when attempting desperate actions.
- ◆ **GRINNING RAVENS:** +1d when **MANEUVERING** to or holding a position.
- ◆ **STAR VIPERS:** +1d when facing non-physical threats.
- ◆ **SHATTERED LIONS:** Do not break from fear or low morale.
- ◆ **GHOST OWLS:** +1d when in stealth or ambushing a target.
- ◆ **SILVER STAGS:** +1d if the squad has suffered casualties this mission.

These rules would not apply during engagement rolls, or to a Legion player controlling an individual Rookie or Soldier. This optional rule allows the Marshal to have a bit more calculation and responsibility when it comes to deployment decisions, and gives each squad a unique personality.

## ADVANCED ABILITIES AND PERMISSIONS

A good way to extend the game is to set up some abilities or ways of interacting with the world, which only come after a character has evolved in the fiction and gained special training or understanding. Not everyone undergoes the process for becoming a Mercy, but once they do, they may be able to do things others cannot.

Here are a few advanced abilities and permissions for characters to acquire through the events of play. You might create your own for your **Band of Blades** campaign, focused on the elements that are important in your game. Before you can acquire the abilities, there are fictional requirements. It will be up to your table to discuss and discover in play how to fulfill those requirements. These abilities are a good way to flesh out and detail the world, and answer some questions. What does it mean to be a Weaponmaster? What sets them apart from other soldiers and warriors?

### WEAPONMASTER FORMS

A Weaponmaster is one who is exceptionally well trained with dozens of weapons, and whose martial skill is renowned both within and without the Legion. When you are respected and recognized for your distinct fighting signature, you become a Weaponmaster. (Those who take the Weaponmaster ability become Weaponmasters automatically.)

Those who have developed their skill at fighting to this point often learn secrets that normal warriors can only marvel at. These techniques are passed down, master to initiate, though some true savants can discover their secrets through hard-won experience. Once you have been initiated into a form, you may acquire the Adept and Master special abilities, in that order.



## SHATTERING STONE STYLE

A well-traveled Panyar spent some time in the Confederacy of Royin learning from a Weaponmaster there. Upon returning to the Eastern Kingdoms, she demonstrated the ability to use her sword to cut through heavy wood in a single strike. Impressed with her skill, the other Panyar gave her the deed name Thunder. Though this Weaponmaster school teaches pupils from far and wide, any Panyar that masters the Crippling Blow move can claim the same deed name.

To become an initiate of the style requires knowledge of the forms—whether via direct tutelage or books—and practice that shatters many, many swords. You may gain either of the following abilities as a Veteran advance.

**CRIPPLING BLOW:** When you push yourself while wielding a sword you may choose to: *shatter a weapon—sunder armor—destroy a vulnerable object*. You may do this as part of an attack.

**DISCERNING:** Masters of this style are known for being able to size up an opponent with a single glance. You can figure out someone's history, strengths, and weaknesses through their fighting style. When you take a moment to **RESEARCH** an opponent or a situation before a fight, count it as a setup action for yourself.

## AVENGING BLADE STYLE

During the Godswar, a famous Dar warrior crossed blades with a Chosen and managed to hold his ground. After this monumental feat, many sought his tutelage, but he only selected five. These five were subject to the same grueling regimen he claimed to have learned in the mountains of Zemya from a Chosen. Those that subject themselves to this regimen wander with Reliquaries at their hip, and some unique abilities.

To learn the secrets of fighting opponents of significantly greater strength and speed, you must first undergo extensive, grueling training, culminating in ritually consuming a Reliquary over the course of a week. You may gain the Adept special ability as a Veteran advance.

Once you're an Adept of the style, you must convince a Chosen to show you how to unlock the true potential of Reliquaries. You may gain the Master special ability as a Veteran advance.

**[ADEPT] UNBREAKABLE:** You've mastered your body and conditioned it to its physical peak, supplementing it with divine power. When equipped with a Reliquary, you may use your **special armor** for any consequence.

**[MASTER] DIVINE BLADE:** You can spend two Reliquary uses to **push** for effect. You've learned to channel the divine force found inside remnants of Chosen to add incredible striking power that can rend even insubstantial foes.

## DEEPER HACKS

Band of Blades might seem like a game that's tightly integrated with its setting. This is true (and intentional), but this can be changed!

### THE CAMPAIGN

The Aldermark campaign in this book provides a set of constraints. You have an unsympathetic, uncaring enemy that's placing pressure on the Legion and pushing them to a final location. Converting this to sci-fi is not difficult. Robots and techno-organic hives provide good enemies, and the latter might even assimilate the dead into their assault force.

You can convert advances to jumps and locations to planets (or other notable space phenomenon like nebulae or black holes). Consider how playbooks might change. Is equipment now the type of ship you take out? Would you use **MANEUVER** to pilot a craft as you do with carts in the original setting? Does **SHOOT** apply to both blasters and ship weaponry? Adjust as needed.

### BROKEN

Broken have straightforward systems to convert. Their monsters are descriptive, and half their abilities expand their armies. The majority of their mechanics lie in the poetry layer of the game. Here are a few things to keep in mind when designing new Broken:

- ◆ **FOCUS ON THE THEME.** This is the theme of the opposition. Blighter's theme is body horror. A techno-organic hive's theme might be loss of individuality and radical adaptation. Their leader might be a Queen.
- ◆ **KEEP THE FANTASY GROUNDED.** Undead are built out of corpses. Remember that while the Broken can bend the rules of the world, they are limited by them. Use these limitations to inspire you. It will help keep the theme sharper and the monsters both reasonable and defeatable.
- ◆ **DON'T OVERDO THE MECHANICS.** It's not about crushing the troops, it's about providing interesting encounters and complicated problems. Broken abilities can get out of hand if you penalize the Legion too much. The game has a delicate balance: too many resource losses will cause it to spiral beyond recovery. Fictional threats (zones of gas, diseases, etc.) can be just as scary as a -1 morale, but threaten that balance less.

### CHOSEN

Chosen need not even be living entities. Mechanically, they provide a Legion-wide ability and a starting mission. A ship or a crew type can do the same. Favor can be converted to xp or be based on some common ideal the group shares. Don't feel tied down to the form.





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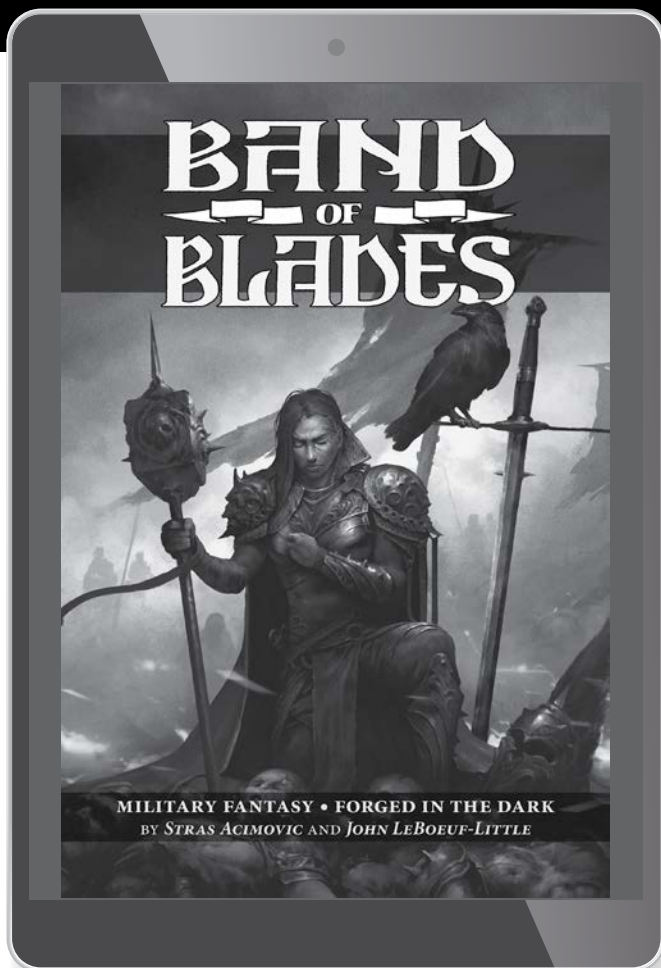
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