# BLOOD RED SANDS

# RALPH MAZZA





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# CHAPTER I OVERVIEW

You are about to enter a savage and brutal world of dark sorcery, a world where the five Witch Kings of Abalahn slew the very gods and have reigned for a thousand years.

### **TABLE CHATTER**

Table chatter is encouraged in Blood Red Sands. If you have a great idea for how a character should respond to a particular threat, share it with that character's player. If you have a great idea for what scene the Chronicler should frame next, share it with that player. If you've got a great tip for how to advance dice in a Clash, share it. If you see an opportunity for a couple of players to unite to bring down the leader, share it with those players. And if they manage to half destroy themselves in the process leaving you open to complete your Faction Goal easily - so much the better for you.

This game is played as much between the players around the table as the characters in the fiction. Advice, guidance, and social manipulation (in the spirit of fun and competition) are as much your tools as are the dice. If you can deliver this advice within the flavor of over the top, "metal" Sword and Sorcery (belligerently, flamboyantly, and full of machismo), even better.

# WHAT KIND OF GAME IS THIS?

**BLOOD RED SANDS** is a role playing game, which means simply that during play you take on the role of characters in a fictional story. You will portray their personalities, declare and describe the actions they take, advocate for their best interests, and engage in dialog with other players who are portraying their own characters. You will do this within the constraints of the setting and by the end of play will have produced a story featuring the characters your group has been portraying.

**BLOOD RED SANDS** is also a competitive role playing game. Much like when playing a board game, you will be playing to win. You may find allies among the characters of the other players for a time, but in the end there can be only one. You can win as a mighty hero surviving a series of harsh ordeals before finally confronting and defeating one of the Witch Kings. Or you can win as the Witch King having earned the right to face another player's hero and crush his pathetic attempts to destroy you.

To enjoy playing **BLOOD RED SANDS** you must be willing to play to win. You must enjoy making opportunistic alliances and expecting inevitable betrayals. Success will require learning how to push your fellow players' buttons to gain their sympathy or goad them into rash action. When playing factions you will have to play multiple characters and switch among them during play. You will want to be comfortable with the notion that, other than your hero, all characters are essentially disposable pawns to use and discard on your way to victory. You will have to maintain an awareness of the status of the game as well as the current state of the fiction and embrace the idea of allowing the actions you choose for the latter to be informed by the former. Attacking another character because that character's player is currently winning the game or because that player attacked you unexpectedly in a previous session (with completely different characters) is the right way to play **BLOOD RED SANDS**. You will want to get good at providing in-character fictional justification for actions motivated by out-of-character events. Ultimately these justifications will provide a depth to the fiction that would be difficult to achieve with such short-lived characters.



Playing **BLOOD RED SANDS** will require you to be aggressive. There is no game master or moderator to ensure spotlight time is shared equitably. All players begin on an equal footing, but during play the rules are entirely unforgiving of players who are not willing to engage. You should use your turn to relentlessly drive toward your goals and actively work to thwart your opponents. Seize opportunities when they present themselves, manipulate your opponents, and put them into painful situations where they have no good options. The spirit of **BLOOD RED SANDS** is to crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and hear the lamentations of their women. Wall Flowers need not apply.

Dark. Savage. Brutal. These words should be your guide as you play the game. The world of Abalahn is stark, violent, and completely over the top. It's a world of heavy metal album covers ruled by sorcerers whose foul magic is fueled by human souls. Legions of the soulless Unliving now exist in half-lives of servitude and torment. Beyond the alabaster towers of the White Princes, scattered settlements of people struggle to survive and remain free in the midst of a desolate wasteland defiled by eldritch magic. Plundered by self-styled warlords demanding tribute, enslaved by sorcerers seeking souls to burn, hunted by vicious creatures and foul beasts of every description, and buffeted by devastating soul storms, the people are desperate for a hero.

Can you rise up above the oppressed masses, survive in a world seeking your death at every turn, and summon the courage to confront an evil powerful enough to slay gods? If so, then you are metal enough to play **BLOOD RED SANDS**.

# IMPORTANT

**BLOOD RED SANDS** requires printed copies of a number of play aids that can be downloaded from *www.bloodredsands.com/downloads*.

The key limiter on table chatter is how welcome it is. If your advice is not welcome, or has become annoying to others, pick up on the social cues and be silent for awhile. The only thing continued obnoxiousness will get you is a knife in the back later on (hopefully a metaphorical one).



### NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Blood Red Sands is specifically designed to be a five player game and all rules have been written with this in mind.

It plays equally well as a six player game, although each additional player can cause play to drag a bit so seven or more players can get combersome. Two and three player games are not recommended.

A four player game is definitely feasible although some of the play dynamics will be significantly different.

Since four heroes will pass the First Cycle, in a four player game, all players' heroes will automatically move on. This makes playing the first hero at the start of the game less important.

> In a five player game there are four factions. In a four player game there are only three. The

# **GAME CONCEPTS & BASIC FLOW**

- **CHAPTER**: a portion of an Ordeal. After each Clash a new Chapter Begins.
- **ORDEAL**: a scenario, story, or adventure for a single hero. Approximately three to five hours of play.
- **CYCLE**: a series of Ordeals to determine which heroes will advance and which will retire.
- **CHRONICLE**: the entire history of a hero, all of the Ordeals featuring that hero.
- **SAGA**: the Chronicle of all of the players' heroes. A complete game.
- **EPIC**: all Sagas played by a group until all five Witch Kings have been vanquished.

**BLOOD RED SANDS** is played in a series of three to five hour long scenarios called Ordeals. A complete game spans 10 Ordeals including the Final Ordeal which pits the last remaining hero against one of the five Witch Kings. The Ordeals are assembled out of randomly generated **ELEMENTS**. You will take turns combining these elements into a situation that pits a number of factions against each other, poised on the brink of conflict.

One of you will play your **HERO** for the Ordeal; the rest will play one of the **FACTIONS**. The hero will wander into the midst of this conflict to be solicited as an ally or targeted as an enemy by the other players. If the hero manages to survive, their **LEGEND** will grow until one day they are worthy of facing the Witch King. You will earn **VICTORY POINTS** during each Ordeal, both for completing faction **OBJECTIVES**, and for inflicting devastating injury on the other players' characters during **CLASHES**. These points will determine who gets the opportunity to play their hero in the next Ordeal. The player who accumulates the most Victory Points over the entire Saga will play the Witch King during the final Ordeal.

Factions and heroes consist of multiple **COMPONENTS** which can define people, places or things, even entire groups. Components are built out dice (most have only four, some have six, heroes can have ten). Each



die is assigned a **TRAIT** which defines what the die represents, and an **ASPECT** which gives the die a special power.

During the Ordeal you will take turns owning the role of **CHRONICLER**, representing an unnamed story-teller in ages hence who is relating the Saga about to unfold. Each Chapter of the Ordeal will begin with a new Chronicler. As Chronicler you will control the flow and pacing of the game and exert significant authority over the fiction. You will use your turns as Chronicler to maneuver your characters into position, hinder and harm the characters of the other players, and essentially ensure that it's your version of the story that gets remembered by posterity. Other players may **CHALLENGE** the integrity of your tale. Or they may **CONTEST** your version of events and try to take the role of Chronicler for themselves. Or they may **CLASH** with you and resolve the conflict with dice rather than accept the way you've told it.

Clashes are typical when two or more Components come into conflict in the fiction. Dice are collected on the **BATTLE MAT** and then played against each other in a series of tactical exchanges whose object is to damage the other players' dice and win the confrontation. A Clash lasts until all opponents have yielded and the winner claims the **SPOILS**; after which a new Chapter begins and a new Chronicler is determined.

Play continues in this way until the Ordeal finally comes to an end when the hero has earned enough Victory Points to walk away. The more points they earned the more favorable the **EPILOGUE** will be for the forces of good and the stronger the hero's legend will grow. Too few points and the Ordeal ends in tragedy and sorrow. Get enough points and you've managed to push back the darkness and bring hope to the people, at least for a little while.

After a number of Ordeals have been completed, the Cycle will end and you will determine which heroes get to continue and which hero is retired. If your hero is killed or retired, you will no longer have that avenue of victory available to you. You will now only be able to win as the Witch King. One by one the heroes will fall. When there is only one left (after the ninth Ordeal) the next Ordeal is the final one of the Saga. intra-faction rivalries and alliances are quite different when there are only three factions.

One of the factions is always naturally inclined to ally with the hero. In a five player game it is thus possible to have a 3-on-2 matchup to oppose the hero. In a four player game you are only likely to get a 2-on-2 matchup making the hero proportionately more powerful.

The Challenge dynamic is a vote where the defender wins ties. In a five player game the challenged player must convince at least two others to remain seated and not Rise Up against them. In a four player game it requires only one other.



### JUSTIFY AND DEMONSTRATE EVERYTHING IN THE FICTION

In the game you will be making mechanical decisions frequently. The rules will be specific as to what decisions can be made and when. However, all mechanical decisions must be embedded in the fiction your group is creating.

Some decisions cannot be made until they are appropriately positioned in the fiction first. You must justify your choice by the story narration that surrounds and precedes it. Other decisions need to be demonstrated after the fact. You must show in the story what you are doing mechanically.

The story you are telling should be consistent and build upon previous facts, or at least fit within established possibilities. The quality

# WINNING WITH STYLE

Ultimately, however, **BLOOD RED SANDS** is about more than just winning. If winning was all that mattered, a board game would be a better format than a role-playing game. **BLOOD RED SANDS** is also about the quality and intensity of the fiction produced as a result of play. And that's what "winning with style" means—to not just win, but in the process to create a tale of powerful warriors, cunning rogues, and evil sorcerers that's actually worth telling.

On the one hand, a Victory Point is a Victory Point. The game is going to award you with Victory Points for hitting certain mechanical triggers; and you're going to be rewarded for getting more of them than your opponents. On the other hand, not all Victory Points are created equal; some are worth more than others. The point you earn while holding your fellow players' rapt attention with your tale of adventure and woe, is worth more (to the quality of play) than the point you earn while your fellow players are bored and disinterested. The game rules don't care. How can they? No set of rules can judge a good story from a bad, and no two groups are going to find the same things interesting. But you should care. It is easier to maneuver your opponents where you want them when they are being entertained. When you lose your audience you'll lose your opportunity to score more points. You may also wind up Challenged.

Winning with style is about establishing an aesthetic for what your group wants to see, and then competing to earn the most points while delivering that aesthetic. Winning with style is superior to winning without style; and losing is better than winning with bad style. If you don't believe that, you shouldn't play this game; it won't work for you. It's up to you to work with your group to establish your own aesthetic vision for the fiction. Like a story-teller you have to play to your audience, making sure that the twists and turns are compelling and the coincidences and surprises are fresh and believable. The Challenge mechanic is how you do this—Challenge things that you think are (or should be) outside of the vision. Challenge your fellow players to step up and deliver better and more thought out fiction.

You are responsible for delivering the goods when it's your turn as Chronicler. You are also responsible for quality control when other



players are the Chronicler. Part of the design principle of this game is "those who aren't willing to step up and hold their fellow players accountable don't get to complain about it later;" and also "those who aren't willing to deliver and play to their audience's preferences and meet and exceed their expectations can expect to fall behind in the game."

The game itself puts very few up front constraints on the aesthetic of play. You have to be willing to play in a Sword and Sorcery setting where the gods are dead, evil has all but won, and the world is a cruel and desolate place. The appendix provides some "canonical" setting elements, but even these should be treated only as inspiration for your own variants and preferences.

For instance, the game isn't going to tell you how heroic your heroes should be. The only stipulation the game puts on them is that they are willing and able to stand up in opposition to the Witch Kings. Whether they are expected to be played as paragons of justice, champions of the weak, and embodiments of chivalry; or whether they are just slightly less cruel and oppressive then the Witch Kings themselves is up to you. Do you applaud a player who plays a less than heroic hero, or Challenge them to be more virtuous?

Similar decisions are there to be made about how overt or subtle you wish magical effects to be, whether you want your fight scenes to be grittily realistic or full of over the top, anime inspired wire-fu action, and how much gore and overt horribleness you want explicitly described vs. implied "off screen." You may wish to spend a few minutes as a group collectively thinking about these things, but this is not strictly required. You may find it easier (and more expedient) to just let actual play happen, setting the tone for what you want to see by leading with the example of your own fiction, and relying on Challenges to sort things out as you go.

# THE RIGHT OF CHALLENGE

In **BLOOD RED SANDS** you'll have a great deal of latitude to describe the events of the story, particularly when you are acting as the Chronicler. You are obligated to keep your descriptions consistent with the dark tone of the game and the expectations of the other players in regards to what seems sensible to them.

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of the story and its suitability to the group aesthetic are your responsibility and is subject to being Challenged by your fellow players who aren't satisfied.

The important thing to remember is that everything is subject to how well it fits in the fiction. Other players may not be able to tell you how to play the game, but they can force you to make your choices fit the fiction to their satisfaction.

Thus, taking the time to foreshadow, to establish a logical sequence of events, to call back to earlier narration (especially other players' narration) will amply provide you with the justification you need to make the choices you want when you want to make them.

Use the story to set up your path to victory.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RITUAL

Rising up is an important concept to this game and specifically these Challenge rules. It's easy to throw out comments and critiques from a chair and the game encourages the free flow of suggestions and ideas among players (see the Table Chatter sidebar, page 6). But when a player cares enough to actually stand, and others care enough to stand with them, that sends a message with much more gravitas than mere comments. Likewise, if a player doesn't care enough to stand, then their comment is just a comment and can be freely embraced or rejected without concern that there's something bigger under the surface.

In the same vein, the proper submission ritual is important to the functioning of the rule. Combined there is a psychology that acts to prevent frivolous Challenges while also ensuring they have impact when they do occur. The rule is effective even when it's not being actively used. Its mere presence is usually enough to keep players aware of their fellows and voluntarily keep themselves in check. Twists, turns, and sudden betrayals are encouraged, but everything you say should be believable to the other players who are also serving as the audience to the tale you're collectively telling.

If someone says something that breaks the flow, or that you deem too implausible, or in some other way is judged to be unsatisfactory, it can be Challenged. While this is a competitive game and you are seeking to win, you are seeking to win within the constructive constraint of crafting an interesting Saga in the process.

Delivering a poor story just to gain an advantage towards winning is considered poor play. Your honor is at stake regardless of what the rules may allow.

The Right of Challenge is such a central feature of **BLOOD RED SANDS** that it is the first rule in this book. Its purpose is to ensure that in a game with no consistent central authority that every player can be heard. Even in a world as over the top and raw as Abalahn there is a need to make sure things don't get so outrageous (or grim) that it spoils the enjoyment of others at the table. As noted above, you have an obligation to put the quality of the story on at least as high a plane as the goal of winning. The Challenge is how the other players let you know when you're slipping.

It's also a heck of a lot of fun! **BLOOD RED SANDS** is a game of testosterone fueled aggression where Sword and Sorcery meets 1980s heavy metal album covers and players compete to create characters and scenes that could have stepped off of a Frank Frazetta canvas. If someone describes something unfitting you could simply calmly share your thoughts and politely ask them to rethink their description. But this isn't some weenie hippie game. This is **BLOOD RED SANDS**! In this game the proper response is to leap to your feet, loom over the table, stab your finger in their face, and loudly and belligerently demand that they change their narration to suit you. If enough of your fellow players agree with you, you will soon be savoring the sweet success of bending the game to your will and forcing your opponent to submit to your whim. Of course, if you gauge the mood at the table wrongly, it could be you forced to utter the dreaded phrase "As you will..."



# **CHALLENGE THE FICTION**

During the game there will be times when another player's actions just don't feel right. Maybe you think a particular tactic is dirty pool, or a particular action is a cheap shot. Most of the time when a move feels cheap, lame, or uninspiring it's because it was not properly embedded in the fiction.

When you have the right lead in, the right foreshadowing, the right justifications, then that very same move will feel right. It will feel like it belongs, like it's a natural next development in the story.

When it doesn't feel right, Rise Up and Challenge it. You can't Challenge the move, after all it's a competitive game and your opponent can act as they like within the rules. But you can Challenge the fiction surrounding the move. It's a rule of the game that every player is responsible for embedding their mechanical choices in the fiction according to the story aesthetic appropriate to your group. Failing to do so not only produces lame play, it's against the rules.

You can't control what actions your opponents choose to take, but you can require them to frame their actions firmly within the fiction. If they do so in a way that makes the action feel more appropriate and alleviates your concern, great, if not, Challenge the fiction until they come up with something the majority of the group can enjoy (or, if they can't, until they decide to do something else.)

Remember of course, that the aesthetic they must adhere to is that of the group, not any one player. If the rest of the group doesn't support your Challenge, or doesn't press it as far as you would like, then accept that the player's action has been deemed appropriate.

### THE CHALLENGE RISE UP

At any time you may announce your opposition to any description of fictional events in the game that you feel makes the story less compelling, less believable, less genre appropriate, or which threatens to detract from your enjoyment of play.

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Almost as importantly, the mechanic feeds directly into the feel and flavor of play. In a sense, the Right to Challenge trains you how to approach the entire game. By requiring you to act a bit over the top and belligerent as a player, it gets you into the right frame of mind for your characters. It demonstrates that there is no one at the table looking out for you, protecting your interests, or checking to make sure you're on board. You have to do that yourself. Playing the game requires you to be active, direct, forceful, take strong action with initiative, and sometimes even be a bit devious; just like the Challenge.

Finally, the ritual is a safety valve. When playing a competitive game that encourages aggressive action and brutal description, things can sometimes get heated. Since the Challenge mechanic already frames things in an aggressive manner, such behavior becomes part of the ritual, a little fun and a little ridiculous, rather than an actual argument.

### EXAMPLE OF NEGOTIATING CHALLENGES

During play, a player attempts to reinforce a Clash with his "Bodyguard" Component. He describes how the bodyguard comes to the aid of his employer in the fight.

This is Challenged on the grounds that the bodyguard was previously described as being passed out drunk, although no Pain had been inflicted to restrict his location.

The Challenged player suggests giving the bodyguard a Weakness to account for his drunken state. The Challenger deems this appropriate and withdraws their objection. The bodyguard receives "Severely Hung Over" as a Weakness and play continues. When you do this you must **RISE UP** in defiance, standing at the table and directing your comments to the source of your displeasure. This symbolic posturing is waived for those with difficulty standing (substitute another suitable gesture, like a fist in the air) but otherwise is mandatory. If you don't care enough to stand, you don't care enough to Challenge.

### STATE YOUR CASE

You are encouraged to express your rationale for your position and suggest a more palatable behavior. It isn't required, but since your success depends on winning the support of the other players, you'll likely want to make the effort.

### THE RESPONSE

The Challenged player may agree with you and adjust their actions to suit you. They may negotiate with you for a different outcome that you both find suitable, which can include the way things are positioned in the fiction or even specific **PAIN** that must be suffered. If you are satisfied you can withdraw your Challenge by sitting back down.

If the Challenged player does not agree, they may instead defend their action and appeal to the crowd, making their own case for why their actions are indeed suitable and should be allowed to stand.

### **ASSESS SUPPORT**

If the Challenged player does not acquiesce, and you do not withdraw your Challenge, then the issue is thrown to the judgment of the group. Any player who agrees with you must Rise Up also to be counted along side of you. Any player who remains seated is automatically defending the Challenged player. There is no abstaining.

To win your Challenge there must be more people standing than sitting. If you do not outnumber your opponent then the Challenged player wins (ties go to the defender).



### **SUBMISSION**

If you win your Challenge then the Challenged player must submit to you with the phrase **as you will**. They must then alter their description to fit. The Challenging players should remain standing until they are satisfied with the alterations. Until they sit the issue is not resolved satisfactorily. However, it is only necessary for the Challenged player to alter their narration just enough to get some of the supporters to sit. Once the standing players no longer outnumber those sitting, the issue is deemed resolved.

If you lose your Challenge, then you must submit with the phrase **as you will**. The group has indicated that they don't have as great a problem with the fiction the Challenged player is creating as you do. They are collectively accepting responsibility for how things turn out as the result of their choice.



### THE MYTH OF ABALAHN

Once there were gods who trod across the heavens and embodied the aspects of the universe they'd created. These gods had each two natures for there is duality in all things. The fire that warms also burns. The water that gives life also drowns. There are beasts that feed and beasts that feast. The gods understood the duality of nature and accepted it as how things should be.

Chief among the gods was the goddess whose nature was of life and death, and she did not accept this duality as how things should be. She hated the part of herself that was death, that was entropy, that was the ending of things. Why can't the universe be only about the good? Why must fire burn and water drown? Why must beast feast on beast? Why can't all be kindness and mercy without end?

And so the Chief Goddess determined to bring forth a child. If she and her siblings had created a universe, how much harder could it be to create a god? She determined to imbue this child with all that was good and with naught that was bad. Only kindness, and gentleness, and mercy, and patience, and compassion would reside in her



child and she would be a giver of life and health and comfort.

And so the Blessed Daughter was born and she was all that was good with naught that was bad. She was kindness, and gentleness, and mercy, and patience, and compassion and all the gods cherished and adored her, and none more than the Chief Goddess herself who became the Original Mother.

But the Original Mother was not finished giving birth, and soon delivered a twin to the Blessed Daughter, a son. And this son was everything the Blessed Daughter was not, and none of what she was. Where his sister was kind, he was cruel. Where she was gentle he was violent. Where she showed mercy he showed none, and neither did he show patience nor compassion.

The Chief Goddess was horrified, duality had not been thwarted, and she had not only brought forth a child of pure good, but another of pure evil. She brought him up as a mother must, but he was ever the Unloved Son. When she could take his nature no more, she cast him out into the void, and the Unloved Son became the Forsaken One.

The time came for the Blessed Daughter, now grown, to take her place at the council of gods. All of the gods had helped to create the

# WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

### BOWLS

While not strictly required, it can be helpful for each player to have a small bowl for their Dice Horde. A plastic sealable container will make it easy to store the dice needed to play between sessions. The group should also have a larger bowl or platter (preferably metal) within easy reach for the Bone Yard.

### DICE

**BLOOD RED SANDS** requires a large number of dice. Characters and other Components are built out of dice and Clashes involve those dice being played tactically against each other.

- For purposes of this game a "set" of dice is considered to be 1d10, 1d8, 1d6, and 1d4.
- d12s and d20s are not used in **BLOOD RED SANDS**.
- Total dice needed for a full game of five players: 25d10, 25d8, 25d6, and 25d4 for a total of 100 dice.

### **BASE DICE**

At the start of each Ordeal every player will need four sets of dice for your **DICE HORDE** (16 dice each, 80 for a five player game).

### MOST DEVASTATED BONUS SET

The player who was the Most Devastated Player (see page 52-53) in the previous Ordeal gets a bonus set (4 dice) for having been knocked around so badly. For the first Ordeal of the Saga these dice are left in the Bone Yard. In the Final Ordeal these dice are given to the Witch King.

### HERO BONUS SETS

The Hero Player has three additional sets available (12 dice). For every Ordeal they are featured in after the first they will get access to one of the bonus sets (one in the second Cycle, two in the third, and all three for the Final Ordeal). Sets not being used by the current Hero Player are left in the Bone Yard.



### WITCH KING BONUS SET

The Witch King gets one additional bonus set (four dice) in the Final Ordeal. Until then these dice are left in the Bone Yard. In the Final Ordeal, the Witch King will also claim the Most Devastated Bonus Set (there is no Most Devastated Player during the final Ordeal).

### THE BONE YARD

The Bone Yard is a centrally located bank for dice. When dice are **DEVASTATED** or discarded to purchase Sorcery Aspects they go to the Bone Yard. When dice are earned as a reward for inflicting damage they are drawn from the Bone Yard. There are no sets of dice specifically for the Bone Yard, but at the beginning of each Ordeal it is seeded with any dice not otherwise being used.

- For the first Ordeal of the Saga, there will be five full sets in the Bone Yard (the unused Most Devastated Bonus Set, the three unused Hero Bonus Sets, and the unused Witch King set).
- After the first Ordeal, the Most Devastated Bonus Set will be drawn out leaving four sets.
- During the second Cycle, one of the Hero Bonus Sets will be drawn out along with the Most Devastated Bonus Set, leaving three sets.
- During the third Cycle, another of the Hero Bonus Sets will be drawn out, along with the first Hero Bonus Set and the Most Devastated Bonus Set, leaving two sets.
- During the Final Ordeal, the last of the Hero Bonus Sets will be drawn out to join the other two. Plus the Witch King will claim the Most Devastated Bonus Set and draw out the Witch King Bonus Set leaving no dice in the Bone Yard.

### **EDGE TOKENS**

You will need a supply of small flat tokens (such as pennies) to serve as Edge Tokens. Edge allows you to reroll your dice. When you use Edge, place a token underneath the die you rerolled. It now shares the fate of that die. 32 Tokens is the most that could be needed in the Final Ordeal.

Universe and all things that were had been created by them. The mountains and fields, oceans and rivers, flowers and trees had all been so created. Every beast, every bird, every fish, and every other thing that lived upon the world had been their work, and so it was time for the Blessed Daughter to create and take her place among the gods.

The Blessed Daughter created the first people upon the land, and endowed them with great wisdom and patience. Kindness and compassion was also theirs, as was long life and health. They were perfect in form and beauty and all the gods who looked on them marveled at this wondrous creation. All living things are imbued with a soul, but the souls of the first people were more pure and more perfect than any that had then been fashioned. These were the Fair Folk of whom few are now left.

It was then the Forsaken One returned, and he too wished to take his place at the council table and add his creation to the world. His mother would have denied him, but the other gods understood the duality of the universe and the balance of brother against sister and caused her to relent and the Forsaken One became the Unforsaken. He asked his sister to fashion for him souls as pure and



as clean as those she had used to form the Fair Folk and he took this soul stuff and placed it in the heart of the people he had created.

But as he did so he pushed his thumb into the stuff and left there a hollowed out place. And these people he called men and they were also a marvel and a wonder, but deep in their heart was an empty space that could never be filled. The gods welcomed this creation and so the seed of their destruction was formed.

Within every man's breast is his heart, and at the heart of his heart is his soul; but in the heart of his soul the thumb print of the Unforsaken left a hollow and because of this all men feel empty inside. This emptiness is the Longing of Man, and such a longing had never before been seen. It is the hunger that can never be fed. the lust that can never be sated. Only man will eat when he is not hungry, only man will desire that for which he has no use. The life of man is a never ending search to fill the void in the heart of his soul; and the gods recognized this same void in the Unloved Son. Where his sister was content and complete, he was not and neither his return nor his creation satisfied him. The Unforsaken became now the Unfulfilled God.

In other Ordeals the number will be closer to half that many. Edge Tokens can also be substituted for spending dice from your Dice Horde.

### **FACTION PLAYERS**

Faction Players may start with 0, 1, 2, or 3 Edge each Ordeal. 10 Tokens should be sufficient to cover this need.

### **HERO PLAYER**

Each hero starts with 2 Edge and can earn between 0 and 3 more each Ordeal they are featured in. 11 Tokens is the most that will be needed.

### WITCH KING

During play, the Witch King will have earned between 0 and 2 Edge each Ordeal for a possible total of 18. In the Final Ordeal, this will be added to their base Edge of 2 to 5 (or two more than a normal Faction could have). However, any Edge the Witch King earns is not earned by the Hero so only an additional 11 Tokens is needed to cover the Witch King.

### MINIATURE FIGURES OR PAWNS

These are not required but very useful for marking locations of key characters on the Ordeal Map. At least one figure or marker should be used to mark the location of the current scene. It can also be helpful to note where each of the other characters are in the game. If figures aren't available, small sticky notes with the character's name written on them work well. Any other Components the character carries can be stuck to the character.

### **GAME RECORD SHEETS**

**BLOOD RED SANDS** uses several different types of Record Sheets to help organize play. The use of these sheets will be described more completely in the next section .

- Saga Record Sheet: only one is needed for the entire Saga.
- Ordeal Record Sheet: one is needed each Ordeal.
- Ordeal Map Sheet: one is needed for each Ordeal.



- Faction Record Sheet: one is needed for each Faction, four per Ordeal (in a 5 player game), each Ordeal.
- Hero Record Sheet: one is needed for the Hero Player each Ordeal, at most four for the entire Saga. This is the only player sheet that will be reused in future Ordeals.

# USING THE RECORD SHEETS

If this is your first time reading these rules, go ahead and skip this section as it refers to things not yet covered. When you've read the rules completely and are ready to prepare for your first play session, return to this section for guidance on how to use these sheets.

### SAGA RECORD SHEET

The Saga Record Sheet is used to track which players' heroes are still in the hunt for the Witch King and your respective Victory Point totals. This is open information and can be reviewed at any time. Before the first Ordeal, the Hero Player assigns a record keeper.

### THE HERO PLAYER

The Hero Player for the first Ordeal will select which of the five Witch Kings of Abalahn is the target for the Saga. It must be one who hasn't yet been destroyed by your group.

### THE RECORD KEEPER

Hand the Saga Record Sheet to the Most Devastated Player to fill out. There won't be a Most Devastated Player in the first Ordeal of a Saga, so the first Hero Player will assign one of the other players to fulfill this role. If that's you, fill in the players' names and the target Witch King at the top of the sheet. When the Hero Player returns to the table with their hero, record the hero's name underneath the player's and enter the hero into the "Featured Hero" box for the Ordeal.

After each Ordeal, record the Victory Points earned in that Ordeal for each player in the appropriate box.

Man must always seek to fill the void in his heart, and it is in his nature to seek to fill it in many ways. A man's soul can be filled with kindness, and joy, and love; and no being in the universe can show greater kindness, experience more joy, or love as deeply as man. Yet so too can the soul of man be filled with dark cruelties, inhumane lusts, and venomous hate. Nor can any being in the universe inflict greater cruelty, indulge in more lust, or hate as viciously as man.

But the gods understood the duality of man as they understood the duality of all nature, and accepted it as how things should be. And so the seed of their destruction was planted.

But the Chief Goddess did not accept man. The Original Mother saw in man a constant reminder of her failings and all of the things she hated in herself she saw in man. She turned her good nature away from man and so man knew pain; pain from birth, pain during life, and pain at death. Life was pain and man knew also famine, and disease and all manner of hardship. And so the seed of destruction sprouted.

But the Blessed Daughter alone among the gods showed compassion, for she could do naught else. She walked among the peoples of the lands and gave solace and comfort.



She taught man wisdom and they fed themselves with livestock and grain, she taught man medicine and all manner of art and craft so they might live and raise themselves up despite their plight. There were those among men who were inspired by this example of the Living Goddess Among Them, and took up the call to offer solace and comfort and these saints, these Blessed achieved miracles among the people.

At this the Chief Goddess became jealous. Her wondrous daughter, her perfect daughter, her Blessed Daughter of everything good had left the heavens and walked among the lands ministering to those whom she loathed. And so the Original Mother turned her ill nature against man and cursed them and their suffering increased ten fold. Crops were blighted and livestock fell sick and plague and pestilence stalked the land and even the Blessed Daughter could offer only little comfort. The gods saw this and amongst them it was said, the beasts of the wood, and birds of the sky, and fish of the sea all know death. But none know as many ways to die as does man. Yet none would speak against the Chief Goddess and man's suffering continued. And so the seed that had sprouted, grew.

And so too did the Unloved Son walk the land; he who is the

- Add 10 Victory Points to any player who achieved their Faction Objective.
- Add five Victory Points to any player who did not create or use a Sorcery Aspect this Ordeal.
- Mark an "H" in the box for the Hero Player.
- Mark "MDP" in the box for the player who qualified as the Most Devastated Player.
- Circle the Ordeal total for the player who earned the most Victory Points in this Ordeal and who still has a hero in the running and whose hero has not yet been featured this Cycle. That player will be the Hero Player for the next Ordeal.
- Enter the die size of the Legend earned by the Hero Player next to their name in the featured hero box.

Before each Ordeal, announce the running Victory Point total for all players and the accumulated Legend dice for all remaining heroes.

When all Featured Hero boxes for a Cycle are filled (no hero should appear more than once) the Cycle is over. Any heroes without a claim are retired. "X" off their hero name box on the record sheet.

### **ORDEAL RECORD SHEET**

The Ordeal Record Sheet is a worksheet used to track the information needed to create a new Ordeal. There are three main sections to the Ordeal Record Sheet. Record all of the basic Ordeal details in the data bank at the upper left. Populate the list section in the upper right with all of the randomly generated elements. As the elements get built into the starting situation for the Ordeal assemble the combinations in the matrix at the bottom.

### THE RECORD KEEPER

Record yourself as the Record Keeper and note the Ordeal number, date, and who the Hero Player will be for this Ordeal. Then record the randomly generated geography and note if there will be a Twist. Fill in the lists with the Factions, Objectives, and Extras rolled. Star any elements that are Thematic (sourced from the Witch King table rather



than the general tables). At least one element included in the Ordeal must be Thematic. You will then get to select any one element you wish to see in the Ordeal and add it to the list. This can be chosen from the general tables, the thematic tables, an element from a previous Ordeal you'd like to see again, or something of your own which can then also be added to an open entry on the random tables.

### THE GROUP

As you take turns selecting elements from the list and combining them, pass the Ordeal Record Sheet around the table. As each listed element is used, cross it off and enter it into the corresponding row of the matrix. When complete, each column of the matrix will consist of one Faction and all the elements attached to that Faction. The last remaining unused Faction will be discarded. When it is time for you to select the Faction you are going to play, enter your name into the matrix.

### FACTION RECORD SHEET

### **RECORD KEEPER**

As the Ordeal Record Sheet is being passed around and elements combined, the Record Keeper should begin filling in the appropriate blanks on the Faction Record Sheets, using one sheet for each Faction. When Ordeal generation is complete there should be one record for each Faction Player and it should include:

- Faction Name.
- Faction Objective.
- Extra.
- Edge.
- Whether the Faction is Aligned, Opposed, or Neutral towards the Witch King.
- The role or name of the Main Faction Character if this has been specified.
- Whether or not that Faction's player will be the Initial Chronicler.

Forsaken One, the Unforsaken, and the Unfulfilled God. Where his sister taught solace and comfort and wisdom, he taught malice, and anger, and resentment. He who was of his mother's ill side saw himself in the curse of pestilence and plague, of famine and pain. Everything he was, his mother was now expressing, she was embracing the very nature of him that she had once banished, and for one brief moment, the Unfilled God knew joy and became the Once Fulfilled.

And also did the Once Fulfilled teach to man the powers of the gods: the ability to channel and shape soul stuff and to create and to destroy. The defiling art of the Sorcerer, the runic lore of the Tormentor, the rites of the Totem Takers and the Soul Forgers were all taught to man. And with these powers man grew in stature and the Witch Kings of Abalahn rose up and took power over the land and banished the cults of the Blessed. And so the seed that had sprouted and grown bore fruit.

And the Witch Kings determined to overthrow the gods and the first to die was the Blessed Daughter. The people rose up and brought her down. She who was perfect, they defiled, she who was goodness they afflicted with all manner of harm, she who was kindness and



mercy was shown neither, and she who had given man everything had everything taken from her; and from her soul they gained such power to conquer the very heavens. And then the war waged and all the gods were slain and the Once Fulfilled himself slew his own mother and ripping forth her still beating heart he consumed it and in so doing became the Devourer.

And when the gods were dead the Devourer was pleased with man, his creation, and praised them, for as his mother had rejected him and man both so had he and man both now rejected the gods; and they would now live as gods and he would be as a father to them and they as his children and together their souls would be fulfilled. But they rejected his words saying they had no use for gods or fathers and if they were children once they were children no more.

### EACH FACTION PLAYER

When you've chosen your Faction and taken its sheet, fill in your name. You should also fill in the matrix in the lower right summarizing the information for the other Factions to help you keep track. You may also want to note the other players' current Victory Point totals for reference during play.

Obtain the indicated number of Edge Tokens and place them in the Edge box on the left. In the Victory Points box in the lower left you'll make tally marks as you earn Victory Points during play from Devastating your opponent's dice during Clashes. Next to the Victory Points box is the Dice Discarded box. You'll make tally marks in this box to record each of your dice that get discarded to the Bone Yard during play (one per die). This total is used to determine the Most Devastated Player for the next Ordeal.

Next to your Faction Sheet, or in a small bowl, store the dice of your Dice Horde. Store any new dice earned here as well. A sealable bowl is best, if you have to span an Ordeal across several sessions of play.

Across your sheet are five locations to record your Components. The first is for your Main Character which may have been identified when the Ordeal was created. The other four are for other Components you can create at any time during play. The identity of the first may already have determined by your Faction's Extra (if it is a Required Component). These locations are a hard limit; you can have no more than one Main Character and four supporting characters in the ordeal. The Components Chapter has more details on how to create Components, page 30.

Each Component has a space to record a name and then a number of dice slots to build with (six for the Main Character, four for the others). When you create a Component you will move a die from your Dice Horde to one of the Component's slots. You will write the die size, the assigned Trait, and the assigned Aspect in that slot. If ever the die is Devastated you will cross out the entire slot. It may not be used again.

When you Clash with other players you will move the dice you are using from their die slots to the Battle Mat. When the dice are



**BATTERED**, or after the Clash is over, you will move the dice back to their respective slots.

### HERO RECORD SHEET

The Hero Sheet is the character record for your hero.. This sheet will be carried forward throughout the Saga until the hero is killed, retired, or faces the Witch King.

You will complete this sheet before the Ordeal featuring your hero for the first time. Go off by yourself while the other players create the situation and choose their Factions. The Hero Creation Chapter (page 40) has more details on how to create a hero. Start by filling out your name at the top of the sheet. Starting heroes will not have a sobriquet or scars.

Obtain a number of Edge Tokens equal to your current total Edge (which starts at two for all Heroes) and place them in the Edge box in the lower middle. In the Victory Points box you'll make tally marks as you earn Victory Points during play from Devastating your opponents' dice during Clashes. Next to the Victory Points box is the Dice Discarded box. You'll make tally marks in this box to record each of your dice that get discarded to the Bone Yard during play (one per die). This total is used to determine the Most Devastated Player for the next Ordeal.

Next to your Hero Sheet, or in a small bowl, store the dice of your Dice Horde. Store any new dice earned here as well. A sealable bowl is best, if you have to span an Ordeal across several sessions of play.

Across the middle of your sheet are five locations to record your Components. The first is where you will build your actual hero. Record their name at the top. The other four are for your Features, which are weapons, companions, pets, followers, or the like closely associated with your hero. These locations are a hard limit; you can have no more than one Hero Character and four supporting Features in the Ordeal. The Components Chapter has more details on how to create Components.

Before the Ordeal begins, create your hero. There are 10 dice slots for your hero but only six of them will be defined at first. The other four will be added during play (one for each Ordeal you are featured in). Likewise only one Feature will be defined at first (your Starting Feature).

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And they took up the Devourer and bound him with Soul Forged chains to his mother's throne with her ever-bleeding corpse at his feet. And they took down the star lights from the heavens and plunged the throne room into utter darkness and left him there and returned to the lands. And so the Devourer became the Twice Forsaken and the Bound God who for ages to come would see nothing but the darkness and hear nothing but the drip of his mother's blood until at last he was consumed by madness.

### WHERE ARE THE DICE?

Dice will always be in one of four locations.

THE DICE HORDE: Dice in your Horde can be used to build Components or Contest the Chronicler.

### THE RECORD SHEET: When

Components are built, move dice from your Horde to your Record Sheet for each Component.

THE BATTLE MAT: During a Clash, dice are moved from your Record Sheet to your Battle Mat. Afterwards, the ones not Devastated are returned to your Record Sheet.

THE BONE YARD: In addition to the extra dice which begin in the Bone Yard, dice that are Devastated or discarded in play are sent here as well. When you earn dice in play take them from the Bone Yard and add to your Dice Horde. The remaining three can be created during play, but your hero can only start each Ordeal with a number of Features equal to the current Cycle. When you create a Component you will move a die from the Dice Horde to one of the Component's slots. You will write the die size, the assigned Trait, and the assigned Aspect in that slot. If ever the die is Devastated you will cross out the entire slot. It may not be used again.

When you Clash with other players you will move the dice you are using from the die slot to the Battle Mat. When the dice are **BATTERED**, or after the Clash is over, you will move the dice back to their respective slots.

On the second page record your hero's Chronicle. For your first Ordeal define your hero's origin, the tragedy that set them out into the world on a quest to kill the Witch King. Then after each Ordeal your hero is in, summarize the key events in a short paragraph. Pay particular attention to the tone of the Epilogue, and any vows you made.

When the Faction Players are finished setting up the Ordeal they will call you back to the table where the first thing you will do is Rise Up before the assembled group and read as dramatically as you can, the Chronicle of your hero to date.



### **BATTLE MAT**

The Battle Mat is a play aid to help organize your dice during Clashes. Every player should have their own Battle Mat and be familiar with it.

The Battle Mat is organized into 7 colored strips representing the 7 different Aspect effects. The colors and icons help to visually identify what the other players have brought to the Clash. Store your Available dice in the center section off each strip. The text here serves as a reminder of what each power does mechanically.

When you advance dice you will move them to the top edge of the strip where your opponent can immediately see what you're using. When your dice are Devastated you will discard them to the Bone Yard. When your dice are Battered you will return them to the appropriate slot on your Record Sheet. When your dice are used you will move them to the bottom edge of the strip. And should you be able to Refresh your dice you will move them from the bottom edge of the strip back to the central Available area.

After the Clash, all dice remaining on the Battle Mat will be returned to their appropriate slots on your Record Sheet.

### THE ORDEAL MAP SHEET

The Ordeal Map Sheet is a blank page which you will use as a visual aid during your Ordeal. After the Ordeal is created you will draw the map, indicating all of the geographical features and the location of all place specific elements, including the starting location of the Main Characters for the Factions and where the hero will arrive. You are making this up so try to draw it in a way that makes sense given the situation and which Factions are at odds with each other. If players can't agree, the Record Keeper has final say where things go on the map.

During play you will use miniature figures, pawns, or small sticky notes to mark the current location of the characters in the story. At a minimum, a larger pawn should be used to mark the location where the current scene is taking place.

# HOW BEST TO BUILD COMPONENTS?

At the beginning of any Clash you can only bring in two Components. Each exchange thereafter you can only add one additional Component to the fight.

Therefore there is an advantage to having the most powerful Components possible – all die slots filled with the largest dice available. If you like you can put all four of your starting d10s in a single Component. That will make for a very strong starting position in the Clash, able to bring many large dice to bear.

However, it's also extremely vulnerable to taking damage as you won't have many disposable dice to soak damage with. Components can also have their location restricted so they can't be used. So putting all of your best dice in a single Component is risky and makes you vulnerable.

When you only have small dice left, consider leaving the slot empty, filling it when you capture a larger die from the Bone Yard. If you get into a fight you can always add it then if needed.





### THE SAGA MAP SHEET

The Saga Map Sheet is a one page high level map of Abalahn. At the beginning of each Ordeal the Record Keeper should mark the location of the Ordeal on the map. Sometimes the location of the Ordeal will be specified in general terms like "The Fire Lands" and so the location can be placed anywhere within the Fire Lands. Sometimes the location will be given specifically as a particular place like "The Palace of the Gods." Sometimes the location will be a type of place like a "Market Town" which could conceivably be anywhere. You can also use the identity of the Factions to help locate the Ordeal. The presence of an "Iron Lord" may signify the Ordeal is taking place in the north near the Iron Mountains. The presence of a "Tribe of Totem Takers" probably means the Ordeal is in the south.

In later Cycles, draw a path from the last Ordeal the hero was featured in to the current Ordeal. This path may or may not be a straight line, and is meant only to graphically show the journey of the hero over the course of their Chronicle. If the hero had a location identified in their origin story, be sure to start the path from there to the first Ordeal. At the end of the Saga, each hero will have the path of their journey drawn on the map with the final hero's path ending at the citadel of their targeted Witch King.



# FOR EVERY LOCK, A KEY EXCERPT FROM A STORY BY T.S. LUIKART

Namadur chuckled, his band along with him. "So, my compatriots and I watch over this stretch of road. The work is difficult. There are always thieves, bands of Bestials, why once some ogres from off the steppes came down to ravage the area. Hard going. We ask for donations from passing travelers, such as yourselves, to compensate our efforts."

"I can spare you a skin of mead."

Namadur's band tittered again, but with a darker edge this time.

"I'm afraid that won't do."

The warrior gazed at Namadur for a long moment, before rolling his shoulders in one smooth movement. "Then I have another offer."

"We are all listening."

"Turn and run, and I'll spare your lives. The rest I feed to the horse."

Namadur shook his head. "I had hoped you would be one of the smart ones."

The warrior, surprisingly, gave him a fierce grin. "I hoped the same of you."

For the first time, Ostigo's face betrayed a touch of concern. His eyes darted from Nyray to Arrus. "Whatever they're paying you friend, it isn't worth your life."

"My life, my lands, my wealth, everything, thief. It is worth everything."

Arrus stepped forward, bringing up his axe. There were gasps in the dark as the surrounding rogues could suddenly see the runes clearly glittering along the blade. Arrus swept the axe high, then brought it down and across his body in a wide arc, roaring as he seemingly cut the air before him. For the barest second, Ostigo began to grin at the outwardly clumsy blow, but his initially forming expression died and his eyes widened as the space before the Iron Lord visibly pulsed and twisted aside from the strike. The roiling air ripped across the short stretch of street and through Ostigo whose head flew from his shoulders to land with a wet crunch on the stones behind him.



T.S. LUIKART is an award winning writer, game designer, and codeveloper of the wuxia-western transmedia epic, Far West. TS has won multiple ENnie awards, picked up a few Origins nominations and has been privileged to work with the likes of Green Ronin, Bio Ware, Post-Human Studios, and Games Workshop along the way. These days, in addition to working on Far West, TS finds himself in the Kickstarter stretch-goal business. You can find TS on Twitter @TSLuikart or at intothefarwest.com.



# CHAPTER II COMPONENTS

Players will create Components with the dice in their Dice Horde. Characters are given privilege of distinction because characters can do stuff, but mechanically Turgon the warlord, the pack of reaver beasts, the town walls, and the Staff of Eldritch Majesty are all treated identically. Components created for heroes are called Features because there are some extra rules around them. Some Factions will have a Required Component which simply means that the general identity of that Component has been already determined as a creative spring board. You still build it as normal. Each Component is recorded separately on the Faction or Hero Record Sheet. During play, you will earn additional dice which can be used to build more Components.



For ease of reading, Component and character will often be used interchangeably in these rules.

# **COMPONENTS AND DICE**

- **DEVASTATED**: Permanent damage to a die. The die is discarded to the Bone Yard and the die slot is crossed off the player's Record Sheet.
- **BATTERED**: Temporary damage to a die. The die is returned to the player's Record Sheet to be used again in a future Clash.

Component is the collective term given to all people, places, and things that are defined with dice in the game. This includes: characters ("Turok the Iron Lord"), groups ("A Cohort of Legionnaires"), buildings ("The Sorcerer's Tower"), geographical features ("The Bone Fields"), artifacts of power ("Death Razor the Soul Forged Sword"), creatures ("Armored War Beasts"), and anything else you can imagine that is suited for a dark and savage world of sword and sorcery. People, places, and things not built out of dice can be mentioned in play (even described doing things) but they will have limited ability to impact the game mechanically.

When you create a new Component assign it a name or a role in the fiction. Naming Components is an opportunity to evoke the flavor the setting and put your own stamp on the world of Abalahn. Instead of creating a "Fortress," create "The Sky Citadel of Arak'duhm." A "Pack of Wolves" is ok, but a "Pack of Slavering Death Hounds" kicks things up a notch. Give your own name to your Required Component as well.

Each of you will have your own **DICE HORDE**. This is a supply of dice kept within easy reach (usually in a handy bowl next to your Record Sheet). All players start with the same standard set of dice to build Components with. Heroes will gradually increase the number of dice they have available as they are featured in additional Ordeals.

### THE STANDARD SET OF DICE FOR ALL FACTION PLAYERS IS: 4D10, 4D8, 4D6, AND 4D4.

Factions have space on their Faction Record sheet for four regular Components plus a Main Component. Heroes have space for four Feature Components plus the hero them self. This is a hard limit. You



cannot create or acquire more Components than the spaces available on the Record Sheet.

Each Component has slots for a certain number of dice. When you build Components you will move dice from your Horde to one of the slots for that Component (one die per slot). Write the size of die in that slot as well. This is also a hard limit. You cannot add more dice to a Component than the number of slots it has.

When a die is Devastated, cross off its slot and discard the die to the **BONE YARD**. You cannot replace the die in that slot during the Ordeal. If all slots have been crossed off, the Component is destroyed.

- **REGULAR FACTION COMPONENTS:** 4 dice.
- **HERO FEATURE COMPONENTS**: 4 dice.
- MAIN FACTION COMPONENTS: 6 dice.
- **HERO**: initially 6 dice but can grow to 10 dice.

## TRAITS

Each die of a Component is always tagged with a **TRAIT**. Define your Traits with a short word or phrase that represents what the trait is. Write the Trait in the die slot for the Component on the Record Sheet. It is good practice to also write in the size and Aspect of the die you assigned for future reference.. Traits can be internal characteristics like skills ("Master Swordsman"), talents ("Never Sleeps"), or functions ("Impregnable Walls"). They can also be external characteristics like weapons ("Barbed Javelins"), a specific member of a group ("Led by Captain Theodoric"), or people attached to a place ("Manned by Watchful Sentries"). There is no mechanical difference between these kinds of Traits. However, if an External Trait is significant enough, it could be created as its own Component with its own Traits.

Try to give your Traits some evocative flavor. Sure you could make your sword "Sharp." But making it "Stained by the Blood of My Enemies" is far more interesting. You could give your sorcerer "Sorcery." But try "The Night Obeys Me" instead. Use such descriptions sparingly so they don't become over done. It's fine for a unit of legionnaires to be simply

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### TRAITS

Traits have very little mechanical impact on play. However, they have tremendous impact on the feel of play and the interactions between players. Use your Traits to paint the world of Blood Red Sands as savagely as you desire. Sure you can have your cannibal character wear "Leather Armor – 1d8 Fortitude;" but how much more colorful is "Wears the Raw Flesh of His Last Dinner – 1d8 Fortitude."

Use your Traits to define your characters and Components so they'll be memorable to the other players. Use the psychology of your opponents to your advantage. Create characters they'll empathize with if you want them as allies this Ordeal. Create characters they'll loathe if you want to bait them into attacking you. Make a statement about whether you are the "good guy" or the "bad guy" based on how you tactically want to approach the Ordeal relative to the hero and the other Factions. You can get away with a lot if you have characters the other players love, or love to hate.

Traits do not limit what you can do. They do not (usually) limit the dice you can use. Traits determine the flavor of your narration when you use your dice. They determine how your characters appear in play. You should seek to portray "Insane Fury" differently than "I Will Avenge my Mother" even if both are 1d10 Force dice. "Well Disciplined" and armed with "Large Shields." But perhaps their seven-foot-tall war leader is "Descended from Dragons."

The purpose of all Components in **BLOOD RED SANDS** is to engage in conflict in a colorful (and likely savage and brutal) manner. Don't waste dice on frivolous or tangential Traits that don't enhance the Component's ability to confront other Components. All Components should be fit for the Clash. It's all well and good to create "Shedra the Washer Woman" but when it comes to defining Shedra's Traits she better be able to do more than just laundry.

Think beyond a mere catalog of abilities and use your Traits to establish how your characters interact with the world. You'll be using your dice to attack your opponents and defend against them. The die's Trait describes what that looks like in the fiction. What does it mean when you assign Mattias the Crazy Old Hermit the Trait "Eater of Secrets?" What does that look like when you use it in battle? A good part of the fun of play will be describing how eating the secrets of a bunch of soldiers is an effective defense when they're looking to spear you.

Use your Traits to color how other players see your characters. You could give Mattias the Trait of "Simple Man of Faith," or "Crazy Old Hermit," or "Filth-Caked Ascetic." For game purposes they're all mechanically identical, but what a different picture they paint in play.

Traits rarely restrict your ability to use a die in a Clash. All dice are generally assumed to be applicable unless restricted by a **STIPULATION**. If you commit a die to a Clash you should be prepared to flavorfully describe how that die's Trait is being used and what it looks like, or risk having your use Challenged. Alternatively, voluntarily choosing not to use a Trait "because it doesn't apply" is a great psychological tool. Used deferentially you can highlight what an honorable opponent you are, thereby increasing the social pressure on your opponents to treat you honorably. Used aggressively you can rub your superiority in your opponent's face; essentially saying "I can beat you with one hand tied behind my back."



# **ASPECTS**

Also tag each die with an **ASPECT**. Aspects have two functions. First they give a narrative flavor to the Trait that defines how that Trait is used to approach conflict. Second they provide the die with a special power. To enable you to quickly recognize and evaluate the Aspect powers your opponents have available, each Aspect is linked to a color and an icon. The Battle Mat has color coded spaces to help you sort your dice.

There are three broad classes of Aspects. **STANDARD ASPECTS**, **SORCERY ASPECTS**, and **SPECIAL ASPECTS**. Sorcery Aspects mean that the Trait is actually itself magical or powered or enhanced by magic. Since all sorcery in **BLOOD RED SANDS** draws upon the power of the soul (typically someone else's) such Traits take on a darker flavor.

### STANDARD ASPECTS

Standard Aspects can be freely assigned to any die. There are three Standard Aspects. See the Clash Chapter (page 115) for mechanical details.

- FORCE (RED): This Aspect helps you inflict extra damage in a Clash. Describe aggression, belligerence, strength, rage, and bull-headed focus as you meet your opponent with direct power.
- FORTITUDE (BLUE): This Aspect helps you avoid damage and fatigue in a Clash. Describe resilience, toughness, endurance, and determination as you meet your opponent's best efforts and refuse to yield.
- FINESSE (YELLOW): This Aspect cancels out your opponent's Standard Aspects, letting you dodge their effects. Describe grace, agility, wit, and reflexes as you meet your opponent obliquely with cunning and style.

### **SORCERY ASPECTS**

Sorcery Aspects are more powerful than Standard Aspects. Each Sorcery Aspect requires discarding one die (of equal or greater size) from your Dice Horde to the Bone Yard (or you may discard an Edge Token). Some Extras provide free Sorcery Aspects or allow two Sorcery Aspects



### WHEN CAN I CREATE A COMPONENT?

Any time you wish. Just take dice from your Horde and build as desired.

**EXCEPTION:** When a Chronicler has described part of the world as part of their turn, you cannot define and take ownership of that part of the world until there is a new Chronicler.

### A NOTE ON ASPECT/DICE COLOR

Since it is unlikely that your group will have sufficient dice to match the color of your dice to their Aspect, the Battle Mat provides color coded spaces to help you sort them.

All references to dice colors in these rules should be taken to mean the color of the appropriate spaces on the Battle Mat, regardless of what color the die actually is.

> If you do have sufficient dice so that everybody's Force dice are red and Finesse dice are yellow, then congratulations. You are all set to play...and a bit of a dice dork. Do remember that dice in the Bone Yard have no color, so you may have to substitute dice when they are drawn and tagged with a different Aspect.

to be taken for each die discarded. If you choose to play an entire Ordeal without creating or using any Sorcery Aspects you earn an extra five Victory Points.

There are four Sorcery Aspects. See the Clash Chapter (page 115) for mechanical details and the Setting Compendium (page 178) for descriptions of sorcery and the sorcerers who use them.

- SOUL FORGED (ORANGE): This Aspect helps you inflict extra damage in a Clash. Describe how an artifact imbued with the power of stolen souls is crushing and reaving your enemies.
- SOUL REAPER (PURPLE): This Aspect helps you recover from damage and fatigue in a Clash. Describe harvesting the souls of your enemies, draining their life to replenish your energy and power your eldritch magics.
- BLESSED (BUFF): This Aspect cancels out your opponent's Aspects (both Standard and Sorcery) and gives you a boost of spiritual power. Describe how your character is inspired to perform miracles and draw upon the purity of their own soul to cast down evil.
- SOUL FUSED (GREEN): This Aspect makes your attacks and defenses more powerful. Describe how your character is performing feats of superhuman strength and prowess powered by stolen souls.

### SPECIAL ASPECTS

These Aspects can only be assigned to a die when specified by the rules.

- UNIQUE ASPECTS: Some Extras that your Faction may possess (like the Unliving) have special Aspects whose exact mechanical effects are unique to that Aspect. These Aspects can only be taken as indicated by the Extra description. Set these rare dice in the margin of the Battle Mat during Clashes.
- LEGENDARY (SPECIAL): This Aspect is only possessed by Heroes and the Witch King. It is a special Aspect that is added to a die in addition to the Aspect the die already has. Heroes can tag another die with the Legendary Aspect at the end of every Ordeal they survive. During Clashes, dice tagged with the Legendary Aspect are never rolled; rather they are always automatically set to the largest



number on the die. This cannot be canceled by Yellow Finesse Dice or Buff Blessed Dice.

WEAKNESSES/OATHS: Weaknesses and Oaths are special Traits inflicted on a Component as the result of Pain. They are not attached to a die and do not take up a die slot on the Component. Their description must reflect something the character has promised to do (or not do) or some event or feature that puts the Component at a disadvantage. Each Weakness or Oath can be used by another player against its owner once, it is then crossed off. Calling on a Weakness or an Oath lets you force the owning player to make certain mechanical decisions they way you want them to.

# NON-CHARACTER COMPONENTS

These are essentially characters that are not individual people. A fortress, a war machine, an organization, a treacherous piece of terrain, or any other noun that you wish to have a mechanical impact on the fiction can be defined as a Component.

In most cases, the difference between a character and a non-character Component is minimal and any reference in these rules to "characters" can be applied equally to all Components, especially if they have been or can be personified. However, some Components by their nature have additional considerations. A citadel of stone is typically immobile. It can only be introduced into scenes where it is located. A sword likewise doesn't move on its own (usually) and so must be narrated being carried and wielded.

Components can be used to represent groups as well as individual characters or items. A pack of reaver beasts, a torch-wielding mob, or a company of soldiers can all be built as a single Component. Use a Trait to define the relative quality of the group. For example, for soldiers a d4 might represent green or inferior troops, a d6 trained professionals, or a d8 experienced veterans. A d10 would be rare for a large group but might represent a small core of elite.

You can also use a Trait to highlight a specific individual or powerful artifact within the group. Returning to the soldier example, a cunning commander might warrant a d8 Finesse Trait, a mighty berserker might



### BUILD A COMPONENT SUMMARY

- 1. Name the Component.
- 2. Assign 2-4 dice to the Component (or 3-6 for the Main Faction Character). Take the dice from the Dice Horde and move them to the available slots in the Component Box.
- 3. Tag each die with a Trait of your own invention and write that in the slot along with the die size.
- 4. Tag each die with a Standard Aspect and record in the die slot, or discard a die from your Dice Horde to the Bone Yard to tag it with a Sorcery Aspect instead (the first one is free for some Factions).

You can always assign a die and define a new Trait for an existing Component that has room for another.

You can never replace a die that has been Devastated.
#### EXAMPLE COMPONENTS

#### **A RAGING WILDFIRE**

THE BURNING SPREADS

+ 1d8 Force

SUDDEN SHIFTS + 1d8 Finesse

REMORSELESS

+ 1d6 Fortitude

#### DEATH'S HEAD LEGION FIRST COHORT

COMMANDER LORD MYSKEL + 1d8 Finesse

> ABSOLUTELY RUTHLESS + 1d8 Force

> > FEARLESS + 1d6 Fortitude

AKRONOS THE SORCERER + 1d10 Soul Reaper

#### **SNAKE GULLET PASS**

**THE IMMOVABLE MOUNTAIN** + 1d10 Fortitude

SEEMS TO WIND ON FOREVER + 1d6 Finesse

BEWARE THE FALLING ROCK + 1d10 Force

SWALLOWING CREVASSES + 1d8 Force be noted with a d10 Force Trait, equipping the unit in sturdy tower shields and armor might be reflected by a d6 Fortitude Trait.

When you inflict Weaknesses on these soldiers you can use Weaknesses like "Low Morale," "Difficult to Keep Supplied," "Slow on the March," or "Commander Is a Drunkard."

If you define a Component that is a location make sure to mark it on the map. You will want to ensure as much of the Ordeal as possible occurs there so you can continue to use it.

If you create a temporary feature like a "Raging Wildfire" or "Fierce Sandstorm" you will want to make sure you have ready justification for reusing the Component again. Perhaps starting fires is a common hunting tactic for your tribe of Totem Takers. Of course having a sorcerer with the Soul Reaping Sorcery Aspect attached to a "Summon Sandstorm" Trait makes introducing your Sandstorm Component much easier.





### **MOTHER'S WRATH** EXCERPT FROM A STORY BY MATT SNYDER

The storm came upon the horse lords in a swirl of malice and stinging shards. For it was a thing alive. A force of will. A thing of hunger, like a swarm of razors that rent flesh from bone. The storm stirred the horse lords' loyal steeds into wide-eyed terror, and disarray spread among them with the wind.

Ranek, a wanderer born far in the north, stood on a nearby hilltop guiding the tempest. He knew not how. It was a thing within him, born with him as a curse upon his soul left by his witch mother. Still, his cursed power was finite. By measure, the storm was small. He could steer such winds and shards only briefly before his mind darkened and body shook and sweat.

They took Shahir to a nearby bonfire. They tied straps to his wrists and elbows, his knees and ankles. And then they hoisted him on poles erected around the fire. From the ends of the cords, they tugged his limbs into crazed, painful contortions. Urghul directed as he waved a red-hot brand about, chanting.

Urghul's twisted sorceries filled the air like smoke. The chants grew louder, quicker as the soldiers pulled the Shahir's straps in a terrible rhythm. With each twist and pull he grunted in pain. Flames licked his back, his flesh sizzled. Again, they raised him, tugging sharply on the cords and stretched out his limbs painfully while others poked lances into his joints and side. A change of contortions, and they began the process all over again. Each twist in the tortuous rite was a breath that seemed to last hours.

Shahir died, wracked in agony as Urghul Khan captured his essence. He drove the glowing brand into his own shoulder, a jagged wound shaped eerily like Shahir's twisted corpse. Every scar on his body was a moment of pain and a captured soul. It was a mad sorcery, and it made him more than a man. More even than a khan.

MATT SNYDER cut his teeth on fiction by Michael Moorcock and Fritz Leiber and Conan comics his small-town barber used to share. He is the author of role-playing games Dust Devils and Nine Worlds. Matt lives in Iowa with his wife and two kids. He has less hair now, but then the barber isn't much use either without those Conan comics around.

Read the full story at www. galileogames.com.





# CHAPTER III THE HERO

Each Ordeal will feature one hero. Each player will have the opportunity to play a hero, but to do so you will have to earn the privilege by skillful play as a Faction. The highest scoring Faction Player who still has a hero to play and who hasn't yet been featured this cycle will play the hero in the next Ordeal. If a cycle passes without your having won the right to be featured, your hero is retired. When at last there is only hero left, that hero will face the Witch King.

#### EXAMPLE FEATURES

#### MOUNT: BLOOD FANG THE IRON RAPTOR

SOUL BOUND + 1d10 Soul Fused

**BATTLE TRAINED** + 1d8 Fortitude

RAZOR SHARP TALONS + 1d6 Force

> VICIOUS TEMPER + 1d4 Force

#### WEAPON: DEATH RAZOR

**MASSIVE SWORD** + 1d8 Force

LIGHT AS AIR IN ITS MASTER'S HANDS + 1d8 Finesse

+ 108 Finesse

SUPERNATURALLY SHARP + 1d10 Soul Forged

> **VOID BLACK BLADE** + 1d10 Soul Reaper

The first time you win the right to play the hero you will have to create one. You do this by taking a copy of the Hero Record Sheet off by yourself while the rest of the players set up the Ordeal in which you will be featured.

The hero starts play like a Faction Main Character built out of 6 dice. A play progresses, this Component can be expanded up to 10 dice, making the hero an individual of some power. In addition, the hero will start with one Feature Component with up to four dice. They can accumulate more during play.

## **CREATE YOUR HERO**

**DICE HORDE**: All heroes initially start with the same standard four sets of dice as any Faction. Any dice not used for your Hero Component or your first Feature will remain in your Dice Horde to start play.

▶ 4d10, 4d8, 4d6, and 4d4.

#### **BUILDING THE HERO COMPONENT**

The Hero Component is created much like any other Component. First give your hero a name. Then move six dice of your choice from your Dice Horde to the first six dice slots (you must use all six before play). Tag each die with a Trait as usual, with one exception. All Hero Component Traits must represent some internal feature of the character. Consider physical and mental abilities, leadership and social qualities, personality quirks, skills, natural talents; anything that would be useful in a conflict. Remember, the Traits color how your hero will deal with conflict and how the other players perceive you, so choose accordingly.

Tag each die with any Standard Aspect for free. Or, if you want to take a Sorcery Aspect, you must discard one die of equal or greater size to the Bone Yard. If you don't take or use any Sorcery Aspects you'll earn an extra five Victory Points each Ordeal.

Heroes can be killed, and can have their Traits Devastated by Pain.



#### **BUILD YOUR FIRST FEATURE**

Your hero will start their first ordeal with one Feature. Features are always items that are external to the hero. These can include: companions, pets, mounts, weapons, armor, artifacts of power, companies of soldiers, the ghost of your dead father, an entire household of servants, or just about anything else you can imagine that fits with the setting and your character concept.

Label the Feature and build it like any other Component by moving up to four dice to the corresponding dice slots from your Dice Horde. Tag each with an appropriate Trait and Aspect, including Sorcery if desired.

All Features are considered external to your hero and thus can be stolen with Pain.

#### **STARTING EDGE**

Your Edge refers to the advantage your hero has achieved in their pursuit of the Witch King. The Witch King also accumulates Edge against the heroes.

- All heroes start with two Edge Tokens.
- Edge Tokens allow you to reroll dice in Clashes.
- Edge can be discarded to Contest or purchase Sorcery instead of discarding a die from your Dice Horde.

#### **STARTING DOOM**

Doom refers to the fate of the hero to die at the hands of the Witch King. After all, the Witch Kings have reigned for 1000 years, who is your hero to challenge their power? Doom has no game effect until the Final Ordeal.

- All heroes start with one Doom
- In the Final Ordeal, Doom provides the Witch King the ability to reroll your dice against you.

#### MOUNT: WIND RACER THE SKY STALLION

**SURE FOOTED** 

+ 1d8 Finesse

CLEVER

+ 1d8 Finesse

#### **CAN'T BE CAUGHT**

+ 1d6 Fortitude

**TIRELESS** + 1d6 Fortitude



#### COMPANION: REDDICK THE SQUIRE

#### **ASSIST IN BATTLE**

+ 1d8 Finesse

#### SHIELD BEARER

- + 1d6 Fortitude
  - **SHARP EYED**
  - + 1d4 Finesse

LOYAL AND RELIABLE + 1d6 Fortitude

#### ARMOR: THE BLACK PLATE OF LORD TUROK

PROOFED WITH THE SOULS OF 100 MEN + 1d10 Soul Forged

BLACK IRON AND COLD + 1d10 Fortitude

ADORNED WITH THE HEADS OF MY ENEMIES + 1d8 Finesse

> SPIKES AND RAZORS + 1d8 Force

#### STARTING LEGENDARY TRAIT

Your Legendary Traits are what your hero is known for, what sets them above and apart. A Legendary Trait is one whose die has been tagged with the Legendary Aspect in addition to whatever other Aspect it had originally, as described in the Components Chapter, page 36.

- Choose any one of your d4s (either hero or Feature).
- Circle the Trait associated with that die.
- Whenever that die is to be rolled in a Clash, automatically set it to its highest value instead.

#### **RECORD YOUR ORIGIN STORY**

On the reverse side of the Hero Record Sheet is a space where you can write a few sentences about the origin of your hero. Think of this like an Ordeal that already happened before play begins. It must be completely tragic because it only earned you a d4 Legendary Trait. But you survived, and earned two starting Edge and one Doom in the process.

What set your hero on the road, leaving behind wherever he came from, determined to kill the Witch King at any cost?

## **DURING THE ORDEAL**

#### **ADDITIONAL HERO DICE**

There are four additional dice slots on the Hero Record sheet for the Hero Component. During each Ordeal featuring your hero (including the first) you can add a die to one of these slots. Tag the die with a Trait and Aspect as normal, it should relate in some fashion to the established fiction of the Ordeal so far.

You may do this at any time during the Ordeal after being on the winning side of a Clash. In the rare circumstance that you never win a Clash, you permanently lose this opportunity. Black out that die slot entirely.



#### HERO DEATH AND RETIREMENT

If at any point in the game all of a hero's Hero Component Dice are Devastated (including in the middle of a Clash), the hero is slain. If the situation did not involve a physical threat that would easily lead to death, then some additional narration can be worked in, such as an execution, disease, or the hero's own suicide. The player who Devastated the last die should narrate a suitable result.

If at any point during a Clash all of a hero's Hero Component Dice are damaged (Devastated or Battered) and the hero's side goes on to lose the Conflict, the hero is **BROKEN** and forced to retire.

Note: this can be easily tracked by observing that during a Clash, all of the hero's dice are either crossed out or back on the Record Sheet. They may have suffered a crippling debilitating injury, been driven insane, become a monster themselves – unfit to be a hero, or they may have simply lost the will to go on. The Leader on the winning side of the Clash should narrate a suitable result.

The Ordeal ends immediately, exactly as if the hero had voluntarily walked away. Proceed to the Epilogue immediately using whatever Victory Points the hero had managed to earn. There is an entry on the random element tables that permits a retired hero to return to play so go ahead and award Legend and Edge as normal.

A hero that dies or is forced to retire still counts as having been featured in an Ordeal. However, since there will be fewer heroes going into the next Cycle, it will be easier for all heroes to be featured and move on. Thus there is some motivation to eliminate the competition.

Note: given the hero's ability to make Vows which restore Battered Dice, it is extremely unlikely for a hero to be killed. However, using Vows leads to Doom so being put on the verge of death will ultimately come back to haunt you.

#### **FEATURES**

Every other Component you create during play is a Feature and must be something external to your hero. You can only have a maximum of four Features at any given time but can always discard a Feature (returning its dice to your horde) to make room for a new one.



#### COMPANION: DARAEK THE BODYGUARD

#### SOUL BOUND

+ 1d10 Soul Fused

**TASTE MY AXE, DOG!** + 1d8 Force

#### I CARVE MY OWN FLESH

+ 1d8 Fortitude

#### **ALWAYS VIGILANT**

+ 1d8 Finesse

#### HEAVY METAL SAMURAI

A way I like to play is a little something I call the Way of the Heavy Metal Samurai. I use the word "heavy metal" here because, to me, it connotes a certain flamboyance and radically ramped-up machismo. I use the word "samurai" because this is about the contest. It's about battle taken to the point of something artistic and transcendent.

In part it's about playing to win. Everyone is playing to the top of their ability — to do less would be dishonest and dishonor yourself and your opponent. But it's about more than just winning. It's also about the style of the win. You have certain expectations of yourself and each other, the most important being the artfulness of your maneuvers. It's gotta look good. If you defeat me by dropping unlimited elephants on my head, then bullshit, you have won nothing. There is no art in that. If you defeat me in a way that is clever and beautiful and legitimately more skilled than I was, then I will say with my dying breath, "At last, I get to see the Shoruya Horse-Killing Technique," and die with a smile on my face, iust like in the samurai movies. You can create Features at any time during play as long as you can work it sensibly into the narrative. You can also add additional Traits to any existing Features that you haven't yet defined the full four dice for. You are limited in how many Features you start an Ordeal with, but you can always build up to four at any time.

If all Traits of a Feature are Devastated during play, then that Feature is destroyed permanently. This doesn't impact the number of dice your hero will start the next ordeal with, but does mean that Feature is no longer available and should be removed from the Hero Record Sheet.

## AFTER THE ORDEAL

#### HEAL AND RECOVER

All dice from all of your Components and all of your Edge Tokens from Edges are fully restored. All damage is healed. The one exception is Features that were fully destroyed (all dice Devastated). Those are permanently lost and should be erased. The die slots are recovered however and can be used again. Any Weaknesses the hero suffered or Oaths made during play, remain.

#### DETERMINE YOUR NEW LEGENDARY TRAIT

After each Ordeal your featured hero will earn a Legendary Trait depending on how many Victory Points you scored during play. Select one die of the indicated size (or smaller if necessary) from any of your hero's Components and circle the Trait. That die now has the Legendary Aspect in addition to whatever Aspect it already had (including Sorcery). From now on instead of being rolled it will always be set to its highest value.

**IMPORTANT EXCEPTION:** At least one Faction Player had to obtain their Objective during play. If not your hero gets no Legendary Trait, regardless of how many Victory Points were earned. You actually have to choose a side, take a stand, and accomplish something to be remembered.

• **0-3 VPS**: an incomplete and totally tragic epilogue. You do not earn a Legendary Trait.



- 8-13 VPS: a mostly tragic epilogue. You earn a d6 Legendary Trait.
- 14-17 VPS: a largely heroic epilogue. You earn a d8 Legendary Trait.
- > 18+ VPS: an entirely heroic epilogue. You earn a d10 Legendary Trait.
- 24+ VPS WHILE SUCCESSFULLY FULFILLING A VOW: an epic epilogue. You earn two d10 Legendary Traits.

#### **IMPROVE YOUR HERO**

Choose any one die from your Hero Component that is smaller than your new Legendary Trait and increase it by one die size. You may improve two Traits this way with an epic epilogue. You should describe how the events of the just completed Ordeal led to this increase.

#### EDGE

During each Ordeal your hero has the chance to earn up to three Edge. You can do this by preventing Factions that are Aligned with the Witch King from achieving their Objective, or by helping Factions that are Opposed to Witch King achieve theirs. Additionally, if you write up the Chronicle of the Ordeal in one or two pages and recite it before the group at the beginning of the next session you can earn another point of Edge.

- +1 Edge: Aligned Faction doesn't achieve Objective.
- +1 Edge: Opposed Faction achieves Objective.
- +1 Edge: Recite 1-2 page long Chronicle of Ordeal.

#### **CONTINUE YOUR CHRONICLE**

On the back of your Hero Record Sheet record the name the group has given to this Ordeal and highlight the key events you want remembered: who you thwarted, who defeated you, what Vows were fulfilled or broken. If you fulfilled a Vow you are entitled to a sobriquet to be added to your name. Record the one selected by the other players to reflect your achievement.



"To battle is to ask yourself who you are. To attack is to express yourself through your blade. To win is to prove your power to your opponent, to yourself, and to the universe at large. To lose is to have the opportunity to learn something. I want to battle you, to attack you with everything I have, and I want you to do the same. But I would rather lose than win dishonorably. In an honorable loss there is the opportunity to learn. In a dishonorable win there is only shame."

– Marshall Burns

When Marshall wrote these words I knew he'd encapsulated the spirit of play needed for Blood Red Sands. This is how you must approach this game for it to work to full effect. Win but win with art. Fight but fight with grace. Make sure your opponents enjoy themselves even while you are defeating them. If they are not, then you lose, even if the score says otherwise.

#### DOOM

Your hero starts play with one Doom, the mark of your tragic origin. You gain one more Doom each Ordeal your hero is featured in. You also gain one more Doom every time you make a Vow.

Doom has no effect during normal play. It slowly builds until it comes back to haunt you in the Final Ordeal. During the showdown with the Witch King, your enemy will turn your Doom against you, using it to force you to reroll your best dice, in the same way as Edge lets you reroll your worst. If you failed to fulfill a Vow you suffer a physical, mental, or spiritual scar. You may choose the nature of the scar.

## SUBSEQUENT ORDEALS

#### **DICE HORDE**

You always start with the basic four sets of dice. In addition, each subsequent Ordeal your hero is featured in provides another set. If you make it to the Final Ordeal you will have a total of seven sets at your disposal.

- Initial dice: 4d10, 4d8, 4d6, and 4d4.
- Take an additional 1d10, 1d8, 1d6, and 1d4 for every Ordeal the hero has already completed.
- Discard one die of like size for every Sorcery Aspect you have.

#### **ALLOCATE DICE TO YOUR HERO**

At the beginning of each new Ordeal you will start with all of your dice in your Dice Horde and then move them to the designated dice slots you already have filled in from previous Ordeals. Fill in your hero Component slots first. You should always have enough dice of sufficient size to match.

Remember to discard dice for Sorcery Aspects.



#### ALLOCATE DICE TO YOUR FEATURES

Next allocate dice to the Features you have recorded on your sheet. The Features you allocate dice to will be the ones you take into the Ordeal. The others will not be available. You may only start the Ordeal with a number of Features equal to the Cycle; so two in the second Cycle, three in the third, and four into the Final Ordeal. Unavailable Features can be erased (essentially abandoned) so you can create a new one during play.

Depending on how you built your Features during play, you may not have enough dice of the right size to match all of the Feature's dice. In this case you may substitute a smaller die size for this Ordeal.

Any dice not allocated to your Hero or your Features remains in your Dice Horde. You may always discard any Feature not taken into the Ordeal to recover its dice and dice slots and build a new one in play.

#### **EDGE**

Collect a number of Edge Tokens equal to your hero's accumulated Edge and place them in the Edge box on your Hero Record Sheet.

#### STAND AND RECITE YOUR CHRONICLE

Return to the group and, standing before them, read off the Chronicle of your hero. If you wrote up a full Chronicle to earn additional Edge, read that. Otherwise read the short forms from the back of your Hero Record Sheet. Clas Er

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## CHAPTER IV: SECUPTHE ORDEAL

BLOOD RED SANDS is played over the course of ten Ordeals. The first nine are created randomly using the method outlined in this chapter. The last is chosen from the five pre-set Ordeals. The first is found in the Appendix V, the rest can be found at www.galileogames.com.

#### VICTORY POINT AUCTION

Every player starts with 10 Victory Points.

To run the auction, each player must hide a d10 under their hand, having set the die to show the number of Victory Points they are bidding (one being the minimum bid).

Reveal the bids.

Starting with the player who owns the game and proceeding clockwise around the table, each player may alter their bid one time. In the totally awesome event of more than one player owning the game, the player hosting the game takes precedent, otherwise roll off.

If your bid is currently tied with any other bids, it must be altered. All altered bids must be changed to a unique value so as not to be tied with any other current bid.

Then, the player who owns the game may alter their bid one final time.

All players reduce their Victory Points by the amount of their final bid.

The highest bid becomes the initial Hero Player.

All other players will play Factions, and will choose their Faction for the first Ordeal in order from high to low bid. Setting up an Ordeal is done in five parts. First, determine which player will be playing the hero. If that's you, and you've not yet created your hero for this Saga, then you should do so now using the rules from the previous chapter. Second, the players who will be playing Factions will use the random element tables to generate the building blocks for the Ordeal. Third, you will now take turns assembling those elements into the situation that exists at the start of the Ordeal. Fourth, you and the other Faction Players will then take turns choosing which Factions you will play. Finally, the Hero Player returns, reads their Chronicle to the group, and the player selected as the first Chronicler begins to tell the story of the current Ordeal.

## **IDENTIFY THE HERO PLAYER**

The nine Ordeals of **BLOOD RED SANDS** are divided into three Cycles. Four heroes will have the opportunity to be featured in the first Cycle. If there are more than four players, the additional players will not have a hero this Saga. Only three heroes will be featured in the second Cycle, meaning one of them will be retired. Another will be retired after the third Cycle which will feature only two heroes. When there are only two heroes left, their legend will be judged to determine who goes on to the Final Ordeal to face the Witch King.

- First Cycle: Four Ordeals.
- Second Cycle: Three Ordeals.
- Third Cycle: Two Ordeals.
- After the Third Cycle hold the Legend Judging.
- After the Legend Judging comes the Final Ordeal.

#### FOR YOUR FIRST ORDEAL

If this is your group's first Saga, we recommend that the Hero Player for the first Ordeal be the player who owns the game and/or is most familiar with the rules. The other players will play Factions and will choose their starting Faction in clockwise order around the table starting from the Hero Player. More experienced groups may wish to use the Victory Point Auction method instead.



As the Hero Player for the first Ordeal, you will choose which of the five Witch Kings will be the target for this Saga. All heroes will be striving to defeat this same Witch King and each Ordeal will include elements related to that king.

The player most familiar with the rules should brief the other players on how Ordeals are created. Assign one of them to be the Record Keeper, and then go off by yourself to create your hero.

#### IN SUBSEQUENT ORDEALS

The eligible player who scores the most Victory Points in this Ordeal will be the Hero Player in the next Ordeal. Players whose hero has already been retired or killed, or whose hero has already been featured in an Ordeal this Cycle are not eligible.

#### FACTION PLAYERS WILL SELECT THEIR FACTIONS STARTING WITH THE MOST DEVASTATED PLAYER AND CONTINUING IN ORDER OF TOTAL ACCUMULATED VICTORY POINTS FROM LEAST TO MOST.

When there are only two heroes left, do not follow the procedures in this chapter but instead move directly to the Confront the Witch King chapter and follow the procedures there.

You are the Hero Player of the new Ordeal if you scored the most Victory Points in the last Ordeal among all players who:

- still have a Hero who hasn't been killed or retired.
- have not yet been featured as the Hero Player in the current Cycle.

## **BUILDING THE ORDEAL**

Only the Faction Players participate in building the Ordeal. The Hero Player is not present while this is being done. When the Hero Player returns, they will be thrust into the middle of a hostile situation completely blind; unaware of who the participants are or what they want–exactly like their character.

During the first Cycle the Hero Player can use this time to create their hero. During subsequent Cycles, the heroes will have already been created. Faction Players should complete the Ordeal quickly so the Hero



The advantage of having the first hero is in knowing for certain that your hero will advance to the second cycle. All other players will have to earn that reward through play. The advantage to having the second highest bid is getting first pick at the Factions. The advantage to bidding low is starting with a Victory Point advantage over the other players.

These starting Victory Points are not considered to be earned during the first Ordeal for purposes of becoming the next featured hero.

#### THE MOST DEVASTATED PLAYER

The Most Devastated Player exists because sometimes the fiction of the game or the state of the competition between players will single out one player to be the primary target of the Ordeal. This rule helps even the playing field by giving that player an advantage in the next Ordeal.

When your goal becomes unobtainable, this rule encourages you to do something. Get aggressive, try to score as many points as possible by damaging other players, and accept enough damage yourself to claim the Most Devastated Player status.

Since a player with nothing to lose is dangerous to everyone, other players are motivated to not back an opponent so far into a corner that this is the only valid play strategy. Instead you should keep the possibility of them achieving their goal open so that they don't want to risk losing it by taking too much damage – then you can yank it away from them after it's too late. Player won't have to wait too long. Fortunately, by this time each of the players will have had several Ordeals worth of experience so the process shouldn't take too long. Even so, you may wish to consider one of the variant faster set-up options.

#### **GENERATE THE ELEMENTS**

Ordeals are built out of elements. Five of the types of elements are randomly rolled on the respective random element tables. Some of the results on the tables are "Open" meaning that your group can make its own mark on the world of Abalahn by defining your own elements, possibly by importing favorite characters, features, or organizations from other games or novels. Any player can feel free to suggest an idea; the Record Keeper gets final choice. If the creative juices aren't flowing you can just roll again, but that's pretty weak.

#### THEMATIC ELEMENTS

In addition to the standard random element tables, each Witch King has their own table of Thematic elements which are specifically flavored to them. These work to provide a consistent thread throughout the Saga. Ordeals aren't just disjointed collections of unrelated adventures. They are stepping stones along the path to the Witch King. The Witch King won't be a complete stranger when eventually confronted because elements of them have been encountered repeatedly along the way.

Some of the results on the standard tables are "Thematic Element" meaning the Record Keeper should select an element of that type from the Witch King's table. Every Ordeal must have at least one Thematic element, so if all of the elements have been generated and they don't include a Thematic element, randomly roll on the Witch King's table and add the result to the element list for the Ordeal.

• Each Ordeal must have at least one Thematic element.

#### THE RECORD KEEPER

In the first Ordeal of a Saga the first Hero Player assigns a player to be the Record Keeper. In each subsequent Ordeal, the Most Devastated



Player of the previous Ordeal becomes the Record Keeper of the new Ordeal.

The **MOST DEVASTATED PLAYER** is the player among the current Faction Players who ended the last Ordeal having discarded the most dice to the Bone Yard. This was tallied in the Dice Discarded box on their Faction Record Sheet and should have been recorded in the entry for that Ordeal on the Saga Record.

In each Ordeal the Record Keeper may select one element to add to the Ordeal element list. You may make your selection before or after the rest of the elements are rolled. You may:

- Choose from the standard element tables.
- Choose from the Witch King's Thematic table.
- Bring back a character or faction featured in a previous Ordeal.
- Create a new element of your own invention and also add it to an "Open" entry in the respective table.

#### THE ELEMENTS

The Record Keeper should assign another player to roll on the indicated table while they record the results in the upper right section of the Ordeal Record Sheet.

#### **GEOGRAPHY**

Roll once on the Geography table. This gives a general sense of where the action will take place. Some of the entries are regions found on the Map of Abalahn. Some are types of places that can be found just about anywhere. This information will help to locate the Ordeal on your Saga Map and provide the primary terrain features for you to draw on the Ordeal Map.

There is a space to the left of the element lists on the Ordeal Record Sheet to record Geography.

#### **FACTIONS**

Roll a number of Factions on the Faction table equal to the number of Faction Players +1. One will be discarded in the next step. These



The advantages given to the Most Devastated Player are:

- You may choose one of the elements that will be used in the next Ordeal.
- You will choose your Faction first.
- You will gain a bonus set of dice to add to your Horde: 1d10, 1d8, 1d6, 1d4.

#### **ALIGNMENTS**

Like Thematic elements, Aligned and Opposed Factions serve to tie the Saga together. What you do as players in this Ordeal affects the situation for the Final Ordeal.

A player looking to have a triumphant hero will thus be motivated to have Aligned Factions fail and Opposed Factions succeed to keep the power of the Witch King from growing. This may not only inform a player's choice of alliances and targets in the game, but their choice of which Factions to play as well.

Similarly a player whose hero has already been retired can only hope to win by becoming the Witch King and defeating the hero. They'll be interested in making the Witch King as powerful as possible.

But what happens when a player, whose hero is your hero's main rival, happens to be playing an Opposed Faction this Ordeal? By helping him achieve his goal, you're putting him one step closer to beating you. Yet if you stop him, you make the Witch King that much stronger.

These sorts of meta-game considerations feed back into the fiction leading to the sorts of strange bedfellows and sudden yet inevitable betrayals common to the genre. Inventing narrative Factions are listed only in their roughest form, such as "Warlord." It will be up to the player who winds up owning the Faction to fill in all the details. Who is this warlord, what do they look like, what kind of forces do they command, are they protecting the people from hostile enemies, or are they the hostile enemy the people need protection from?

The first column on the Ordeal Record Sheet has spaces for up to six Factions (suitable for a six player game with 5 Faction players). Cross out any extra Factions for games with fewer players.

#### ALIGNMENT

There are three Alignments to be assigned: Aligned, Opposed, and Neutral. These do not need to be rolled for and are already filled out in the second column of the element list on the Ordeal Record Sheet.

These alignments are relative to the Witch King. This doesn't have to be a direct relationship to the Witch King, it could simply be an agenda that inadvertently furthers or thwarts the Witch King's aims.

If a Faction is a Thematic element it will already be identified as Aligned or Opposed. There must be one, and only one, Aligned Faction, and one, and only one, Opposed Faction. All remaining Factions are Neutral.

Alignment has no effect during play. After the Ordeal it impacts the relative advantage in the contest between hero and Witch King.

- If the Aligned Faction achieves its Objective the Witch King earns one Edge.
- If the Aligned Faction fails to achieve its Objective that hero earns one Edge.
- If the Opposed Faction achieves its Objective that hero earns one Edge.
- If the Opposed Faction fails to achieve its Objective the Witch King earns one Edge.
- Each hero tracks their own Edge separately, but the Witch King accumulates Edge from all of the Ordeals.



#### **OBJECTIVES**

Roll half as many Objectives as Factions (rounded up). Objectives are a general notion of what the Faction is trying to accomplish in this Ordeal. Successfully accomplishing the Objective will earn the Faction Player +10 Victory Points at the end of the Ordeal. The exact nature of the Objective and who the target is will be determined as part of the situation. For example if the Objective is to "win a contest" the players will need to decide what the contest is and who the Faction is competing against.

The purpose of the Objective is to serve as a MacGuffin, the term in film used to describe an object that motivates the characters to action but whose details are ultimately unimportant. In **BLOOD RED SANDS**, the details you create serve to define what hoops the Faction will have to jump through in order for the player to declare they've succeeded (and this should be clear and unambiguous for that purpose). But ultimately what matters is that the Objective motivates the player to take action and engage in direct conflict with another Faction. Typically, a good Objective is one:

- Where a Faction must do something to or get something from another Faction.
- Where it will be easily recognized at the end whether the terms have been met.
- Where there is more than one solution that can be pursued, including negotiations and alliances.
- Where other Factions can put themselves in a position to interfere.

Every Faction will be assigned one unique Objective. Only some of these will come from the Objective element list. The remaining Factions will get one of the two standard Objectives (Survive and Oppose). For now just record the result of the rolls in the third column of the Ordeal Record Sheet. The two standard Objectives have already been filled in. Cross out any blanks not being used. The details will be filled in, in the next step.



justification for meta-game motivations helps develop the fiction to a much deeper level than any random generator can achieve.

The Hero Player will not know the alignment of the Factions when the Ordeal begins. Faction Players are specifically forbidden from identifying their Faction's Alignment except as role-played out within the fiction. In character you can try to persuade and win the hero's support with any claim you desire. Violators can be penalized Victory Points via Challenge.

At the end of any Clash the hero participates in, the Hero Player is told the Alignment of each Faction on the opposing side.

#### THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF EXTRAS

**REQUIRED COMPONENTS:** When

you start play with your Faction you will have a Main Character and four supporting Components. The nature of one of those four Components may be chosen for you if your Faction's Extra is a Required Component. If that Component is destroyed you also lose the special power it granted.

**REQUIRED TRAIT**: One of your Main Character's Traits may be predefined for you if your Faction's Extra is a Required Trait. You can give it a more descriptive name if you wish. It also usually provides a special power. When the Trait is Devastated you also lose the special power it granted.

GENERAL EFFECT: These Extras are not tied to a specific Component or Trait. Their effects remain in place throughout the Ordeal.

#### **EXTRAS**

Roll one Extra per Faction Player. Extras help to differentiate Factions. A Warlord with a Citadel will develop in a different direction than a Warlord who commands a monster. Additionally, the Extra serves as a creative springboard. Starting play with a totally blank slate, knowing nothing about your Faction other than its name and its Objective can be challenging. Adding even the small detail of identifying one of your Faction's Components can make this easier.

Each Extra also has a special rule that is either beneficial or harmful. All Extra's are not created equal; they can make a Faction stronger or weaker.

#### **EDGE**

Edge is not rolled for. The choices of Edge are already listed on the Ordeal Record Sheet. This choice will determine how many rerolls each Faction will get in each Clash during the Ordeal: 0, 1, 2, or 3. There is only one each of the choices that provide zero, one, and three Edge Tokens. There are three that provide two Edge Tokens. Cross out one of the two Edge choices if there are only 3 Faction Players. Any choices not assigned to a Faction serve no other function in the Ordeal.

#### THE TWIST

Roll once for the possibility of a Twist. In most Ordeals there will not be one. If there is one, do not determine what it is at this time. Instead, mark yes on the Order Record Sheet and continue on. Each Witch King also has a Thematic Twist. If a Thematic Twist is called for, that is the Twist that will be used in the Ordeal. However, it will only be used once, and cannot be selected again. Any further result of a Thematic Twist in this Saga will be treated as no Twist.

Once play begins, if a Twist was called for, the Record Keeper is responsible for managing the timer. It might be helpful to write "Roll for Twist" prominently on your Faction Sheet to help remember. Put a tick mark after this note at the beginning of each new Chapter (including the first).

Roll 1d10 after every Clash.



- If the result is equal to or less than the current Chapter in the game, the Twist occurs.
- If the Twist occurs, roll on the Twist Element Table and follow the instructions.

## **ASSEMBLE THE SITUATION**

Faction Players now take turns assembling these elements into the starting situation that exists at the time the hero arrives. The situation will poise the Factions at the very brink of conflict. All Factions must wind up directly opposed to the interests of one other Faction (and potentially indirectly opposed to several).

#### COMBINE THE ELEMENTS

Only the Faction Players should be present. The players will take turns passing the Ordeal Record Sheet, starting with the player who has the fewest total Victory Points and going around the table clockwise from there.

On each turn you will select one of the listed options linking two or more of the elements together. Cross off the elements you used and record your combination in the matrix at the bottom of the sheet.

- Each column of the matrix is a single Faction and all of the elements linked to it.
- When selecting a Faction that's already been used, add the elements you're linking to the existing column.
- If the Faction has not yet been used, add it and the elements you're linking to it to a new column.

Announce your combination to the group. The Record Keeper should have a supply of Faction Record Sheets available, and as combinations are announced, begin to fill in the proper blanks on each sheet, one sheet per Faction.

When all but one of the Factions have been used there will be one Faction for each Faction Player. Cross off the last Faction, unused.

#### **A NOTE OF CAUTION**

When assembling the elements into a starting situation it is possible to get a combination of factors that won't produce exciting play. It's your responsibility to see that doesn't happen. If the story drags, nobody has a clear idea of what their faction should be doing, or somebody's objective didn't make sense-don't panic. There are plenty of Ordeals to play before the game is over and having one that fizzles isn't the end of the world. If it becomes too horrible to continue, use the Challenge rule to call a mulligan and start over. Decide whether to keep or throw out the Victory Points earned so far and just push the reset button.

Some things to watch out for:

- Objectives that are too easy to resolve, especially by several players just agreeing to give each other what they need.
- Situations where everyone is ganged up on one player (unless done intentionally because that player is winning).
- Situations where it isn't clear what a player has to do to fulfill the terms of the objective.
- Situations where objectives wind up daisy chained together in a domino-like series. This can be but fun, but can also feel weird if not well tied to the fiction.



#### PLAYER ORDER FOR SELECTING FACTIONS

A key part of the strategy for assembling the Factions is the order that players will be making their selection. The Record Keeper should use the Saga Record Sheet to announce to all players what the order will be.

 Most Devastated Player/Record Keeper will get first Faction pick.

> Remaining players will select in order of fewest total Victory Points to most.

As you assemble the factions, keep in mind the order that players will be choosing which Faction to play. Unless you get first pick you don't want any of the Factions to be significantly better than any of the others, and if you're picking last, you'll want to try and prevent any of them from being clearly weak.

Remember, at least one Thematic Element must make it into the Ordeal, so if there is only one more opening and it hasn't been used yet, your choice is limited to including it.

#### FLESH OUT THE DETAILS

As you select the options, you are not limited to just taking the bare words and linking them together. You may add additional details to make the situation logical, consistent and interesting. The elements listed on the Ordeal Sheet provide the "what." Think also of the "why" and the "who."

If you take the Sorcerer Faction, link it with the Conquer Objective and target it at the Warlord Faction, consider why the Sorcerer is attacking the Warlord. If the Warlord has a Citadel as a Required Component, it might be because the Sorcerer wants the fortress for himself. If the Sorcerer is Aligned with the Witch King it may be because the Warlord has been leading the local resistance against the Witch King's forces. Or you can get more elaborate. Maybe you decide that the Sorcerer is the Warlord's nephew, robbed of his inheritance. He's learned to master the dark mysteries and now he's returned to take back his lands from the usurper. When you take your turn to link elements together you get to add whatever details you like to make the story interesting.

One of the most common details to add is the identity (or at least general role) of the Main Character. Often this is strongly implied by the Faction. Most commonly the Main Character for the Warlord Faction will be the Warlord. However, it's also acceptable to make the Main Character an emissary or famous captain and leave the Warlord himself to be a supporting character or even not directly present at all.

You can even use psychology to your advantage by adding details that you know will attract or repel your fellow players and thus influence what Faction they will choose to play.



Remember, however, that ultimately you will be spending several hours playing through the situation you create so making sure it is exciting, compelling, and fun is your responsibility.

#### THE CHOICES

#### LINK AN OBJECTIVE

Pick one of the Objectives from the list and assign it to one of the Factions. You must also select which Faction the Objective is targeted at. Since the targeted Faction must be included in the Ordeal, this Choice gives you the ability to lock in two of the Factions that will be used.

The randomly rolled Objectives are intentionally broad and vague. You must supply the details that will allow them to make for interesting fiction. These details must also allow you to determine what the Faction actually must accomplish to be considered successful.

You must choose from the randomly rolled objectives first before picking one of the two standard objectives.

**OPPOSE**: Give a Faction the Objective of opposing another Faction.

- They succeed if their target Faction fails.
- They fail if their target Faction succeeds.
- Two factions cannot both have the Oppose Objective targeted at each other.

**SURVIVE**: Sometimes it's enough if the Faction can just make it through in one piece.

- If you give a Faction the Objective of surviving, you do not give them a target Faction.
- However, there must be at least one Faction targeting them.
- To succeed the Faction's Main Character must survive to the end of the Ordeal (their fate in the Epilogue does not count).
- If so, the Victory Points the Faction Player earned during the Ordeal will be tripled (instead of earning a +10 bonus).

# the ordeal



#### SITUATION COMBINATION CHOICES

Starting with the player with the fewest Victory Points and going clockwise each Faction Player chooses one of the following actions:

- Select a Faction, assign an Objective to it, and identify the target.
- Select a Faction, and assign an Extra to it.
- Select a Faction and determine its Edge.
- Select a Faction, assign it an Alignment (Aligned, Opposed, or Neutral).
- Select a Faction, designate its Player as the Initial Chronicler.

#### FINALIZING THE ORDEAL CHECKLIST

When finished:

- The number of Factions should equal number of Faction Players.
  - Each Faction should have been assigned one (and only one) Objective and it should be clear to all where the areas of conflict lie and what the Factions are after.
  - Each Faction should have an Extra (which may just be "nothing special").
  - Each Faction should have been assigned a number of Edge Tokens.
  - At least one element should be a Thematic Element from the Witch King list.
- One Faction should be Aligned and one should be Opposed.
  - One Faction should have been selected to be the initial Chronicler.
- The matrix on the Ordeal Record Sheet should be filled out.

(continued on next page)

#### ASSIGN AN EXTRA

Pick one of the Extras from the list and assign it to a Faction. If it's a Required Component, fill in its identity for the first Component on the Faction Record. If it's a Trait, fill in the first dice slot for the Main Character. Designate with a star to let the owner know that special rules apply. Copy the special rule into the Extra box.

You can use this to your advantage by pairing Extras your opponents will find undesirable with the Faction you'd rather they not choose and the Extras they will find desirable to the Factions you want them to choose.

#### **ASSIGN EDGE TO A FACTION**

The more reroll tokens you give to a Faction the stronger they are. It's only a marginal difference but other than the Extra it's the only mechanical difference between Factions (all Factions start with the exact same strength in dice).

The strategy for assigning Edge depends on the order you will be choosing Factions in. If you will be picking first you will want to make the most advantageously positioned Faction as strong as possible so you can choose it. If you will be picking last you will want to make all the Factions roughly equal so you don't get stuck with a weak one. If your biggest opponent will be picking last you will want to stick them with the weakest, worst positioned Faction possible.

The Edge options are set up so that there will always be at least one Faction with a different number of Tokens (higher or lower) and potentially a great range of differences.

#### ASSIGN AN ALIGNMENT TO A FACTION

If the Faction came from the Witch King's Thematic Element list it will already have its Alignment determined. There can be only one Aligned Faction and one Opposed Faction in each Ordeal. You are free to assign a Neutral Alignment to a Faction but you are constrained to ensure that there is one of each.

The primary strategy for assigning Alignments is to influence who the Hero Player will be targeting and assisting. The hero is a powerful



influence in the Ordeal and you'll want them on your side and pointed at your enemies.

#### **DETERMINE INITIAL CHRONICLER**

One of the players will get to be Chronicler first. Their first scene will introduce the hero to the situation and so this position has the potential to set the direction for the entire Ordeal. One of the Factions will be flagged. The player who winds up owning that Faction will thus be the initial Chronicler.

While the advantage of being the first Chronicler is temporary it should not be underestimated (or squandered). Putting the Chronicler on a Faction can help make it more attractive and thus work into the mind games you're playing with the other players with your situation choices.



- Each Faction should have its own Faction Record Sheet and its information from the matrix should be filled in.
- The map should be drawn.
- If the situation does not seem interesting, any player may use the standard Challenge rules to discard the whole process thus far and start over.

#### FASTER SET UP VARIANTS

- Have the Record Keeper for the next session randomly roll all of the elements before the session (at home, or at the end of the prior session)
- Ordeal set up is easily handled on-line between sessions using a forum, email group, chat room, or web meeting. Use alphabetical order in lieu of going around the table for turns.
- Some groups may choose to have the Hero player present during set up. You will lose some of the mystery, and much of the manipulation of a poor hero who is uncertain who to trust—but play during the Ordeal will tend to move along faster as the hero player will have a clearer idea of what to do.



#### **GET READY FOR PLAY**

- FACTION PLAYERS: set your Faction Record down in front of you along with a copy of the Battle Mat. The Ordeal Map should be centrally located where all players can see and refer to it.
  - Collect your Dice Horde: 4d10, 4d8, 4d6, 4d4.
- The Most Devastated Player also takes: 1d10, 1d8, 1d6, 1d4.
  - Each player gathers their Edge Tokens (0, 1, 2, or 3 plus any extra from Extras).
  - Place the figures for your
    Faction Characters on the map at their starting locations.

#### DRAW THE MAP

The Record Keeper should now draw the Ordeal Map with full input from the other players. The map can be mostly lines, labels, and crude icons, or it can be nicely rendered by your group's resident artist. The important thing is that they be legible and understandable for all players, especially the Hero Player who will be using the map as a starting point to get their bearings.

The map is an important visual reference. It adds color to the fiction and helps cement the situation as existing in the broader world. There is no "movement rate" or "travel time" in the game. Characters can pretty much arrive anywhere they need to be using narrative logic. But the map should inform the fiction. There's a different feel to a scene at the warlord's citadel if it's perched on top of a cliff vs. squatting down in a swamp.

- Locate any place specifically identified by the elements, particularly Extras that are "immobile."
- Locate any geographical features stated or implied, elaborate as desired. A town implies roads; farms imply a source of water.
- Locate the starting position of all Faction Main Characters or Required Components.
- Include political notations such as boundaries, disputed territories, directions of march, and so on.

## **CHOOSE YOUR FACTIONS**

After all of the Faction Record Sheets have been filled in, players pick which Factions they will play. Pass the stack of Faction Records around with players taking their choice from the pile.

#### FIRST ORDEAL OF THE SAGA

Pick your Factions in clockwise order starting with the player who will be sitting to the left of the Hero Player; or, if using the Victory Point Bid method, in high to low bid order.



#### **ALL OTHER ORDEALS**

The Most Devastated Player will get the first pick. The remaining players will select in total accumulated Victory Point order from lowest to highest. The player with the most total Victory Points will thus get the last pick, taking whatever Faction is left.

## THE HERO RETURNS

The Hero Player is now summoned back to the table where they must Rise Up and recite their hero's Chronicle. They should highlight the vows they've fulfilled, the sobriquet's they've earned, the scars they bear, any sorcery they possess, and their Legendary Traits.

Faction players should remember not to reveal anything of the situation they've crafted. In fact you are expressly forbidden from doing so except as events develop in the fiction.

The Faction Player determined to be the initial Chronicler should start by indicating the hero's path on the Saga Map and where on the Ordeal Map the hero his now, describing the geography and landmarks they encountered on the way. The first scene should establish how the hero first encounters the situation; who their first contact is with, where it is, and what tenor it has. It is often appropriate to start the scene in media res, with the hero stumbling into an active conflict between two factions. **HERO PLAYER:** When you return to the table, likewise set your Hero Record down in front of you along with a copy of the Battle Mat. You should take a moment to look over the Ordeal Map and get you bearings.

- Collect your Dice Horde: 4d10, 4d8, 4d6, 4d4.
- Collect one additional set for each Ordeal you've already been featured in (none if this is your first): 1d10, 1d8, 1d6, 1d4.
- Distribute your dice to your hero and any Features they have with them (equal to the cycle number).
- Gather your accumulated Edge Tokens.
- The initial Chronicler will place your figure on the map at the site of the first scene along with the figures of all other characters that will be present.





# CHAPTER V: HOW TO PLAY

So you've got your hero; the Ordeal's been crafted, the Factions have been selected, and the dice have been gathered. How the heck do you play this game anyway? That's what this chapter is for.

#### THE CHAPTER

The Chapter begins by determining a new Chronicler and that Chronicler setting up the action for a new scene.

The Chapter ends when:

- ▶ The Chronicler passes.
- Players trigger a Clash.

## GAME FLOW SUMMARY

An Ordeal is told through chapters. Each chapter begins with the selection of a new **CHRONICLER** and ends when a Clash occurs. During a chapter the Chronicler can change several times as players **CONTEST** each other for the role. The Chronicler is the lead story teller of the Ordeal. As long as you are the Chronicler, the story will primarily be about your characters. You will also control "the rest of the world," which includes all things that have not been yet defined as Components on another player's sheet. As Chronicler you will describe the scene, identifying where the action is taking place, who is there, and what's going on. You can inflict **PAIN** on other players in the form of causing damage or other limitations to their Components.

As a Faction Player, you should use your turns as Chronicler to drive the action towards achieving your Objective for the Ordeal and thwarting those of the other players. You will also want to goad other players into Clashing with you in order to score Victory Points. Being the Chronicler is a great way to maneuver into position to have an advantage during Clashes allowing you to score points at the expense of the other players. The time leading up to a Clash is vital, and your success will often depend on how consistently well you use it.

As the Hero Player, you should use your turns as Chronicler to enter into Clashes with Factions in order to determine their Alignment. Most often you will want to assist the Faction Opposed to the Witch King and hurt the Faction Aligned with the Witch King. In some cases, due to the overall score standings you might decide differently. You will also look for opportunities to make Vows and score Victory Points in Clashes. Scoring Victory Points is especially important for the Hero Player as how many points you earn directly determines whether the Ordeal will end happily or tragically and how big your Legend will grow as a consequence.

When you are not the Chronicler, you will participate in scenes where your Components are present; portraying the actions of your characters, reacting to the events of the Chronicler's story, engaging in dialog, and exercising your **DOMINION** over your property. You always get to say what your characters do, the actions they take, and how they feel. You can make declarations about your Components where appropriate or



in response to specific questions. You may not inflict Pain upon others but you may voluntarily accept Pain as a way of gaining bonus dice from the Chronicler.

If you wish to oppose what the Chronicler is saying or the Pain they are attempting to inflict, you can do so by **CHALLENGE**, by **CONTEST**, or by **CLASH**.

The typical Ordeal thus looks like this:

- A chapter begins and a new Chronicler is selected.
- Chronicler sets the stage for action, maneuvering their forces into positions of advantage.
- Other players go along with the Chronicler as long as they can see advantage for themselves or as long as the cost for resisting is too high.
- Eventually, when the price becomes too high, or the Chronicler looks poised to accomplish too much, a player who is being targeted will resist by taking the role of Chronicler for themselves with a Contest or taking it to dice with a Clash.
- The role of Chronicler may be passed around several times with each player trying to obtain as strong a position as they can.
- Once a Clash begins, however, the normal game flow halts until the Clash is resolved, after which a new chapter begins and the process repeats.
- This continues until the hero is defeated or the Hero Player decides they've scored enough points to walk away and end the Ordeal.

#### DOMINION

When playing **BLOOD RED SANDS** you have Dominion over everything written on your Record Sheet – as faction or hero. That means you say what actions your characters are taking, you speak for them in conversations (either in first or third person as you prefer), and you decide how they feel and what they look like.

#### MANEUVER WITH NARRATION

When you are the Chronicler you should have a goal, a situation in mind that you want to get to, such as cornering your enemy by himself where you can gang up on him with an ally. Use your turn as a Chronicler to position a sequence of events in the fiction piece by piece using small steps and perhaps some misdirection. Seek to arrange things so that there is no question that when it comes time to spring your trap, it all makes sense.

What you are striving for is to have all of the other players, including your enemy, to be thinking "of course that's what's happening...I should have seen that coming.

How do you do that? Think like a story teller. Think of the novels you've read, the movies you've seen, the comics you've enjoyed. There are lots of scenes leading up to the big climactic battle. Scenes where we see people preparing for the battle. Scenes where we see distractions or trickery employed. Scenes where the future is being set up and foreshadowed.

Use all of the storytelling techniques at your disposal to justify why a certain Faction can't be present or must be. Why a certain Weakness is clearly callable while another clearly isn't. Why your action isn't breaking the Oath you swore. If you do it right you should have a big advantage and no trouble with Challenges.



#### **OWNERSHIP**

To be clear about Dominion: you own only those Components actually defined on your sheet, not everything tangentially related to them. Everything not written on any player's sheet is owned by the current Chronicler (who can be you when it's your turn to be the Chronicler) even things that would seem to be part of your Faction. Other players may add Components to their sheet, which descriptively might seem related to your Faction, but since they're on their sheet, they're owned by them.

For example, your Faction is a Market Town. You have the head of the Merchant's Guild as your Main Character and have also added the "Town Walls" as a Component. The Chronicler describes rioting townspeople setting fire to your town, inflicting Pain by damaging your wall. This works because since the town's people are not a Component on your sheet, they are controlled by the current Chronicler.

Later on, you describe how the guild leader defuses the riot and gains the support of the people, creating the Component "Townsfolk" on your sheet. Now those people are solely under your control and cannot be used by other players when they are the Chronicler.

#### For instance, the Chronicler may declare that your hero Karn is being addressed by the sorcerer Malethax, but the words Karn speaks come from you.

The only time you lose this authority is when the Chronicler inflicts Pain upon you, or you lose the Spoils in a Clash. The consequences of Pain might require one of your characters to swear an oath of allegiance to another character, cause him to go blind or lose a limb, or make him decide to stay home and not join in the defense of his village.

For instance, Malethax wants you to agree to help him. You refuse. In response the Chronicler inflicts Pain upon you in the form of an Oath: "Karn swears to help Malethax in all things."

Such Pain can never be inflicted upon you unilaterally, you must either agree to it (and thus gain the bonus die offered by the Chronicler) or agree to fight about it (and thus only suffer it if you lose).

If you decide to go along with this, Karn acquires an Oath "Karn swears to help Malethax in all things" along with whatever die the Chronicler offered them from the Bone Yard. Malethax's player will be able to call upon this once during the game to force Karn to take a specific action consistent with the oath. Or you can Contest for the role of Chronicler, and if successful, take over the story and decide for yourself how the conversation winds up. Or you can let the dice decide and fight with Malethax in a Clash that probably starts out as an argument but may well escalate to blows depending on which dice you call upon.

When you are in a scene involving another player's characters (including when you are the Chronicler) you must defer to that player for descriptions of what they are doing and details over appearance and tone.

For instance, in the midst of your argument you say, "Karn has had enough, he grabs Malethax by his robes and shakes him hard," at which point your opponent corrects you saying, "Malethax doesn't wear robes. He's wearing a cuirass of hardened leather, carved and molded into the shapes of damned souls." You must adjust your description to account for this corrected detail. "Fine, I grab him by the throat instead."



When needed you can direct the owning player to fill in the details around a particular topic. The player being questioned must be honest about what can reasonably be seen and known. But they do not have to reveal secrets or things that are hidden. If you want to know another player's secret you can make them take an Oath that they are telling the truth. That way there is at least a consequence for their lie.

For instance, later you are the Chronicler and you are traveling with Malethax to the Bone Tree, one of the sorcerer's Components. You say, "We've arrived at the Bone Tree – what's it look like?" At which Malethax's player responds, "It's a large dead tree, bent and twisted. From every branch hang bones; some entire skeletons bound in metal cages, most just loose hanging like chimes knocking hollowly in the howling wind."

From time to time your view of your character may not match the events being described by another player. When that occurs, they are obligated to change their description to fit your vision. But you are also obligated to provide an alternative means for them to accomplish what they want that does fit your vision.

For instance, Malethax's player is Chronicler again and has narrated how he has come upon Karn sleeping in a field and has snuck close enough to cast a spell upon him. You interrupt to correct this saying, "Karn is a tribesman from the south. There's no way a clumsy northern sorcerer could sneak up on him." But you still must cooperate with the intent so you go on to say, "but Karn is so disdainful of your ability that he arrogantly allows you to get as close as you wish."

## THE CHRONICLER

In some ways the role of Chronicler is like a temporary rotating Game Master. However, the Chronicler's job is not to be an unbiased mediator and arbiter of rules. Instead you should use your turn as Chronicler in much the way you would use your turn in a board game: to gain an advantage and move yourself closer to victory.

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Your opponent is playing the Warlord Faction determined to conquer your town. They add "Disgruntled Merchants" to their sheet as a Component. Even though those merchants are citizens of your town in the fiction, they are now controlled by your opponent.

If you feel that your "Townspeople" Component was all inclusive and should cover every living soul in the town, you may Challenge your opponent on this. It will then be up to your group collectively to set the standards for how inclusive a broad Component label should be. For reference, as the game's author, I would not be standing with you on such a Challenge as I think having such internal rivalries and machinations is part of the fun of the genre.

#### WHO IS PRESENT IN A SCENE?

Components that are Constrained (by Pain or time or immobility) can never be in the scene unless set at their exact location.

> One of the Chronicler's Components must be present or the scene must be redone.

Components previously established as being at that location at that time are already there. Chronicler can offer a die to their owner to send them away.

Chronicler selects the Components of other players to also be in the scene. Owning players may offer a die to the Chronicler to stay away.

Other players select any additional Components of their own that they wish to also be there. Chronicler can offer them a die to keep them away.

Offered dice come from the player's Horde. The other player may either accept the die and make the desired change or refuse it by putting forth a die of their own.

> If refused, the dice are rolled and the high roller gets their way. The low roller adds both dice to their horde. Reroll ties.

In the fiction of the game the Chronicler lives years, even generations in the future. They are relating the legends of great heroes from eras past, your heroes. But like any storyteller with a rapt audience and only half remembered myths and oral traditions to work with, they fill in the details to make for the most compelling story; and of course they play favorites. When players Contest each other to take over the role of Chronicler, they're representing a different version of the legend, one that features their favorites instead.

#### **CHRONICLER AUTHORITY**

When it's your turn to be the Chronicler, you will have both the power and the responsibility to take the reins and direct the story. You will have the opportunity to focus events on your hero or Faction in an effort to advance your goals and maneuver into a stronger position. It's also your responsibility to do so in a manner that remains true to the fiction. The other players are your audience listening to your tale. While a good part of the game is moving your "game pieces" around the "board" in order to win, it shouldn't feel that way so overtly that you lose track of the story as a chronicle of great heroes.

As Chronicler you have:

- The power of any player to fully control the actions and thoughts of your own Components.
- The power to set the action in any location you desire and to call upon any characters or combination of characters to be present.
- The power to fully control the actions of everything in the world not currently defined on another player's Record Sheet (including how the world changes as the result of the actions of your or another's characters).
- The power to inflict Pain on the Components of others.
- You do not have the power to describe the actions of any Components owned by another player except as part of inflicting Pain.



#### THE VOICE OF THE CHRONICLER

When you're describing the actions of your own Components, you should use your own voice. You can speak in the first person or the third as you desire. You can have your characters talk to other characters and the players of those characters can converse with you as they choose. You can ask questions of the other players related to things they have Dominion over and should defer to them when they are asserting their Dominion.

But when you exercise the Chronicler's other powers, you should invoke the **VOICE OF THE CHRONICLER** to signify the additional authority you are calling on. Use it whenever you set up a scene, or control the actions of "the world," or inflict Pain.

When speaking in the **VOICE OF THE CHRONICLER** use third person past tense. Project your voice powerfully to your audience using the somewhat florid and purple prose of a story teller spinning a tale of grim adventure.

#### HERE OUR CHRONICLER IS INFLICTING SOME PAIN:

"And then did the hero Karn bring forth the Death Viper Spear and, having impaled the vile sorcerer Malethax upon it, hung him by his flesh from the Tree of Bones and the ravens didst devour his eyes."

#### SET UP THE ACTION

As Chronicler you have the responsibility of driving towards conflict. It's fine to have the occasional scene on your own where your characters are maneuvering for advantage or launching into extended soliloquies, revealing their intentions in order to intimidate or garner sympathy. Most of the time you should be figuring out who you want to hurt, then bringing your characters and their characters together in such a way that you have the opportunity to hurt them.

You should figure out who your allies are. Bring them along so they can help inflict the hurt. You may want to shore them up with an **OATH** or two so they're less tempted to betray you. If you know who's likely to ally with your enemy, **CONSTRAIN** them so they can't come. Then bring the Pain. Inflict a little Pain if you just want to weaken them and




set them up for more later. Or inflict a lot so they have no choice but to Clash with you. When they do, stomp them.

When you become Chronicler you must establish the scene where the action is taking place. If you are the first Chronicler of a new Chapter you will do this entirely from scratch, perhaps starting in a completely new location with completely different characters from the previous Chapter. When you take over the role of Chronicler mid Chapter you should start with the stage that's already been set and continue with the fiction from there, moving to new locations as needed. If a scene doesn't lead to a Clash (which ends the Chapter) you can cut away to a new scene elsewhere and introduce the same or a different collection of characters.

If you find yourself starting scenes and then cutting to new scenes and then ending those and starting other scenes without actually inflicting Pain on anyone, you're probably not playing right. Bring the Pain, but only after you've positioned yourself well enough to survive the repercussions.

#### WHERE

When setting up the action, the first thing you must decide is where the action is taking place. Most often this will be a location that has already been drawn on your Ordeal Map. If not, draw it on the map now. Pay special attention to Components that occupy a fixed location, like a citadel, or an armed camp, or the Tree of Bones. If those are your Components you'll want to set a lot of the action there, so you can use them. If those are your enemy's Components you'll often want to avoid them unless you're specifically trying to destroy them. Also note where the other players' characters are. Any characters already at a location will automatically be in the scene if you set it there.

#### WHEN

As the Chronicler, you are in control of the flow of time. The only restriction is that you cannot excessively fast forward. "later that day," "that night," "the next morning" or even, in some circumstances, "a few months later" are acceptable time frames. "Ten years go by," "after the child has grown," "generations later," or "seas rise and fall and ages pass into history" are not.



Similarly you can't flashback excessively back in time. Scenes set "earlier that day" with a different set of characters work fine. "Last year" or "in our grandfather's time" does not.

The individual Ordeals of the Saga all must run more or less concurrently to allow for effective crossing of characters and locations between Chronicles within the lifespan of the hero. So time changes shouldn't be too radical. Most often you will set scenes to be taking place at the same time or slightly subsequent to the last sequence of events that occurred.

As with most stories told by oral tradition, precise tracking of the minutes and hours is not necessary. Time of day and seasons are useful for establishing flavor and tone, but epic tales don't concern themselves much with hourglasses and calendars unless they are of some religious or ritual significance.

A side function of time in this game is to regulate travel between locations. If a character was established at being at one location, then they aren't likely to be able to also be in a scene set shortly thereafter at a distant location. There are no travel rules to appeal to in this regard. It's a legend. Accept it or Challenge it. Those are your options.

#### WHO

The most important aspect of setting up the action is which characters and other Components are present. After all, if your goal is to inflict Pain and trigger Clashes, you need to have someone there to inflict Pain on and Clash with.

Note: Components that have been **CONSTRAINED** are not available to participate in any action that is not set at the precise location they've been constrained to. All Components are always considered to be Constrained by travel times and distance. If a character is too far away to have made it to the location in a timely fashion, then they can't be there. Again there is no hard and fast measure for this. Use story logic and the standards of myths and legends as your guide and be prepared to Challenge those whose standards you don't agree with.

You must always have one of your own characters or Components present. If there isn't one at the location chosen, one must travel there.

# USING THE VOICE OF THE CHRONICLER TO INFLICT PAIN

"AND THEN DID THE HERO KARN BRING FORTH THE DEATH VIPER SPEAR AND, HAVING IMPALED THE VILE SORCERER MALETHAX UPON IT, HUNG HIM BY HIS FLESH FROM THE TREE OF BONES AND THE RAVENS DIDST DEVOUR HIS EYES."

In this example Ralph's hero (Karn) is acting against one of Seth's characters (Malethax). Interestingly the Tree of Bones is one of Seth's Components, but since Ralph isn't describing it doing anything just using it as a prop, this isn't normally a problem unless it was to be Challenged.

Two incidents of Pain are being inflicted here. The first is that Malethax is being Constrained in a particularly unpleasant manner. As long as he's hanging from the tree, by his flesh no less, he isn't at liberty to go anywhere else for at least the rest of this Chapter.

In addition, the example includes the ravens which are not built as a Component, and so are also controlled (indeed invented at that moment) by Ralph as the Chronicler. The Pain caused by the Ravens could be either Devastating a Trait (if Malethax had a vision related Trait like "Hypnotic Gaze")



or could assign a Weakness (like "Raven Devoured Eyes").

Ralph offers a d6 and a d8 from the Bone Yard. Seth attempts to negotiate taking the Constraint Pain for the d8 but not taking the Weakness. Ralph will have none of it. With no high dice in his Horde Seth is in no position to Contest. Ralph says, "Suck it up or fight me."

Since the first Pain event was caused directly by Ralph's hero, Seth could elect to respond by triggering a Clash – going to the dice to determine whether or not Karn really does impale him on his spear and hang him on the tree. More on that in a later sidebar. If none are available then you can't set up the action. Frame a different scene or pass your turn as Chronicler.

Any immovable Components that are designated as being at that location at that time are automatically present regardless of any player's wishes unless otherwise constrained.

Any characters or other Component that have already been described as being at that location are automatically assumed to have been selected to be there by their owners (after all, if they didn't want them there, they should have described them going somewhere else). If you don't want them there you may offer them a die from your Horde to have them leave (after all if you didn't want them there, you should have selected a different location, or waited for them to depart). If your die is accepted, the owner may relocate the character to any other location that seems reasonable given time and distance. Or they can reject your die by putting forth a die of their own, rolling off and seeing who wins. The loser gets both dice.

You may then select any characters or Components of any other player and place them in the scene. This is a specific authority of the Chronicler and overrides player Dominion. The owning player still has Dominion over how their character arrives, why they're there and what they do; but they are obligated to find a justification for being at that location at that time. If they don't wish their character or characters to be there they may offer you a die from their Horde to change your mind. If you accept the die than only the characters the player wishes to be are there and any they don't wish to be or not. Or you can reject the die by putting forth a die of your own, rolling off and seeing who wins. The loser gets both dice.

After you've selected all of the characters you want to be in the scene, the other players, in clockwise order, may bring in other of their characters that they wish to be there too and can logically arrive. If you don't want those other characters to be there you may offer them a die from your horde to change their mind. If they accept the die, then only the characters you wish to be there are there. They can reject the die by putting forth a die of their own, rolling off and seeing who wins. Again the loser gets both dice



The basic principle at work here is:

- If you're already there, you're there. If the Chronicler doesn't want you there, they have to pay you to get you to leave.
- If the Chronicler wants you there, you're there. If you don't want to be, you have to pay for the privilege to not be.
- If you want to be there, you're there. If the Chronicler doesn't want you there, they have to pay you to keep you out.
- If any Oaths or Weaknesses apply, the Chronicler may call on them to force the player to make the choice the Chronicler wishes about whether to enter, remain, or leave the scene.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** The hero Craddock had sworn an Oath to not interfere when a clan of tribesmen went to war with another faction. The player of the tribesmen is the Chronicler and has set the stage for that war.

The Hero Player announces that Craddock is present in the scene. The Chronicler declares that this is a breach of the Oath and calls upon it to prevent Craddock from arriving. No dice are offered. Instead the Oath is spent which allows the Chronicler to force Craddock's player to make a specific mechanical choice, in this case to "stay away."

The Chronicler should now begin to describe the action they've set up.

# **INFLICT PAIN**

Pain refers to events in the fiction that also carry mechanical consequences. When your actions cause changes to your opponent's Record Sheet, that's Pain.

You don't get to inflict Pain for free however.

- Describe the type of Pain being inflicted.
- Choose a die (any size) from the Bone Yard or your own Horde and offer it to the recipient of the Pain.
- If they accept the Pain as described they add the die to their Horde.
- They may negotiate for different Pain or a different size die.
- They may reject the Pain using one of the options below.

# WHY INFLICT PAIN?

When you are the Chronicler, there are two reasons to attempt to inflict Pain on another player.

First, you may want to weaken the other player or prevent them from interfering or moving towards their objective. As such you will want to make the Pain reasonable. You'll want to make it fit the fiction and seem exciting and entertaining to the other players to make it less likely to be successfully Challenged. And you'll want to make the Pain of a scope and scale that the other player can live with and is willing to accept so that they don't Contest your authority as Chronicler or fight you over it with a Clash. Using your own Components to inflict the Pain makes it possible for them to start a Clash, but using undefined threats makes it easier for them to Contest (the dice go to the Bone Yard instead of you). For their part, accepting Pain lets them keep the dice you offer.

Second, you may want to goad them into fighting you with a Clash or to give you a die to Contest you. As such you'll want to make your Pain heavy enough that they can't possibly accept it (but not so unreasonable as to be Challenged). If you set the fight up to be too one sided, they may find it more effective to resist



by Contest and seize the role of Chronicler for themselves denying you the opportunity to win points. If you want them to actually fight in a Clash, be sure that the Pain is described as being directly inflicted by one of your Components against one of theirs, and that the fight is such that they have at least a chance of scoring some points themselves; or be prepared to risk losing your Chronicler role. **NOTE**: while the types of Pain are all defined mechanically they must be appropriately embedded in the fiction. Pain too great (or too weak) for the fiction can be challenged on that basis.

**NOTE ALSO:** instead of offering a die to the target, you may offer an Oath instead.

You may inflict multiple instances of Pain as part of the same fictional event. A character can be killed by Devastating each remaining die it has, for instance. You may offer multiple dice to the recipient to get them to accept, up to one for each incident of Pain. The recipient can negotiate to treat them separately or accept or reject them as a package.

Inflicting Pain is a power of the Chronicler. If you are not the Chronicler you may role-play your character's actions and position them within the fiction as part of your Dominion over your Components. You may even describe acts of violence. But that violence cannot have mechanical consequences; you cannot Inflict Pain.

If you want to Inflict Pain you must either:

- Become the Chronicler.
- > Trigger a Clash where Inflicting Pain is part of the Spoils you can win.

# **REJECTING PAIN**

Just because the Chronicler hits you with Pain, however, doesn't mean you have to take it. If you don't want to take it, you can:

- Challenge the Chronicler's description of the events causing the Pain if they don't make sense in the story or logically follow from the events of the fiction.
- Contest by advancing a die and looking to take over the role of Chronicler for yourself.
- Take it to the dice and fight the Chronicler in a Clash. This last option is only possible if the source of the Pain is one of the Chronicler's own Components. If it's coming from the world at large this option is not available.

The choice between accepting or rejecting the Pain is one of balancing the benefit of the die received against the loss of the Pain within the



context of the surrounding fiction. If the fiction is setting you up for a greater beating, it is probably advantageous to trigger the Clash and start the fight before you are put at an even greater disadvantage. If the fiction is setting up a beating for someone else it can be advantageous to accept a little Pain and let someone else bear the brunt of it. If the fiction has maneuvered you into a corner where Pain is your future, it is probably best to Contest and seize the role of Chronicler so you can get yourself out of the jam. Only you can trigger a Clash to reject Pain, but any other player may Challenge and any other player who has a Component present may Contest. You always have first option to do so, however.

# TYPES OF PAIN

The types of Pain are a hard limit. These are the only options.

## **DEVASTATE A DIE**

Your target must cross off the slot containing the die and Trait from their Component on their Record Sheet and discard the die to the Bone Yard. They should add a tally to their Discarded Dice box.

**FOR EXAMPLE**: The Chronicler knows that a showdown between his Faction and a rival Faction is coming, but rather than confront them now, he wants to whittle them down a bit first. In the **VOICE OF THE CHRONICLER** he says:

"Turgon's soldiers had been too long without a war. Their discipline did become lax and their time was spent in pursuit of wine and women."

"Take this d6 die and lose your Finesse d6 "Disciplined Soldiers" Trait from your Eagle Legion Component."

The rival may well agree to take this because it's only costing him one die slot and he's getting the d6 back. If he has other objectives of his own to pursue he may not want to tangle with the current Chronicler just yet. Since this Pain was not directly caused by one of the Chronicler's own Component's he cannot trigger a Clash.





# **IMPORTANT NOTE**

Victory Points are only awarded for Devastating Dice by causing damage within a Clash; never by accepting Pain or winning Pain as part of Spoils.

Also remember when accepting a die for Pain: Dice can be regained as a bonus during a Clash, but (except for the Hero) a Devastated Die Slot can never be replaced.

#### TO DESTROY AN ENTIRE COMPONENT

You must Devastate each of the Component's remaining dice. If you describe this as a single event you will likely have to give the target several dice for them to accept it depending on how many actual dice were left in that Component. They should add a tally to their Discarded Dice box for each die discarded.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** A Faction Player has defined "Fortified Watchtowers" as a Component protecting his town. The Chronicler, playing a sorcerer looking to conquer the town, says using the Voice:

"And then did Xxitchil the Sky Lord summon forth a mighty storm. The wind blew and lightning lashed, and, guided by Xxitchil's clawed hand, small tornadoes of vast destructive power touched down one by one atop the watchtowers; destroying them utterly in a rain of shattered wood and stone."

"Devastate each of the three remaining Traits of your Watch Tower. Here have these 2d8."

It's unlikely that the owning player will accept having their tower Component destroyed so easily for a mere 2d8 (unless perhaps the remaining tower Traits were all d4s). Since this Pain was caused directly by one of the Chronicler's Components (Xxitchil), the player can trigger a Clash; which is actually what the Chronicler wants.

Why offer 2d8 if what he really wanted was a Clash? Why not make accepting even more unattractive by offering only a d4? Because then Contesting becomes a much more likely outcome. If the player does Contest the Chronicler wants to be rolling the 2d8 against him.

#### **TO STEAL A TRAIT**

You Devastate a die as normal. The die must be tagged with a Trait that it is reasonable in the fiction to steal. Items and weapons are particularly easy to justify, but magical powers and even skills and talents can be stolen with the right description and lead in.

Your target must cross off that die slot for the stolen die on their Record Sheet and discard the die to the Bone Yard as normal. They should add a tally to their Discarded Dice box.



If you have a Component on your sheet that has an available die slot and which could reasonably take possession of that Trait, you may now add a die (of any size) from your Horde to that slot by copying the Trait and Aspect from the target's sheet exactly. Using a die of different size may require some in fiction justification depending on what was stolen.

If you don't have an available die slot on the Component you wish to take the die, you may recycle one. Move a die back to your Dice Horde and erase the Trait and Aspect from the slot. Then copy over the stolen Trait as above. You cannot recycle a Devastated slot.

#### TO STEAL AN ENTIRE COMPONENT

You must Devastate each of the Component's remaining dice as for Destroying an Entire Component. Your target must cross off all remaining slots for the stolen component on their Record Sheet and discard each of the dice to the Bone Yard. They should add a tally to their Discarded Dice box for each die stolen.

If you have a Component on your sheet you haven't built yet, you may now copy the Traits and Aspects for each of the Traits the stolen Component had from the target's sheet exactly. Do not copy any slots that were Devastated. Add a like number of dice from your Horde to that Component. If you have additional Slots you can create your own Traits as appropriate.

If you don't have an unused Component on your sheet you may recycle one you do have. Move all of the dice of that Component back to your Dice Horde and erase all Traits and Aspects from all dice slots. Any Devastated Slots in that Component remain Devastated. Then copy over the stolen Component as above.

Note: The hero's Hero Component can never be stolen.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** A sorcerer has been dispatched by Astongetorix to recover the Soul Forged Blade "Life Eater" from a local petty warlord. Life Eater has been defined as the Warlord Faction's Required Component having been rolled during the creation of the Ordeal. The Sorcerer's player is the Chronicler and decides to forgo subtlety, using the Voice to say:





"Then the sorcerer Chaldis did stride forward into the camp tent of the Warlord Turgon commanding 'turn the sword over to me and you may yet survive this day'. His eyes flared with unholy light and, mesmerized by the sorcerer's power, Turgon handed over the blade as he was bade.'

Devastate all 4 dice of your sword; I'm going to add Life Eater to my sheet. Here's a d10 and 2d8 from the Bone Yard.

What is the likelihood of Turgon's player deciding to take this Pain without a fight? None whatsoever. It's on!

#### **CONSTRAIN A COMPONENT**

The targeted Component is either tied to a particular location or locations, or barred from a particular location or locations for a period of time. This could be from any source: from being thrown in prison, trapped behind a river with no way to cross, teleported by sorcerous power so far away it will take days to return, to being bedridden with disease, left for dead in a gutter, or being hung from the Tree of Bones.

Regardless of the description applied, the game effect is to make the Component unavailable to join in the action in any scene not set in a location the Component is allowed to be or specifically in the location the Component was restricted to. This can also mean that if the Component cannot leave the designated location it will automatically be included in any action set there.

Each instance of Constrain Pain restricts a Component for one Chapter (the remainder of the current Chapter being one Chapter) after which the Constraint is automatically lifted. It's up to the owning player to describe what that looks like. Offering additional dice can extend the restriction additional Chapters.

The duration can end early if the source of the Constraint is removed: the jailer lets the character out of prison, the river is no longer flooded, the sorcerer teleports them back, someone with healing ability cures the disease, a friend nurses the beaten character back to health, someone cuts them down from the tree.

If the player who established the Constraint doesn't want it lifted, they can Challenge if the description seems unreasonable, Contest and take over as Chronicler to not allow it, or, if they have a Component



in position to resist this effort they can turn it into a Clash with the Component's freedom as the initial Spoils.

**FOR EXAMPLE**: The Chronicler is looking to lay the smack down on a rival Faction and doesn't want the hero butting in. So he invokes the Voice saying:

"And when Caradoc returned to town, the local guards accosted him and threw him into prison. The guard captain had no patience for outsiders disturbing the peace.

"Take this d10 and 1d6 and remain in prison for the rest of this Chapter and the next."

As long as the hero is in prison, he's not in position to interfere when the Chronicler picks his next fight. The Hero Player might be willing to accept the arrangement if it's just temporary, say to the end of this Chapter. They'll be more likely to resist if it's to be an extended stay. If the guards are defined Components of the Chronicler, the Hero Player can resist by triggering a Clash, otherwise that is not an option – the hero cannot fight guards who aren't actually defined as Components as they have no dice to fight with.

#### **INFLICT A WEAKNESS**

A Weakness Trait is a special Trait that is not tied to a die or a Die Slot. Instead each Weakness is a one-time use vulnerability that can be called upon by another player to force you to make a specific game decision. Using the Weakness requires three things:

- The situation must be one where the Weakness can be described as a vulnerability.
- The choice that is being forced must be describable as following from the nature of the Weakness.
- The player calling on the Weakness must have Components in a position to take advantage of it.

Write the Weakness Trait down in the Component's name space. Weaknesses do not use up dice or dice slots. They cannot be removed during the course of an Ordeal unless the Component is destroyed.

#### Automatically win a Contest. Contest the Chronicler with whatever offer you want, and then force them to accept your offer.

 As Chronicler, require another player to enter or remain in a scene, or prevent them from doing so.

**USE WEAKNESSES** 

Force someone to trigger a

or accepting Pain.

Clash instead of Contesting

Prevent someone from Contesting.

& OATHS TO:



# IN A CLASH USE WEAKNESSES & OATHS TO:

- Prevent a player from Flinching.
  - Force someone to join or not join a side.
  - Force an attacker to attack a certain opponent.

• Force another player to Advance a specific die without rerolling it (one die per Oath).

- Prevent a player from using a reroll from an Edge or other source.
- Prevent someone who is trying to Yield from doing so (one time per Oath).
- If, in play, a mechanical decision that does not appear on this list appears absolutely perfect and appropriate to the Weakness/ Oath and the fictional situation, the player can call on it. The targeted Player may Challenge if they think the decision should not be enforceable in this way.

There is no limit to the number of Weakness Traits a Component can have at one time, but each one can only be used once.

**FOR EXAMPLE**: Turok the Iron Lord was demanding the surrender of a convent of Blessed, threatening death if they resisted. Crystal, the player of the Blessed, successfully Contested and in the **VOICE OF THE CHRONICLER** said:

"Having taken up a simple earthen cup and filling it with the waters of the Fountain of Life, the Sister of Light offered it to Turok. And when he had drunk deeply from it, the power of life flowed through him and opened his eyes and heart and his soul was filled with empathy for all around him.

"Take a d8 and Turok now has the Weakness 'Compelled to be Kind and Merciful."

Turok's player, Ralph, may be willing to accept the Weakness if he wants the d8 or to avoid a Clash, but since its one that is very broad in the situations it can be called into, he may be more inclined to resist...

Later, after having accepted the Weakness, Ralph is inflicting Pain by narrating some depredations of Turok's soldiers against another player. Gabrielle calls on the Weakness saying, "Turok is moved to tears by the actions of his men and orders them to stop. I'm Contesting you with this d4 and forcing you to accept my offer by calling on your kind and merciful Weakness. I'm now the Chronicler".

#### **EXTRACT AN OATH**

Oaths are mechanically similar to Weaknesses except they can only be called upon if the Oath is broken. Only Components capable of thought and communication can make an Oath. Taking an Oath is typically a way to seal a deal or temporary alliance. Oaths are inflicted like Pain but it is possible for the Chronicler to have the target make their Oath to a different player.

The character bound by the Oath is obligated to perform a certain task, refrain from taking a certain action, or is required to behave in a certain way. If the character fails to live up to their obligations, then the player they owe the obligation to may call on the Oath to force a mechanical



decision. This is most often related to what the Oath was about, but in some circumstances can represent the karma of the universe falling like a curse on the Oath breaker. It is up to the holder of the Oath to judge whether the Oath was broken or not, but the bound player may Challenge if they feel they are being unfairly treated.

A common negotiation when targeted by Pain is to offer the Chronicler an Oath instead, agreeing to some terms in return to being spared the Pain.

**FOR EXAMPLE**: When Caradoc the hero was traveling he encountered a group of huntsmen from a southern tribe. The player of the hunters was the Chronicler and he wanted to use Caradoc to help him against his enemies. So, employing the Voice he said:

"Rising up from the tall grasses where they had lain in wait unseen, the tribesmen surrounded Caradoc. Prodding him with their poison tipped spears, the chief among them spoke. 'Stranger, know you are in the lands of the Stone Snake Clan. If ye be not an enemy then pledge on your soul to do no harm to the Stone Snake Clan.'

"Will you accept this 1d10 and take an Oath to do no harm to the Stone Snake Clan?"

Caradoc's player is likely to accept Oaths that are in line with his intentions, as an assurance to his would-be allies (or to put them at ease before a betrayal). But there is nothing but the threat of having the Oath called against him to compel him to keep his word. That, and the repercussions among his fellow players of building a reputation for being untrustworthy.

Oath's can also be offered instead of a die by a Chronicler attempting to Inflict Pain.

"Swear an Oath of fealty to me, to serve me as your lord and master, and I will swear to fight alongside you against the witch demon Sithiss."

Here an Oath is being extracted that will fulfill the terms of a Faction's Objective and instead of offering a die, the Chronicler is offering assistance against another player backed by an Oath of his own. If the player rejects this and Contests it, the Chronicler will have to select a die from his Horde to roll off with.



#### **CLAIM YOUR FACTION OBJECTIVE**

This option is not appropriate for all Objectives and may well not be necessary for most. Use this option whenever a Faction has an Objective to obtain something from another Faction and there is no simple way of judging whether that thing gets obtained in the face of opposition.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** Turgon the Warlord has an Objective to collect tribute from a school of warrior monks. Unlike the sword Life Eater in the Steal a Component example, the tribute has not been created as a Component. That doesn't prevent Turgon's player from claiming it as the Spoils of a Clash or taking it by inflicting Pain as the Chronicler.

"And then did Turgon command the school master to hand over the rightful tribute, and trembling with fear the school master didst obey."

The player of the schoolmaster may well have other ideas, of course, depending on what Turgon is offering.



# **BECOMING THE CHRONICLER**

The role of Chronicler changes hands at two times:

- When the current Chronicler is Contested successfully by another player.
- When the Chapter ends.

The Chapter ends when either:

- The current Chronicler passes.
- Players trigger a Clash.

# **CONTESTING THE CHRONICLER**

Any player can Contest the Chronicler's narration at any time. Typically this will be when you're about to eat some Pain and you'd rather not, but it can also be when the fiction takes a turn you don't like, or to interfere when another player is taking Pain.

In a Contest you are attempting to negate whatever the Chronicler just said ("no, that didn't happen") and take over the role of Chronicler for yourself.

You do this by firmly interrupting the Chronicler by saying **"That's not how I remember it"** and offering one or more dice from your Horde. You may also offer the Chronicler a choice between the dice or accepting an Oath instead. If the Chronicler accepts, then you've won the Contest. If the Chronicler doesn't accept then you will dice off to see who wins.

In the dice off you will be rolling the die you offered to the Chronicler and the Chronicler will be rolling the die they offered while inflicting Pain. If they weren't inflicting Pain and have no die, they select one from their Horde. High roll wins, the Chronicler wins ties.

## USING EDGE TOKENS INSTEAD

When you Contest you can put forth an Edge Token instead of a die. This works exactly the same as described above, except the Edge Token trumps all dice. It automatically wins unless the Chronicler counters with an Edge Token of their own (the chronicler wins ties).





## THE RESULTS

- If the Chronicler wins, your Contest fails. The fictional events or Pain you were opposing happens exactly as the Chronicler decreed and you may not Contest again on this issue. You may not now Trigger a Clash.
  - The player who suffered the Pain (usually the same player who Contested) gets to add both of the rolled dice to their Horde.
  - If the Contest wasn't over Pain (no one was being offered a die) then the dice go to the Bone Yard.
- If you win, your Contest succeeds. The fictional events or Pain you were opposing do not happen. You become the Chronicler and must pick up where the previous Chronicler left off.
  - If the Chronicler had been attempting to inflict the Pain with one of their own Components, they get to add both rolled dice to their Horde.
  - If the Chronicler had been attempting to inflict the Pain with "the world at large," the rolled dice get discarded to the Bone Yard.
  - If the Contest didn't involve Pain, then the Chronicler gets to add both rolled dice to their Horde.
- The previous Chronicler cannot immediately Contest back. They must wait until: 1) you've inflicted Pain on some other player, 2) you're trying to inflict Pain on them, or 3) someone else becomes the Chronicler.
- If Edge Tokens were used, they are claimed exactly as for rolled dice above.

# **CONTEST SUMMARY**

- Contest by selecting a die from your Horde.
  - If the Chronicler had offered multiple dice for inflicting the Pain you are Contesting, you may offer up to the same number of dice.



- You may offer the Chronicler a choice between accepting the die or accepting an Oath you're willing to make.
- If the Chronicler chooses to accept your offer you win the Contest automatically.
  - You may call upon an appropriate Oath or Weakness of the Chronicler to force them to accept the offer.
- If the Chronicler doesn't accept your offer you each roll the dice you put forward.
  - The Chronicler rolls the dice they offered while inflicting Pain.
  - If the Chronicler hasn't offered any dice they select one from their Horde to roll.
- The high roller wins.
  - If you are rolling multiple dice, use the highest number rolled.
  - If the rolls are tied, the Chronicler wins.

# AT THE END OF A CHAPTER

A Chapter ends when:

- The Chronicler passes their turn as Chronicler. Note: having the role of Chronicler taken from you in a Contest is not passing your turn, even if you accepted the offer.
- When a Clash is triggered, the authority of the Chronicler is immediately suspended. A new Chapter begins after the Clash is completely resolved.

When a New Chapter Begins:

- Determine the next Chronicler as described in the sidebar.
- The new Chronicler sets up the action for the new Chapter and begins to describe the events of the action.

# DETERMINE THE NEXT CHRONICLER

Any player who wants to be the next Chronicler may claim the privilege at the beginning of a new Chapter. If more than one player wants it (usually the case) use the following order of precedence:

- No player may ever be Chronicler two turns in a row – no exceptions.
- The Hero Player has the first right to be Chronicler
- Otherwise, the Faction Player with the fewest Victory Points this Ordeal takes precedence
- If this is tied, the player with the highest Discarded Dice tally gets to be Chronicler.
- Roll off if this is also tied.

If no one wants to be Chronicler (rare) the eligible player with the highest precedence must take it.





**FOR EXAMPLE**: Earlier in the Ordeal the hero Karn had sworn an Oath of friendship to the mysterious man calling himself Malethax. Karn's player is the Chronicler and has now realized that he'd been duped and Malethax is actually a vile sorcerer in league with the Witch King.

"Karn screams his rage. 'You worm, you despicable toad, I'll teach you to make a mockery of me!' Karn shatters the crystal orb atop your staff of power, Devastate that die, and also take a Weakness, 'Cowed by Karn's Might." It's Ralph's intention to get Seth to trigger a Clash, so he offers 1d8 from the Bone Yard, small enough to not be worth taking but large enough for Seth to not want to risk losing to in a Contest.

Seth has his own ideas. He Contests the Pain by offering a d4 from his Horde. Declaring that such an attack breaks the Oath of friendship, he calls on that Oath to force Ralph to accept his offer. Seth wins the Contest and becomes Chronicler without suffering the intended Pain. Ralph gets to add both the d8 he'd taken from the Bone Yard and Seth's d4 to his own Horde.

Karn says, "Very well, worm, in honor of the Oath I swore I will stay my hand. But know when next we meet it will not be as friends."



# OH YE PURE OF HEART EXCERPT FROM A STORY BY GABRIELLE WORENT

Under a blood red sky, across jagged crags and desolate wastes strode Andru, son of no one. Behind him lay death and the blood-filled cries of dying men. No doubt more lay before him.

The huge sun beat down from a scorched sky, a baleful eye burning the land in anger. It had burnt up the few stunted trees that dared an attempt at life. It had burned to nothing the grasses and the scrubby bushes. For the moment, everything the eye touched was a dark brown. Soon, soon the sun would kill even that, murdering the color as it had killed all else. Waves of heat rose from the hard ground as it filled to the brim and then overflowed. The waves wrapped around Andru's travel-worn boots, wrestling against his every step. Still he strode on.

She ran as one without skill, but experienced enough not to glance behind. Had she looked she would have seen two creatures out of nightmare. They were an unholy cross of scaly reptile and shaggy boar. They ran on four feet, all ending in claws long enough to find purchase on the rough walls at times when rocks blocked the path. Their bodies were long and sinuous, beginning in a small head that was mostly toothy maw, and tapering off at the end into a tail covered in bone spikes and wiry fur. Their eyes were small slits; their teeth long. Two tusks rose from the corners of their mouths, sharp and fierce. They ran swift and low to the ground, ever gaining on their prey. **GABRIELLE WORENT** discovered role playing long before she found her true love of writing. At the young age of fourteen she cut her teeth on Mage: Ascension, though, sadly, all she can remember of that game was that she named her character Winter and was horrible at rolling dice. The unlucky dice continue to be a problem, but that doesn't stop her from playing a wide assortment of RPGs and board games. Gabrielle has published one novel that she's very proud of and two short story collections that she's not totally embarrassed by. Gabrielle lives in Peoria, IL, with her husband and two incredibly fat cats.





# CHAPTER VI: THE CLASH

The Clash is the heart and soul of BLOOD RED SANDS. All other play drives towards this. All of the maneuvering into position and weakening of your opponents with Pain was to give you the biggest advantage in the Clash. Now you will take it to the dice and test your skills against the other players even as your characters are tested with blood and steel.

## **TYPES OF PAIN**

This is how you score points.

- Devastate a Die Scoring points is how you win.
  - Steal a Trait
- Steal a Component
  - Extract an Oath
- Claim your Faction Objective

Winning is why you're playing. Get it?

# **TRIGGERING THE CLASH**

When you're the Chronicler you use Pain to goad other players into fighting you. But you can't actually initiate the fight yourself. A Clash can be triggered over anything: an argument, a negotiation, an intimidation, a seduction, a battle of sorcerous rituals. Most often, however, it will involve blood and steel.

When the Chronicler is trying to inflict Pain on you that you can't accept, and you think the time is right to make him pay for his insolence, slap the table hard and loudly declare, **"That is not how it happened!"** 

You can trigger a Clash only when there is one of the Chronicler's own Components and one of your own Components facing off. Those are the Components that are starting the fight. Fighting requires dice and if you don't have a Component with dice to fight, there can be no fight.

- One of the Chronicler's Components is inflicting Pain on one of your Components.
- The Chronicler is describing one of his Components maneuvering one of yours into a position in the fiction you don't want to be in (note, this often is something that can be described in terms of Pain, particularly Constraint or Weakness).
- You cannot trigger a Clash with the undefined forces of the world that the Chronicler controls.
- You can be forced to trigger a Clash (if otherwise eligible) by an appropriate Oath or Weakness.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** Keith's hero Andrue is attempting to cross the wasteland pursued by his enemy the the Iron Lord Turok, played by Ralph. Ralph is the Chronicler and he describes running Andrue to ground with Turok's Razor Beak riders. He inflicts Pain in the form of Devastating the last two dice of Andrue's sword, enough to destroy the Feature



completely; described as Andrue throwing the sword away in his attempt to escape. For this he offers only 1d4 from the Bone Yard.

Keith attempts to reject this with a Contest, but before he can put forth a die, Ralph calls on Andrue's "Broken Leg" Weakness which was suffered in a prior battle. Ralph states that since Andrue's leg is broken, that he has no hope of outrunning the Razor Beaks. He uses the Weakness to force the Keith to make the mechanical decision to not Contest. If he doesn't want to throw away the sword to escape, he'll have to fight. As this makes good sense in the fiction, Keith doesn't try to Challenge it.

# THE SPOILS OF WAR

You win the Spoils when you win the Clash, as if true warriors needed another reason to ravage their enemies. What are the Spoils? Are they jewels? Piles of gold? Chests of treasure? Nonsense. Spoils are Pain. When you win a Clash you get to inflict more Pain, what could be better?

Setting Spoils uses a competitive bidding process that will establish what Pain you will inflict on your opponent if you win and what Pain they will inflict on you if they win.

As Chronicler, you bid first, but your bid is already established by the Pain or event that triggered the Clash. Often you will have established several things defined or definable as Pain in your description. By triggering a Clash, the targeted player has rejected all of them. You must choose one of them to be your first bid. The rest will have to be bid one at a time, typically in the order they were to occur in. You may Call the bidding and proceed to the Clash without having added all of the Pain you had initially declared to the Spoils.





# TYPES OF STIPULATIONS

- Limit Components
  - Limit Traits
  - Limit Aspects
- Limit Reinforcing
- Limit Refreshing
- Reduce the severity of already named Pain

The bidding now alternates back and forth with each side doing one of the following:

- Naming a new Pain that your opponent will suffer when they lose the Clash.
- Propose a new Stipulation that your opponent (and maybe yourself) has to fight under during the Clash.
- Propose a reduction in Pain already named by your opponent against you.
  - Flinch, and discard all named Pain and Stipulations, proceeding to the Clash with only the minimal Default Spoils.
  - Call, and proceed to the Clash with the Spoils as named.

To make the bidding go faster, you can bid multiple incidents of Pain at once. You can declare a character is killed as your bid, but this is just short hand for your intention to Devastate each remaining Trait of that Component one at a time. However, your opponent must agree and include an equivalent number of incidents in their bid, or else they can insist that you do them one at a time, especially if they wish to Call before things spiral too large.

#### **STIPULATIONS**

Stipulations provide variety to the Clash and serve as another means of balancing the odds. When your opponent has named Pain for you to suffer that is more severe than the Pain they stand to suffer, you can escalate by naming even more Pain, or you can use a Stipulation to handicap them.

**FOR EXAMPLE**: setting Stipulations are like a form of dare. "Sure, I'll risk losing an entire Component against you losing only one Trait. But you have to fight with one hand tied behind your back."

Stipulations are just proposals. The advantage to your opponent in accepting them is that they count as your bid, which you didn't use to increase their potential Pain. They can negotiate a slightly different stipulation, or ask you to adhere to the same stipulation. The negotiation can also be contingent on you accepting their next Stipulation. "Fine,



I'll accept your limitation if you accept mine." That uses up their bid as well, but ensures you won't shaft them on the proposal.

If agreement is not reached and they refuse to accept your Stipulation, then it's still your turn and you can make them regret their choice by nailing them with even bigger Pain.

#### LIMIT COMPONENTS

A Stipulation can restrict your opponent from using one of their Components in the upcoming Clash. It cannot be the Component that was targeted in the action that triggered the Clash and it cannot be the only other Component your opponent has available.

Instead of identifying a specific Component that cannot be used, this Stipulation can name specific Components that are the only ones that can be used. This is usually accompanied by accepting a similar Stipulation yourself.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** "Ok, how about this: Malethax and his oh-so-scary Staff of Power vs. Karn in a cage match to the death. I won't even bring my spear. Are you tough enough?"

#### LIMIT TRAITS

Less limiting, but also less likely to be refused, you can use a Stipulation to restrict your opponent from using a specific Trait or Traits.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** "Ok, I'll take Malethax up against you mano-a-mano, but you don't get to use that d10 Force Legendary Trait that you keep bashing people's head in with. Still wanna go, tough guy?"

#### LIMIT ASPECTS

With this Stipulation, name a particular Aspect (like "Force" or "Soul Fused Sorcery" or "Weaknesses") or a particular type of Aspect (like "all Sorcery." Your opponent can still use all of their dice tagged with that Aspect in the upcoming clash, but they don't get to use the special powers that come with those Aspects. It's as if the dice were just plain old dice with no associated power.



#### **SPOILS STRATEGY**

If you set your Pain too high, your opponent has the opportunity to Flinch and drop to Default Spoils; denying you the possibility of scoring major points in a big Clash and possibly causing you to miss an opportunity to win your Objective. Alternatively your opponent can ask for even bigger Pain in return, daring you to take it or Flinch which would not only have the same drawbacks as the above, but put you at a disadvantage to boot. If they ask for too much relative to what you asked for, you have the opportunity to hit them with Stipulations.

The idea here is to use Stipulations as a form of handicapping. If your opponent is asking you to risk more than you're asking them to risk, use Stipulations to balance the scales by swinging the odds in your favor. You, then have a greater chance to win smaller stakes, while your opponent has a smaller chance to win larger stakes. Thus, each player has a choice; voluntarily select Spoils that are reasonable and balanced, or engage in an escalating game of chicken with your opponent. Since ultimately such a game either ends in weak Default Spoils or someone getting hammered, the true winners of such escalation are the other players who get to sit back and watch you destroy each other.

Of course, not asking for large enough Spoils means you're putting your dice at risk in Conflict for rewards that may well not be worth it. That tension is the purpose of Spoils in Blood Red Sands. **FOR EXAMPLE**: "So, based on the Spoils so far, if you win this Clash, you'll achieve your Objective, fine. But I say you don't get to use your Blessed powers in this one. Otherwise I'll Flinch and we'll go to Default Spoils and you'll lose the chance to get your Objective."

#### LIMIT REINFORCING

Later in this chapter you'll learn about bringing additional Components into the Clash after it's begun. This Stipulation says your opponent isn't allowed to do that. You probably shouldn't expect it to be accepted unless you agree to the same.

#### LIMIT REFRESHING

Later in this chapter you'll learn about how you can reuse dice you've already used during the Clash. This Stipulation says your opponent isn't allowed to do that. It doesn't impact refreshing from Aspects or Vows. You probably shouldn't expect it to be accepted unless you agree to the same.

#### **REDUCE THE SEVERITY OF PAIN**

If your opponent has named a degree of Pain that's too big for you to live with, you have five options:

- **ESCALATE** by naming big Pain right back, evening the stakes and daring your opponent to take it.
- BALANCE the odds by using one of the previous Stipulations so that even though the Spoils are large, you'll be less likely to lose them.
- **CALL** so things don't escalate even further, and fight on; knowing that if you win, you won't suffer that Pain anyway.
- FLINCH and drop down to Default Spoils. Doing so basically means both you and your opponent failed to set meaningful and acceptable Spoils so your Clash will be an abbreviated one so as not waste everyone's time.
- USE YOUR TURN in the bidding to try to DEESCALATE. Instead of naming new Pain or a new Stipulation, ask your opponent to reduce the severity of the Pain they've already announced. If they accept this counts as your bid.



# **FLINCHING**

Some would say that Flinching is for the weak, for those not tough enough to take the Pain their opponent is dishing out and not metal enough to respond by dishing even more right back; and most of the time they'd be right. But sometimes Flinching is an exceptionally brilliant tactical move which can thwart your opponent's plans at little cost to yourself (save a bit of pride). Part of the fun of the game is figuring out when it's one and when it's the other. Here's a clue, if your friends are snorting in disgust and calling you a feeb, you probably chose poorly.

If you Flinch you'll fight only a small Clash:

- All of the Pain and Stipulations established for the current Spoils are discarded.
- Proceed to the Clash using only the Default Spoils.
- You cannot Refresh during the Clash as your penalty for Flinching.
- Your opponent will thus only be able to Refresh once, which will tend to keep the Clash brief and give them an advantage.
- Neither side can Reinforce, which will also keep the Clash brief.
- No other players may join in. This Clash is limited to the two jokers who couldn't agree on real stakes.
- You may be prevented from Flinching by a Weakness or Oath.

## THE DEFAULT SPOILS

Use the Default Spoils whenever one of the players Flinch while setting Spoils.

- There is only one Pain and it is the same for both players.
- Whoever loses takes a Weakness "Defeated by <Opposing Player>"
- This Weakness can be used by the victor (and only the victor) in any Clash where they find themselves facing the loser. It is automatically justifiable to use for any of the in-Clash effects.

#### A player may be tempted to Flinch to avoid any Spoils that might result in them losing their

USING WEAKNESSES TO DEFUSE TURTLING

Objective (or the opponent gaining theirs). If the Spoils are excessively high, this is perfectly acceptable play. But used repeatedly as a defensive measure (like a turtle retreating into its shell) it's lame, and you can put a stop to it.

When a player Flinches and then Yields the Clash they suffer a Weakness that can be used only by you. You can then use that Weakness to prevent them from Flinching next time. Or, you can let them Flinch again, have two Weaknesses and in the next Clash use one to stop them from Flinching and the other to stop their first attempt to Yield as well.



## PREPARE FOR BATTLE CALLING

- Trigger the Clash
- Determine the Spoils
  - Gather Allies
- Commit Components
  - Roll the Dice

## **FIGHT IT OUT**

- Advance Dice
- Determine Damage
- Aspects Take Effect
- Reinforce Between Rounds

# AFTERMATH

- Somebody Yields
- > They eat the Pain of the Spoils

#### When it's your turn to bid, naming a new Pain or a Stipulation gives your opponent the chance to escalate even further, possibly putting you in a bad position or forcing you to Flinch. It also runs the risk of causing your opponent to Flinch which you often will not want. There are two ways to score points in **BLOOD RED SANDS**, completing your Objective and Devastating your opponent in a Clash. Completing your Objective will most often require winning suitable Spoils which a Flinch will deny you. The brief Clash you fight with a Flinch also doesn't give as much opportunity to score points.

Part of the art of Spoils setting is knowing when to Call – when to accept the Spoils as they are and go for it. After all, if you win, it doesn't matter how lopsided the Spoils were.

 Proceed to the Clash using all of the named Pain and Stipulations as part of the Spoils.

# **OTHER PLAYERS JOIN IN**

There can only be two sides in a Clash although any number of players can participate on each side. Each side will have a **LEADER**.

- The Chronicler is always the Leader of one side (although they no longer have any Chronicler authority).
- The player who opposed the Chronicler and triggered the Clash is the Leader of the other.

Starting with the first non-leader to the left of the Chronicler each player who has at least one Component present in the scene may join in the Clash.

- In a Clash for Default Spoils following a Flinch no allies can join either side.
- You can join either side as you desire or sit it out.
- The Leaders cannot refuse your assistance (or interference).



- You can negotiate your assistance for promises of future support, selling your sword to the highest bidder and causing the Leader to take an appropriate Oath to deliver on their promise.
- You do not suffer the Spoils, that is between the leaders.
- If you have an appropriate Oath or Weakness you can be forced to join one side or the other.

**FOR EXAMPLE**: Andrue has sworn an oath to defend a Convent of Blessed nuns. When Turok the Iron Lord attacks, the Convent player, Crystal, triggers a Clash. If Andrue fails to join the defense of the Convent, Crystal may declare the Oath breached and use it to force Andrue to join their side.

# **COMMIT RESOURCES**

Players now declare and describe the Components and Traits they are committing to the Clash.

- The Chronicler commits first.
- The other Leader commits second.
- Then each of the assisting players in the order they joined.

You may commit up to 2 Components at the beginning of any Clash. You'll have the opportunity to **REINFORCE** to bring in more Components during the Clash, but you start with only 2. If there is clearly a character or other Component that is involved in the fictional activity that triggered the Clash, then they must be committed. Other Components must be properly positioned with the fiction to be able to participate. Of course, you must abide by any Stipulation that prevents you from using a Component. If you have only one Component available, you can enter the Clash with only one, but you'll be at a severe disadvantage. If you have no Components available, you can't enter the Clash at all.

Decide which Traits you wish to use in the Clash and collect the dice for them from your Record Sheet. Announce the Traits to your fellow players along with their Aspect and place them in the appropriate section

## COMMITTING COMPONENTS

On their turn, the Chronicler described an assassin character murdering the grandmaster of a rival guild; inflicting the Pain of destroying the grandmaster character. When the guild player triggered the Clash, both the assassin and the grandmaster are committed automatically.

In addition, the guild player has another Component described as the grandmaster's bodyguard. It is logical that this Component could be committed as well unless it was previously constrained in some way.

Similarly the guild headquarters has been created and has several Traits representing its security measures. It can only be committed if the scene is actually set at the headquarters.

It is, so the player elects to commit the headquarters immediately and bring in the bodyguard at the first opportunity to Reinforce.

If instead the grandmaster had been attacked on the road, the headquarters would not be available. But the player could announce that they are creating a unit of soldiers who were serving as his escort.



# **ALLIES?**

The Leader is a powerful position. By ordering your assisting players to attack, you can use them to drain off enemy resources before attacking yourself.

However, you risk your allies scoring more points than you do, using up your side's Refreshes frivolously, or Yielding at the worst possible moment. of the Battle Mat. Of course you must abide by any Stipulation that prevents you from using a Trait.

You may also take the opportunity to create additional Components with your available dice. Once the dice are rolled you will be limited in when you are able to do so.

## HEROES

Heroes participate in Clashes in exactly the same way. Their Features are treated like any other Component. Note that the hero themself can acquire more than six dice worth of Traits making them able to bring more dice into a Clash than even Faction Main Characters.

# TIME TO ROLL

All players now roll the dice they've committed. Rolled dice that have not yet been used are considered to be **AVAILABLE**. All committed dice start out as Available and should be stored in the center section of the Battle Mat in the column linked to their Aspect color after they are rolled. The color coding allows your opponents to immediately see what combination of dice you have at your disposal.

Available dice are not hard linked to the Component or Trait they came from. If you have three d6 Force dice you do not need to keep track of which came from where. You can decide which Trait a die is linked to at the moment you use that die or it becomes damaged. You should base your description of your attack and defense on the Trait and Aspect of the die you advance.

All rolls are open and you can (and should) examine your opponent's dice when planning your strategy.

#### EDGE

Each player has Edge Tokens that represent some undefined advantage they possess. It may be extra training or preparation, better intelligence, secret techniques, or just the karmic forces of the universe showing favor.

You may use an Edge Token to reroll any one Available die at any time, including when you're just about to Advance it.



When you use an Edge Token, place it underneath the die you rerolled. From now on that token shares the fate of its die. If the die is Devastated the token is discarded to the Bone Yard. If the die is Battered, the token is out of the Conflict. If the die is used, the token remains with it. If the die is Refreshed, the token is also Refreshed and returns to the Edge box ready to be used again.

It is also possible to take an Edge Token from the Bone Yard instead of a die as part of your bonus draw for Battering an opponent's die. The token is immediately available for use. For heroes, such a draw is temporary; it does not carry forward into future Ordeals.

If the player has an applicable Oath or Weakness, any other player who can justify it can call on it to prevent that player from using an Edge Token. Do so after they declare their intent but before they roll. That die cannot be rerolled until it has been used, taken as damage, or the Clash ends.

- Use an Edge Token to reroll a die at any time.
- You may use as many tokens as desired at a time.
- You may reroll the same die using multiple tokens.
- Place the token underneath the die.
- It will share the fate of the die it's linked to.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** Karn is again doing battle with the evil Malethax. Malethax is attacking but Seth rolled terribly with his d10 Soul Reaper Sorcery die. He decides to use one of his Edge Tokens to reroll it. Ralph has other ideas.

He remembers that Malethax has a "Shattered Leg" Weakness from an earlier encounter. He calls on that saying "The pain from your Shattered Leg breaks your concentration and you're unable to concentrate your dark powers. No reroll for you." Seth is now prohibited from rerolling that die at all until it has been used as is, taken as damage, or the Clash ends.

# **TRIGGERING A CLASH**

"AND THEN DID THE HERO KARN BRING FORTH THE DEATH VIPER SPEAR AND, HAVING IMPALED THE VILE SORCERER MALETHAX UPON IT, HUNG HIM BY HIS FLESH FROM THE TREE OF BONES AND THE RAVENS DIDST DEVOUR HIS EYES."

#### "THAT'S NOT HOW IT HAPPENED!"

- Malethax's player, Seth, triggers a Clash, making it clear that Karn did not impale him on his spear or anything else.
- Karn's player, Ralph, bids first for the Spoils. If Ralph wins, Malethax will indeed hang by his flesh from the Tree and be Constrained for the next Chapter.
- Seth bids that if he wins, Karn's Death Viper Spear will lose its Soul Fused die.
- Ralph bids that Malethax will also suffer the Weakness "Raven Devoured Eyes."



- Seth bids to devastate another die from Karn's Spear.
- Ralph bids to Constrain Malethax for an additional Chapter.
  - Seth could escalate further, but decides to not give Ralph the opportunity to demand more. He Calls.
  - After sides are established and all of the dice are allocated and rolled, Ralph will make the first attack. It will tie into that initial narration that Malethax's player opposed.
  - "Karn takes up the Soul Fused Spear Death Viper and with a mighty thrust fueled by righteous rage impales the vile sorcerer Malethax through the belly!"
    - Ralph will then advance his attacking dice, which, given what he's just said, should include the die from the spear's Soul Fused Trait.
  - Seth's defense will determine whether or not Malethax did or didn't get impaled.

# **FIGHT!**

Players will battle it out by selecting Available dice from their Battle Mat and advancing them at their opponent. Dice will be damaged and lost, the special Aspect powers will come into play, and eventually one side will be beaten into submission.

The Chronicler's side makes the first attack. The opposing side defends. This is an **EXCHANGE**. Then they switch for the next Exchange.

- Exchange #1: Chronicler's side attacks, selected target defends.
- Exchange #2: opposing side attacks, selected target defends.
- After either Exchange is resolved, the defender may Yield.
- When both sides have attacked, the round is over.
- Eligible players may now Reinforce.
- Begin the next round with Exchange #1.
- Continue until one side Yields.

# MAKE AN ATTACK

#### **MULTIPLAYER SIDES**

When there is more than one player on a side, the Leader chooses which player will make the attack for their side. The chosen player will choose who to attack on the opposing side. Players can never attack members of their own side.

If the attacking player has an applicable Oath or Weakness, any other player who can justify it can call on it to choose who that player will attack.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** Iron Lord Turok, played by Ralph, has previously defeated Keith's hero Andrue for Default Spoils inflicting a "Defeated by Turok" Weakness on him. Later the Iron Lord and some Townsfolk are again fighting Andrue and Crystal's Convent of Blessed. Crystal is the leader of their side and directs Andrue to make his attack. Keith announces he is attacking Turok at which point Ralph calls on the



Weakness saying, "You're too intimidated to attack me, attack the Townsfolk instead."

#### **ADVANCE TWO DICE**

When you are the attacking player, choose exactly two of your available dice and advance them by moving them to the edge of your Battle Mat facing your opponent (without changing the number showing). The sum of these two dice is your Attack Score. The Soul Fused Aspect allows you to advance its die as a third die in the attack (i.e. it counts towards the total but doesn't count as an additional die). The other Aspects each have their own special powers which will take effect later in the exchange.

If you have an applicable Oath or Weakness, any other player who can justify it can call on it to choose any one Available die you must or cannot advance.

**FOR EXAMPLE**: Karn is being attacked by the vile Malethax. Malethax is suffering from a Weakness "Raven Devoured Eyes." When Seth Advances two of Malethax's best dice, dice capable of doing some serious damage to Karn, Ralph calls on the Weakness. "It's hard to attack when you can't see, even using your sorcery. Use that d8 that rolled a 1 instead of that Sorcery die that rolled a 9."

#### **DESCRIBE YOUR ATTACK**

Each pair of advanced dice is a specific action that a character is taking. Describe what that character is doing to harm your opponent or gain an advantage in the fiction. It's ok to say what you'd like to happen as a result, but it should be understood that what actually happens depends on the result of the Exchange.

Your description should represent a discrete period of time of a scale suitable to the conflict. The time scale of a duel is likely measured in individual blows lasting fractions of a second. The time scale of a battle may be measured in the maneuvers of troops lasting several minutes. The time scale of a diplomatic negotiation may be measured in hours over the course of several days.

## DESCRIPTIONS DURING A CLASH

All advancing dice should be accompanied by descriptions of actions and deeds done. You should aim to be entertaining and also strategic with how you describe your attacks. Your descriptions should tie back to the Traits and Aspects of the dice you Advance, although there is leeway here to make descriptions that are interesting. Essentially, what you say comes true if your attack is not Reversed or Blocked. So in addition to being a commentary on the type of character you have, it also can be an effective positioning tool in the fiction.

You cannot kill or destroy Components with mere description (although you can narrate damage, non-debilitating injury, or killing a few members of a group). You can't inflict Pain of any kind nor cause the Spoils to come true or invalidate them with your descriptions. Beyond that, the only limit is what your fellow players will Challenge as being too absurd for their tastes.



# SOUL FUSED DICE ON DEFENSE

Yes, one die plus one Soul Fused die is a Reversal. No, the Soul Fused die can't be the die kept.

> Yes, two dice plus one Soul Fused die is a Block.

But, three dice plus a Soul Fused die is still damaged, including the Soul Fused die (which is essentially wasted). The scope of your description should be consistent with the sum of the dice you're advancing. Higher sums should accompany more powerful, dramatic or impressive attacks. Lower sums should indicate more limited, weak, or indecisive attacks.

Take inspiration from the Traits and Aspects of the dice you're advancing. Force dice should be accompanied by aggression and anger. Sorcery dice should be accompanied by appropriate sorcerous effects. If you're attacking using a "Master of the Blade" Finesse Trait and a "Decapitating Strike" Force Trait, describe an attack of such speed and precision it sends heads flying in fountains of blood.

Note: how much actual injury is inflicted will be determined by how effective the defense was and the amount of actual damage suffered. Merely saying you decapitated the hero doesn't make it so, even if you hit.

# **DEFEND YOURSELF**

#### **ADVANCE ONE OR MORE DICE**

If targeted by an attack you must advance as many dice as necessary (fewer is better) to equal or exceed the Attack Score.

You can use any combination of Available dice whose sum is at least equal to the attacker's sum. The Soul Fused Aspect allows you to add it to your Defense Score when you advance it, but it does not count towards the total number of dice you advanced. The other Aspects each have their own special powers which will take effect later in the exchange

If you have an applicable Oath or Weakness, any other player who can justify it can call on it to choose any one Available die you must Advance. This can be done after seeing what dice the attacker is using.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** Turok and the townsfolk are still engaged in battle against the Blessed and Andrue. Turok has advanced dice to attack the Blessed and the Blessed have defended with enough dice to Block. They were able to do so without using their biggest most powerful dice and the town player, Seth, knows those dice will be coming for him on the Blessed's attack.



The Blessed's Mother Superior has been inflicted with a Weakness "Goaded into Anger". Seth calls on it to force Crystal to advance her strongest die instead, a d10 Blessed die showing a 10. He figures it's better to have that die whack Turok instead of him.

## **DEFENSE RESULTS**

#### REVERSAL

If you meet the Attack Score using only one die you've scored a major success and completely reversed the attack. Describe how you thwarted the attacker and set yourself up for a major counter.

- Keep the die you Advanced, don't set it aside as Used at the end of the Exchange. If you advanced a Soul Fused die along with a single other die, you may not keep that as your Reversal die.
- When your side attacks next, the Leader must choose you to make the attack.
- > You must attack the player you Reversed.
- You get to (and must) reuse the die you Reversed with as one of the two dice you advance on the attack. You'll keep the same number and get to use the Aspect power again.

#### **BLOCK**

If you can meet the Attack Score using exactly two dice you've successfully stopped the attack. Describe how you parried, avoided, or otherwise prevented the attack from inflicting harm.

- No damage is suffered.
- After the Exchange, the dice you used will be moved to the **USED** section of your Battle Mat.

#### DAMAGED

If you need more than two dice to meet the Attack Score, the attack succeeds and your dice all become damaged. Describe how the attack your opponent launched causes injury to the dice you just lost.



# DAMAGE

Damage is interpreted broadly to include any inconvenience or loss of effectiveness from physical wounds and fatigue, to loss of social standing, becoming emotionally distraught, or being maneuvered into a disadvantageous position.

#### **DICE DAMAGE STATES**

All dice in a Clash are in one of five states determined by their position on the Battle Mat. Each state represents a progressive degree of damage or injury.

AVAILABLE: These dice are uninjured and ready for action. This is the "healthiest" die state. These dice are located in the center section of their respective Aspect column on the Battle Mat.

ADVANCED: This is a temporary state that a die enters when it is called into action in an Exchange. After the Exchange the die will most likely no longer be "healthy." These dice are located in the top section of their respective Aspect column on your Battle Mat.

- Damaged dice will be rerolled to determine how damaged they are.
- Any die that shows an even number on the damage reroll is Battered.
- Any die that shows an odd number on the damage reroll is Devastated.
- Leave them where they are for now as their state may be altered by the Aspects you advanced.

#### ROUTED

If you cannot meet the attack score, even with all of your available dice, you must immediately either find a way (using Rerolls or Refreshes if available) or Yield. If you Yield:

- All of your remaining dice are damaged. Reroll them to determine Battered or Devastated as above.
- Since you did not successfully defend, none of your Aspects take effect.

# DAMAGE

Damage is suffered whenever you cannot defend an attack using just one (Reversal) or two (Block) dice. When more dice are needed, your defense is only partially successful – you're still in the fight, but you do suffer the ignominy of the attack as well as damage.

When three or more dice are used to defend, they all become damaged. Reroll each of the damaged dice and place them back in the same Advanced section on the Battle Mat. Unless you were Routed you will still get to use each of their Aspects.

#### BATTERED

If the damage roll is even, the die you advanced becomes Battered. Battered dice are lost only for the duration of this Clash. You'll get them back for the next one. At the end of the Exchange you'll move the die back to your Record Sheet. If you have multiple dice of the same size and Aspect, you can choose which die slot to return it to.



The player inflicting the Battered result gets a bonus draw of one die from the Bone Yard as a reward. It must be the smallest die size available and is put into that player's Dice Horde for future use. If an Edge Token is available in the Bone Yard it may be taken instead.

If, during a Clash, all of the Hero Component's remaining dice are Battered, and the hero's side goes on to lose the Clash, the hero is **BROKEN** and must retire.

- Battered dice go back to their Record Sheet.
- Opponent gets to add the smallest die in the Bone Yard (or an Edge Token) to their Dice Horde.

#### DEVASTATED

If the damage roll is odd, the die you advanced becomes Devastated. Devastated dice are lost for the remainder of the Ordeal. Heroes will get them back for the next Ordeal they are in, but for Factions, they are gone for good. At the end of the Exchange you'll discard the die to the Bone Yard and cross the die slot off of your Record Sheet. If you have multiple dice of the same size and Aspect, you can choose which die slot to cross out. If a Component has all of its die slots crossed out, it is destroyed or killed.

Tally a mark to your **DICE DISCARDED** box when you discard the die. Note: Some Aspects allow you to avoid discarding the die. Only tally the mark if you actually discard it.

The player inflicting the Devastated result gets a bonus of one **VICTORY POINT**. They tally the mark in their Victory Points This Ordeal box. This is the primary source of Victory Points in the game. Try to score these points as frequently as possible. This is earned regardless of whether the die is actually discarded or not. If, at any time, all of the hero's dice slots have been crossed out, the hero is dead.

- Devastated dice are discarded to the Bone Yard.
- Tally a mark in your Dice Discarded box.
- Cross out the dice slot on your Record Sheet.
- Your opponent scores one Victory Point.



**USED**: These dice are fatigued, worn, or otherwise rendered unavailable. This is the lightest form of injury and can be recovered from during a Clash by Refreshing. These dice are located in the bottom section of their respective Aspect column on your Battle Mat.

**BATTERED**: These dice are truly injured, damaged, dropped, or otherwise rendered impotent. They are out of the current Clash completely but are recovered for future ones. These dice are removed from the Battle Mat and located back in their designated die slot on your Record Sheet.

**DEVASTATED:** These dice are totally, completely, and utterly destroyed. They are out of the entire Ordeal and their die slot on your Record Sheet is crossed out. Remove them from the Battle Mat and discard them to the Bone Yard. Heroes can recover Devastated dice for the next Ordeal, but never in the current Ordeal
### **PYRRHIC VICTORIES**

If the defender has to take damage with a large number of dice, they will have a large number of Aspects available to take effect and potentially wreak havoc with the attacker.

This is by design. Sometimes, taking the blow in order to unleash cosmic destruction is a worthwhile trade.

# **INFLICTING WEAKNESSES**

When you suffer a Devastated result in a Clash you may offer to take a Weakness instead if it makes sense in the fiction to do so. Negotiate with the attacker the exact nature of the Weakness (or multiple Weaknesses) you are willing to take instead of the die being discarded. You will have to discard the die as normal if the attacker refuses your offer.

If accepted:

- The Devastated die is moved to **BATTERED** status instead of being discarded.
- No die slot is crossed out.
- The attacker still gets one Victory Point
- Define the Weakness Trait in a manner consistent with the source of the damage.
- If the Weakness would be applicable to the current Clash it can be immediately called upon.

# **ASPECTS TAKE EFFECT**

What has been described so far is the basic procedure. Aspects have special powers that can alter this process and cause a variety of effects that can cause more damage or help mitigate damage that was suffered.

- Do not implement any of the damage effects until the Aspect powers are resolved.
- Leave all Advanced dice exactly where they are on the Battle Mat for now.
- Implement the Aspects in the order they are listed on your Battle Mat (attacker first in each category) following the instructions for the power listed for each (these instructions are also found at the end of this chapter).
- This will likely change the status of several dice.



# **CLEAN UP THE DICE**

After all of the Aspects have taken effect and any damage has been adjusted, the Exchange is over. The dice must now be moved to their proper place in preparation for the next Exchange or the end of the round.

- Any dice that remain Devastated are discarded to the Bone Yard, and a Discarded Dice tally marked.
- Any dice that remain Battered are returned to their proper slot on the owner's Record Sheet.
- Any dice that were Advanced but not damaged are moved to the corresponding **USED** section of the Battle Mat.
- It is possible that Aspect use may cause a die to return to **AVAILABLE** status.
- A defender's die used in a **REVERSAL** is left where it is in the **ADVANCED** section for the follow up attack.

If that finishes the Chronicler side's attack, proceed to the next Exchange with the opponent as the attacker.

If that was the second Exchange of the Round, proceed to the end of the Round.

# **GETTING MORE DICE**

There are two ways of getting more Available dice to do battle with. Refreshing and Reinforcing. Refreshing is the act of retrieving dice that have already been Used. Reinforcing is the act of committing more Traits and Components to the Clash and moving their dice from your Record Sheet to the Battle Mat.

# REFRESHING

When dice are Advanced in an Exchange they become Used if not damaged or otherwise affected by Aspects. Used dice are set in their designated spot below the Available area on the Battle Mat.



# REFRESHING

With only three Refreshes, the Conflict will eventually end as one side will run out of dice. The benefit of claiming the first Refresh is that you can potentially get two. But you'll often have to claim early to get it before you have that many used dice to benefit. The other side will then have the ability to starve you out by not taking their refresh for as long as they can hold out.

Any player on a side can claim the Refresh any time they Advance dice.

It is possible, and a valid strategy, to use up your side's Refresh, making you best able to attack and score points while your "allies" remain weak and are thus attractive targets for your opponent.

The Leader will have to consider this when selecting a player to make an attack.

### THE HERO'S VOW

Not every Ordeal will include the hero making a mighty Vow, but many of them will. When the hero is battered and bruised, tossed about by fate, and about to be overwhelmed by the forces of darkness, this is when they cry to the heavens, invoke the names of their ancestors, or swear on their very souls for the strength to triumph.

When you make a Vow you must Rise Up and speak the Vow in character with whatever passion and oratory skills you can muster and is appropriate for the character. The Vow is very powerful, if you aren't willing to entertain your fellow players when you make it, you don't get to do it.

The words of the Vow should be as elaborate, threatening and purple as appropriate, but ultimately all vows must fall into one of three categories. Each can be declared only once per Ordeal.

A VOW THAT A FACTION WILL FAIL: The Faction is either the one that has just attacked you or that you're about to attack. Whatever its objective is, you've dedicated yourself to stopping it. The objective cannot already have been irrecoverably failed when the Vow is made. When it is your turn to Advance dice (on attack or defense) and your side is eligible, you may choose to Refresh. Reroll all of your Used dice immediately and move them to their designated Available space on the Battle Mat. Any Edge Tokens under the dice are returned to the Edge Box, available to be used again.

# **REFRESH ELIGIBILITY**

- There can be a maximum of three Refreshes (from any combination of players) during a single Clash. After the third, the Clash continues but with no more Refreshes from either side.
- Either side can claim the first Refresh (by any player on that side when it is their turn to Advance dice).
- The second Refresh can only be claimed by a player on the other side.
- The third and final Refresh can only be claimed by a player on the first side.
- Note: if fighting for Default Spoils, there is only one Refresh available and it can only be claimed by the side that didn't Flinch.
- Always reroll any dice that are being Refreshed.
- Always take any Used Edge Tokens and return them to the Edge Token box where they can be used again.

### HERO'S VOW

See the sidebar for details on how the hero can make a Vow during a Clash. When they do the game mechanics are very similar to a Refresh, only more powerful. The hero gets their second wind and is inspired to feats of greatness.

- Only the Hero Player can make a Vow.
- You may do so when you're about to Advance dice on attack or defense.
- You may immediately Refresh all of your Used dice regardless of eligibility. This can be done even if all normal Refreshes have been



used, or even if you Flinched and normally cannot. It has no impact on the eligibility for normal Refreshes for the rest of the players.

- In addition you may immediately Refresh all Battered dice. Dice that have been damaged and returned to your Record Sheet are now rerolled and are once again Available.
- You also immediately gain one Doom and potentially another one if the Vow is not fulfilled.

### REINFORCING

Reinforcing can only occur at the end of a round, after each side has taken an exchange as the attacker. Only players who Advanced dice during the previous round can Reinforce. If you didn't use any of your dice, you don't get to add more. After everyone has Reinforced, proceed with the next Exchange.

If you are fighting over Default Spoils, no player may Reinforce at all. Fight only with your original Components. If you are eligible to Reinforce you may do any one of the following:

- Add additional dice from already Committed Components.
- Commit one additional Component.
- Create a new Component and Commit it.
- Add a new player to a side.

Immediately collect all of the dice you feel are appropriate, roll them and add them to the Battle Mat in the appropriate Available spot. Announce their Traits and Aspects as you go.

#### **ADD ADDITIONAL DICE**

These may be dice you previously refrained from committing because you thought they didn't really apply and wanted to display your good sportsmanship. Now you feel conditions have changed and the Traits do apply and you want to claim the dice.

If you have empty dice slots that you haven't yet defined you may move a die from your Dice Horde and tag it with a Trait and Aspect. In the fiction it should be either a Trait you'd reasonably had all along and



#### A VOW THAT A FACTION WILL

**SUCCEED:** The Faction is the one currently Leading the side you've joined in the Clash. Whatever its objective is, you've dedicated yourself to seeing it come to pass. The objective cannot have already been accomplished when the Vow is made.

#### A VOW THAT AN ENEMY WILL DIE: The

target is the Main Character of the Faction that just attacked you or that you're about to attack. That character has earned your enmity and must pay with their life. The character must not have more than three Traits Devastated when the Vow is made. If this character survives, it is recommended that they return again as a reoccurring character in future Ordeals.



just haven't revealed until now, or something that you just "picked up" during the Clash.

You may bring in as many dice like this as you wish as long as they all come from Components that have already been committed to the Clash.

### COMMIT ONE ADDITIONAL COMPONENT

The Component must not currently be Constrained in a different location. If the Component is already at the location where the Clash is taking place you have merely to describe how it is joining in or has now become relevant to the conflict.

If the Component is not currently at the location, it may still be possible to bring it into the Clash. First, however, during the exchange you will need to make a successful attack (i.e. not Reversed or Blocked) which you describe as somehow including a means to bring the other Component in. Perhaps you blow on your war horn summoning reinforcements. Perhaps you cast a mighty spell of teleportation. Perhaps the Character is a master of stealth and deception and you reveal how they were "here all along." Whatever the rationale, make it good, because your opponent is likely to Challenge.

### **CREATE A NEW COMPONENT**

You can always create a new Component as long as you have space for one on your Record Sheet. The only limitation is that you cannot create a Component that the Chronicler had been using as part of their authority to control everything else in the world (the Chronicler can).

Simply follow the normal rules for creating a Component and then follow the Reinforcing rules for committing one additional Component above. Of course if the addition is too farfetched, your opponents may well Challenge you on it.

### ADD A NEW PLAYER TO A SIDE

At the beginning of the Clash, players who had Components present had the opportunity to join one of the sides or remain uncommitted on the sidelines. As your Reinforcement option, you may invite one uncommitted player to join your side.



If they accept, they may commit their two starting Components as normal. If they do not, you can choose a different Reinforce option.

# **YIELDING**

All Clashes end when one side Yields to the other. Yielding involves giving up the Spoils, usually because the dice have fallen poorly and you are clearly positioned to lose. Sometimes you'll fight to the bitter end and have no more dice to commit. And sometimes the situation has changed and you no longer value the Spoils highly enough to keep fighting for them.

Make no mistake, Yielding means you lost and, if you're the Leader, you'll be eating the Pain of the Spoils. However, losing the battle doesn't mean you lost the war. Sometimes discretion is the better part of valor and a tactical retreat to preserve your strength can be exactly the right call. Of course, your opponent will still probably rub your face in it, so you'll just have to work that much harder to turn the tables.

You can only Yield after an Exchange in which you defended against an attack, or immediately after your Leader Yields. You can never Yield after making an attack.

Once you Yield, your opponent cannot continue to press hoping to inflict more damage upon you. You are out of the Clash and can return any undamaged dice to your Record Sheet.

If you Yield because you don't have enough dice to defend against a current attack (and can't or don't want to Refresh), then all of those dice are immediately damaged but their Aspects do not take effect.

If you have an applicable Oath or Weakness, any other player who can justify it can call on it after you've elected to Yield to prevent you from doing so this time. You cannot Yield but instead must stay and fight until you have another opportunity to Yield. You can never be forced to Yield by an Oath or Weakness.

**FOR EXAMPLE**: Craddock has sworn an Oath to help the tribe against their enemies. He has joined them in a Clash and has suffered the brunt of the damage. Craddock's player has had enough and declares he is Yielding.





# CONDITIONAL SURRENDER

Negotiating before Yielding is essentially offering your opponent a smaller sure thing instead of them risking loss to go after the full Spoils.

Obviously, if you're in a position of strength with your dice you are more able to negotiate such a settlement. In fact, it can be useful to initiate such a negotiation while you are winning – giving up some of your Spoils and essentially quitting while you're ahead.

For example: "Ok, if you Yield now, and promise (i.e. accept an Oath) to not attack me again, I'll reduce the Pain so that your Main Character is only severely injured for the next two Chapters (i.e. Constrained while "recovering") instead of suffering those Devastated dice." The tribe player declares that this would breach Craddock's Oath and calls on it to prevent him from Yielding. He then promptly turns around as the Leader and orders Craddock to make the next Attack. Low on dice the Hero Player has little choice but to make a Vow and Refresh his used and Battered dice.

# **CONDITIONAL SURRENDER**

As the Leader you can negotiate yielding with the opposing Leader. You may ask your opponent to reduce the severity of the Spoils if you yield now rather than fight it out to the bitter end. You may ask them to accept some of the Pain of your Spoils. You can offer to take an Oath, or request one from them.

Of course, your opponent is under no obligation to accept and may continue to fight until they get either conditions they like or an unconditional victory.

# **MULTIPLAYER SIDES**

If you're an assisting player, you can Yield without your side losing the Spoils. You suffer a Weakness defined as "Defeated by <whichever Player attacked you last>" (as for Default Spoils).

If you're the Leader, you can Yield without losing the Spoils, but you must appoint another player on your side to be the new Leader. If your side goes on to lose anyway, you still suffer the Spoils, not your replacement. Your replacement has no obligation to fight until the bitter end, especially since they suffer only Default Spoils if they Yield, so choose wisely.

If your Leader Yields, you can opt to immediately Yield instead of continuing. You immediately suffer a Weakness defined as "Defeated by <the opposing Leader>" (as for Default Spoils).



# THE ASPECT EFFECTS

All dice are tagged with an Aspect. Each type of Aspect is color coded on the Battle Mat to help your opponent identify what you have. Whenever a die is advanced on attack or defense, the special ability of that die's Aspect will take effect after the defense result and any damage is determined. Aspects flavor Traits, indicating how the character uses that Trait to approach conflict. When you describe your attacks and defenses you should do so in a way consistent with the nature of the Aspect you advanced.

Note, being damaged does not prevent a die's Aspect from taking effect, so do not move or discard any dice until all Aspects have been resolved.

Resolve the Aspects, after determining the defense result, in the order they appear on the Battle Mat from left to right (the same order as they are listed below). For each type resolve the attacker's Aspects first, then the defender's.

The green Soul Fused Sorcery Aspect creates a special exception. Since its power directly affects the Attack or Defense Score of the Advanced dice, it clearly takes effect before the defense result is determined. However, it can be canceled by White Blessed dice like any other form of Sorcery.

# **GREEN SOUL FUSED SORCERY DICE**

Soul Fused Sorcery comes in two flavors: Tormentor Sorcery and Totem Sorcery.

Descriptions involving Tormentor Sorcery should include feats of superhuman speed, strength, and endurance, unnatural toughness, supernatural senses, and powers of the will specific to the nature of the Trait.

Descriptions involving Totem Sorcery should include powers lifted from the totem animal or monster such as: strength, speed, toughness, and senses. It can also include unique abilities not normally possessed by humans such as armored skin, limited flight, water breathing, communication with or command of similar animals or manifestations of the creature's "spirit."



# SOUL FUSED DICE TIPS

Use your Edge Tokens to boost your Soul Fused die if it rolls low.

Look for opportunities to score a defensive reversal by using one die plus a Soul Fused die.

On the attack, look to use a high rolling Soul Fused die in combination with two other high dice to launch an overwhelming attack. Use a Fortitude die where possible to reclaim a Used Soul Fused die so you can use it again.

### **BLESSED DICE TIPS**

Keep your low-rolling Blessed dice Available as a deterrent to your opponent using Sorcery.

Batter small Blessed dice for their Sorcery Aspect negating effects. Use large Blessed dice for their maximizing value against Sorcery.

When your opponent is down to just a few dice so that they'll be forced to defend with Sorcery, attack with a large size Blessed die. Use the maximizing value effect to ensure a high Attack Score. Plan to Batter the die (or another die) to ensure your opponent can't protect his dice or use their Aspects against you. A green Soul Fused die can be added to any dice that you advance on attack or defense. It doesn't count towards the number of dice Advanced. This allows it to be added as a third attack die, or as an extra defense die without dropping the defense result.

- Only one Soul Fused die at a time can be added to a single attack or defense.
- If necessary you can Advance the die as a normal die with no special effect.

Like all Sorcery, it is immune to being negated by Finesse dice but can be negated by Blessed dice. If negated, it does not add its number to the attack or defense score. Adjust the score before determining the defense result.

### **BUFF BLESSED SORCERY DICE**

Descriptions involving Blessed Sorcery should include miraculous effects, mind powers, superhuman abilities, transcendence, purifying light, and protection against the darkness.

When a Sorcery die (of any type) has been Advanced, any one Blessed die Advanced on the other side of the Exchange is immediately set to its maximum value. If more than one Sorcery die has been Advanced, more than one Blessed die can be so set.

Any Blessed die, Advanced or Available can be voluntarily Battered at any time in order to negate all of your opponent's Aspects, including Sorcery dice. If the die is already Battered it can be Devastated instead. If already Devastated this effect cannot be used.

Negated Aspects simply don't take effect. The numbers and defense result remain unaffected. Blessed dice are not affected by this. They cannot be negated.

A Blessed die can never be Advanced together on the same side of an Exchange with a Sorcery die of another type. This can cause a Rout if it prevents available dice from being able to defend. Additionally the negating effect cannot be used if another type of Sorcery die has been Advanced on that side.



### YELLOW FINESSE STANDARD DICE

Finesse is about grace, precision, skill and wits. Descriptions involving Finesse dice should include avoiding, evading, diverting, and misdirecting. This action is about perfection of form, complicated tasks performed with cunning, saying the right thing at the right time, and doing it all with style.

At the moment a Finesse die is Advanced, you may immediately reroll any one Advanced or Available die on your Battle Mat (including the Finesse die itself), exactly as if an Edge Token had been spent. This takes effect before the defense result is determined.

Additionally, Finesse dice negate opposing Aspects. First, Finesse dice played on both sides of the exchange negate each other one for one. For each un-negated Finesse die, you may negate a Standard Aspect of your choice (Force or Fortitude) from any one of your opponent's advanced dice.

The Aspect simply doesn't take effect. The numbers and defense result remain unaffected. There is no effect on the Finesse die's reroll ability. It cannot be negated.

### **ORANGE SOUL FORGED SORCERY DICE**

Soul Forged Sorcery is the art of imbuing artifacts and implements with the power of human souls. Almost any worked or crafted item can be so enchanted (weapons being the most common) so descriptions of the artifact in action can vary widely. Typically the power manifests as an exaggeration of the artifact's intrinsic ability to smash, cut, crush, rend or otherwise inflict massive destruction.

When Soul Forged Sorcery is resolved, choose any one of your opponent's Advanced dice and Devastate it regardless of what its damaged state is after the defense result.

If all of their Advanced dice are already Devastated, you may choose any one of their Used dice. If they have no Used dice, choose any Available die.

Earn a Victory Point as normal for Devastating a die during a Clash.

### **FINESSE DICE TIPS**

Don't be too quick to use your Finesse Dice. The threat of being able to disrupt an opponent's Aspect combo is often more effective than the actual disruption.

Finesse dice on a particularly brutal attack can be a good way to ensure your opponent doesn't use a nasty Aspect strategy when he's forced to defend with multiple dice.

On defense, use good judgment when deciding which Aspect to negate. If it looks like the fight will end soon, use your Finesse to avoid the most immediate hardship (like Force). If the fight's going to linger, use Finesse to negate the one that most impacts your opponent's long term effectiveness (like Fortitude).

### SOUL FORGED DICE TIPS

Choosing what die to Devastate can be amazingly powerful, especially if your opponent doesn't advance a blue Fortitude die to lessen the damage.

High rolling Soul Forge dice are devastating on attack. Pairing with another high die (and especially with a Soul Fused die) can guarantee a number of defender's dice to choose from.

Use a Soul Forged die on defense to get rid of a particularly pesky die that you don't want to see Refreshed. Holding the die back for defense will force your opponent to be careful what they attack with, burning through their Fortitude dice early.



### FORCE DICE TIPS

Force dice automatically damage your opponent even if you can't obtain a high enough attack score to win an exchange.

Use Force dice on attack to flush out an opponent's Finesse or Fortitude dice early.

Save a high Force die until late when your opponent doesn't have many dice left. They'll have a hard choice as to which die to take for damage.

Use on defense, even when taking damage, to get a shot in on your opponent.

A large number of small Force dice played in defense can inflict more damage on the attacker than you suffer.

Your opponent gets to select what gets damaged, so be wary of using a Force die if your opponent has plenty of small, low rolling dice still available to sacrifice. Soul Forged dice cannot be negated by Finesse dice, but can be negated by Blessed dice.

### **RED FORCE STANDARD DICE**

Descriptions involving Force should include direct aggression, belligerence, and rage. Actions should be about mighty blows, berserk frenzy, angry arguments, intimidation, direct commands, and raw emotion driven power.

When Force Aspects are resolved, your opponent in the Exchange must immediately damage one of their Available dice. It is immediately rolled to determine whether it is Battered (even) or Devastated (odd). You earn the usual bonus (Bone Yard draw or Victory Point) for damaging a die. Include it with the other dice being damaged this exchange.

If your opponent has no Available dice to damage they must damage one of their Used dice, including any of the dice they just Advanced that will become Used.

### **BLUE FORTITUDE STANDARD DICE**

Descriptions should include refusing to yield, being the immovable object, and taking everything the enemy has to dish out. The action is about force of will, steely eyed determination, obdurateness, toughness, an unbreakable defense, armored protection and an unwillingness to fail.

When Fortitude Aspects are resolved, select any one of your dice and improve its final damaged state by one step. Devastated dice become Battered instead. Battered dice become Used instead. Used dice go back to being Available instead (after being rerolled). This can save a die that has been automatically Devastated by Soul Forged Sorcery, returning it to Battered state instead.

### PURPLE SOUL REAPER SORCERY DICE

Soul Reaping is the act of draining the souls and life energy out of others to power arcane spells. Descriptions of its use should include souls being ripped from victims and plants being left dry and wilted. The sorcerer can then cast spells of black bolts, violet lightning, smothering darkness, poisonous mists, summoned fiends, blazing hell fire, the command of



people or the elements and virtually any other flashy or subtle magical effect consistent with the powers of darkness.

When Soul Reaper Aspects are resolved the owner has a choice between two effects. If any dice are being Devastated this Exchange (including your own) then one of them can be stolen. As the die is about to be discarded to the Bone Yard, intercept it and add it to your Dice Horde. The die's owner still tallies a Discarded mark.

Or, if there are no dice you can or wish to steal, you may choose any one of your currently Used dice and Refresh it; returning it to Available status.

# SUMMARY OF CLASH MECHANICS

### **PREPARE FOR BATTLE**

#### **TRIGGER THE CLASH**

• A player elects to oppose undesired fiction or Pain inflicted by one of the Chronicler's Components.

#### **BID FOR SPOILS**

- Start with the Chronicler whose first bid(s) must be any Pain that was opposed.
- The two Leaders alternate raising with additional Pain, Stipulations or requests to reduce Pain until someone CALLS (locking in those Spoils) or FLINCHES (dropping down to Default Spoils).
  - **DEFAULT SPOILS**: the loser takes a "Defeated by" Weakness.
  - The Flincher cannot Refresh.
  - Neither side can Reinforce.
  - No Allies can join.

# FORTITUDE DICE TIPS

Use Fortitude dice on attack to reclaim a large die (especially sorcery) so you can use it again. Using the same die multiple times can help you delay needing to Refresh.

Reserve some Fortitude dice for when you take damage. Use them to save your most valuable dice from being Devastated.

### SOUL REAPER DICE TIPS

Soul Reaper dice are excellent at keeping you in a fight by renewing the dice you have available and giving you additional dice in your Horde to use to Reinforce.

Use the Refresh capability to recover your best dice, especially other Soul Reaper dice or blue Fortitude. By cycling these dice through you can avoid running out of dice.

Use the dice stealing capability to add large dice to your horde (Bone Yard draws from Battering dice are always the smallest dice). Use it to avoid losing your d10s to damage. Keep a small Soul Reaper die handy to save your best dice when you eat damage.



When it is your turn to Advance dice (on attack or defense) and your side is eligible, you may choose to Refresh. You do not need your Leader's permission.

 Reroll all of your Used dice immediately and return them to Available. Any Edge Tokens under the dice are available again.

➤ There can be only three Refreshes (from any combination of players) during a Clash.

- Either side can claim the first Refresh.
- The second Refresh can only be claimed by the other side.
- The third and final Refresh can only be Claimed by the first side.
  - Note: if fighting for Default Spoils, there is only one Refresh available and it can only be Claimed by the side that didn't Flinch.

### **GATHER ALLIES**

• Starting from Chronicler's left, other players with present Components may opt to join either side.

#### COMMIT COMPONENTS

 Players each commit two Components in order: Chronicler, opposing Leader, Assisting player in the order they joined.

### **ROLL THE DICE**

# **FIGHT IT OUT**

#### **ROUND PROCEDURE**

- Exchange #1: Chronicler's side attacks, selected target defends.
- Exchange #2: opposing side attacks, selected target defends.
- Reinforce.

#### **EXCHANGE PROCEDURE**

- Leader selects a player to make an attack.
- Attacking player selects a target to attack.
- Attacker advances two dice and announces **ATTACK SCORE** (sum) and Aspects, moving dice accordingly.
- Defender advances any number of dice whose sum equals or exceeds the Attack Score.
- > Player Advancing dice may **REFRESH** if they qualify.
- Determine Defense Result
- Record damage and clean up.
- Proceed to next step in the Round (Exchange #2 or Reinforce) unless defender YIELDS.

#### **DEFENSE RESULT**

• Soul Fused dice don't count as a die used.



- Matched in one die is a **REVERSAL**.
  - No damage, and save die to be used for follow up attack.
  - Defender must make next attack and must be against the reversed attacker.
  - Reversal die must be used in the attack.
- Matched in two dice is a **BLOCK**, no damage.
- Matched in three or more is **DAMAGED**.
  - All defender's dice are damaged.
  - Dice will be rerolled to determine damage.
  - Dice showing even are **BATTERED**, opponent gets a Bone Yard draw (smallest die).
  - Dice showing odd are **DEVASTATED**, opponent gets a Victory Point.
- Can't Match? Refresh or **YIELD**.
- ASPECTS Take Effect. See Battle Mat for details.

#### **CLEAN UP THE DICE**

- Defender may offer to take a **WEAKNESS** instead of Devastating a die.
- Any dice that remain Devastated are discarded to the Bone Yard, and a Discarded Dice tally marked.
- Any dice that remain Battered are returned to their proper slot on the owner's Record Sheet.
- Any dice that were Advanced but not damaged are moved to the corresponding **USED** section of the Battle Mat.
- It is possible that Aspect use may cause a die to return to **AVAILABLE** status.







### REINFORCE

- After each round (two Exchanges with alternating attackers), all players who Advanced dice during the round may Reinforce. Choose only one:
  - Add additional dice from already Committed Components.
  - Commit one additional Component.
  - Create a new Component to Commit.
  - Add a new player to your side.
- Proceed with Exchange #1 of the next Round.

# AFTERMATH

### SOMEBODY YIELDS

- You can only Yield after making a defense, or after your leader Yields.
- If you can't defend and must Yield all remaining dice are damaged and the Aspects are ignored.
- The Leader can negotiate a conditional surrender.
- If the Leader Yields they must appoint another player as Leader.
- If all players of a side have Yielded, the original Leader suffers the Pain of the Spoils.



# THE OLD MAN AND THE THIEF EXCERPT FROM A STORY BY PETER WOODWORTH

"Do not cry, little sister," Carn said, although she wasn't. "Rejoice! For when I visit the soothsayer, he will pronounce me the destroyer of the Witch King and the true savior of this land!"

\* \* \*

"I pronounce him a fucking prick," said the Old Man as he walked in from his meeting with the ill-tempered slab of meat who had arrived the night before, some bellowing hick full of brainless bluster and prone to wild slashing displays of "prowess." The big lummox was camped a safe distance away on the loftily named "Field of the Aspirants," so named because the more accurate title of the "Field the Goats Used to Shit In" hardly carried the same majestic appeal.

The ancient soothsayer glanced over at his kept thief and rubbed his hands together gleefully. "Let's get him killed."

The problem most looters have is a serious lack of imagination.

Not that this was Slynn's problem. He had plenty of imagination, which is why he didn't die trying to hack through the hordes of Unliving who still shambled through the streets of the God Bridge, or get eaten by the packs of Bestials that fed on the wretches. That's how a lot of ruin hunters had been picked off over the years. They just saw the God Bridge and more or less took it straight on. That was a sucker play, and the reason those idiots were torn apart and passing through the digestive systems of various horrors while Slynn kept diving for some ten years now. He liked straight on, but the way he saw it, you had to get the right angle first.

**PETER WOODWORTH** is a a New Jersev native and resides there still, happily teaching English at a small local college. His fiction has appeared in the Gimme Shelter anthology, Steampunk Tales magazine and sites such as Terrible Minds and 365 Tomorrows. Working for White Wolf, Evil Hat, Eschaton Media and others, he has also written a stack of roleplaying books for both tabletop and live-action play. He even enjoyed working as a rock journalist until his newspaper finally caught on that most newspaper readers are over fifty and do not know or care about Flogging Molly. When he isn't grading papers or writing novels, he reads a lot, runs too many RPGs, is seriously addicted to Fantasy Flight board games, and LARPs whenever he can swing it. You can find him online at peterwoodworth.com.





# CHAPTER VII: OROEAL'S ENO

Ordeals continue with players taking turns playing the Chronicler and attempting to achieve their Faction's Objective. Only the Hero Player can decide that an Ordeal is over and only if they've scored a minimum number of Victory Points first. Ending the Ordeal only ends the hero's involvement in the situation; the hero walks off into the sunset (or crawls away to lick their wounds). The final resolution of the situation will be determined through the epilogue.

# AT THE END OF THE ORDEAL

- ▶ The Hero Falls or Walks Away.
  - Who met their Objectives?
    - The innocent meet their fate in the Epilogue.
  - How did the hero change?
    - Update the standings for the next Ordeal.

# THE HERO FALLS OR WALKS AWAY

There are three ways for an Ordeal to end. The hero can be killed, the hero can be broken, or the hero can leave – either with head held high, or fleeing for their life.

- The hero can be killed if all of the Hero Component's active die slots are Devastated. The Ordeal ends immediately.
- The hero can be broken if all of the Hero Component's active dice slots that aren't Devastated are Battered. The Ordeal ends immediately.
- The hero can leave the Ordeal behind them and continue on their journey any time the Hero Player is the Chronicler and has earned at least four Victory Points. Just describe how you go.

When the Ordeal ends during a Clash, finish up the Clash and award Spoils. Then end play. The loose story ends will be wrapped up in the Epilogue.

# WHO MET THEIR OBJECTIVES?

There are two sources of Victory Points for Faction players during an Ordeal. The points they earned from Devastating their opponents' dice during Clashes have been tallied in the Victory Points This Ordeal box on their Record Sheet. They also have the opportunity to win a substantial bonus if they succeeded in their Objective.

The Record Keeper asks each player for their Victory Points this Ordeal total and records it in the correct box on the Saga Record Sheet.

Start with the Faction Player who scored the fewest Victory Points this Ordeal. That player declares whether they feel they did or did not achieve their Objective and states their case. They also declare whether or not their Faction created or used any sorcery this Ordeal and their Faction Alignment. If another player disagrees with the assessment they may Challenge the declaration using the normal Challenge rules.



- If they achieved their Objective add +10 Victory Points to their score this Ordeal
- If they did not create or use any Sorcery Aspects this Ordeal add +5 to their score
- If they were the Aligned Faction:
  - And achieved their Objective: Award 1 Edge to the Witch King
  - And did not achieve their Objective: Award 1 Edge to the current Hero
- If they were the Opposed Faction:
  - And achieved their Objective: Award 1 Edge to the current Hero
  - And did not achieve their Objective: Award 1 Edge to the Witch King

The Record Keeper notes "+0", "+5", "+10", or "+15" in the correct Saga Record Sheet box and sums the total for the Ordeal and the running total for the Saga to date. Also note the success of the Aligned and Opposed Factions.

Continue in increasing Victory Point order through the rest of the Faction Players, with the player who scored the most Victory Points this Ordeal going last. In the event of a tie, the Record Keeper picks one of the tied parties to go.

Based on the success of the Objectives the Hero Player now notes whether they fulfilled or didn't fulfill the Vows they made. Award Doom to the Hero for failed Vows.

# DECLARE OBJECTIVES SUMMARY

- 1. Record Keeper records Victory Points this Ordeal on the Saga Record.
- 2. In order from fewest points to most each Faction Player declares:
  - Whether they succeeded at their Objective.
  - Whether they qualify for the no-sorcery bonus.
  - ▶ Their Alignment.
- 3. Other players Challenge their declarations.
- 4. Record Keeper adds the appropriate bonuses to the Saga Record.
  - ► +10 VP for completing Objective.
  - ► +5 VP for no sorcery.
  - Edge to the Hero and / Witch King.
  - Doom to the Hero for failed Vows



### **EPILOGUE SUMMARY**

0-3 VICTORY POINTS: Incomplete. Entirely Tragic and the hero earns no Legend.

4-7 VICTORY POINTS: Entirely Tragic, the hero made it worse, everything goes wrong. They earn only a d4 Legend.

8-13 VICTORY POINTS: Mostly Tragic, the hero didn't help much, but at least one thing goes right. They earn only a d6 Legend.

14-17 VICTORY POINTS: Mostly Heroic, the hero made things better, except for one thing that went wrong. They earn a d8 Legend.

**18+ VICTORY POINTS:** Entirely Heroic, the hero saved the day, everything ends well. They earn a d10 Legend.

#### 24+ VICTORY POINTS + FULFILLED VOW:

Epic, the stuff legends are made of. Wrongs are righted and the villains get what's coming to them. The hero earns two d10 Legend dice.

# THE EPILOGUE

The Epilogue is the conclusion to the Ordeal that defines the ultimate lasting outcome for the people and places involved. It can reinforce the good events that occurred in play, granting a "happily ever after" ending, at least in that small corner of the world. Or it shows the final fate of the innocent as they're overwhelmed by the darkness the hero was powerless to stop.

During the Epilogue, Objectives that were declared as successful at the end of the Ordeal may be overturned and others that failed may come to pass over the long term. **This has no effect on the Victory Point awards** that the Faction Players earned which were for short term achievement. Lasting achievement, however, is dependent on the success or failure of the hero.

There are six possible Epilogues ranging from the most tragic to the most heroic. Which Epilogue is used for this Ordeal is determined by how many Victory Points the Hero Player Scored.

### 0-3 VICTORY POINTS: AN INCOMPLETE ENDING, A HERO FALLS

This is the worst possible result. The hero fell or was broken before accomplishing anything lasting.

This result is identical to the 4-7 Entirely Tragic epilogue except that in addition to the tragedy that befalls those clinging to hope, the hero is not awarded any Legend dice at all.

For all other effects see below.



# 4-7 VICTORY POINTS: AN ENTIRELY TRAGIC ENDING

Hope has died. The darkness has smothered yet another source of light in the world, the hero's actions during the Ordeal made everything they touched worse.

The hero has failed.

The Faction Player with the Opposed Alignment reminds the group of their Faction's Objective and any successes or progress they enjoyed during play. The other Faction Players will shatter and destroy these ambitions, undoing all of their successes and leaving their hopes in ashes. Any characters of the Opposed Faction can be freely killed or given horrible endings.

The Aligned Faction Player reminds the group of their Faction's Objective. Their Faction has essentially won the Ordeal. The Witch King is ascendant and his agents have spread his reach even further.

- The Aligned Faction Player contributes first. Describe a successful ending for your Faction. If you did not achieve your Objective in play, describe how you manage to achieve it after the hero left. Take the opportunity to punish any characters you harbor a grudge against as gruesomely as desired. Identify any particularly righteous or wholesome characters and make sure they are dealt with. Corrupt them into evil, make their death tortuous and lingering, or let them live – broken and shattered, a witness to the ending of their dreams.
- The Neutral Faction Players now contribute in order from the fewest Discarded dice to the most. You can describe the status of any characters or objectives not already established by earlier players. Play out your own grudges and try to give your characters something to cling to, within the strictures of what prior players have left you with.
- Neither the Opposed Faction Player nor the Hero Player contribute anything to this Epilogue.

# ADVICE TO THE HERO PLAYER

The higher level Victory Point Thresholds are high, painfully high. That's by design. Abalahn is a harsh and tragic place and so getting a happy ending should be a feat worthy of legend. However, there is one thing you can do to obtain it.

Act! Act often, and act hard. In a traditional role-playing game, the GM is there to specifically target the player characters with challenges. As a result, players can spend much of their time reacting to what the GM throws at them. That will not work in Blood Red Sands.

Faction Players, when they are Chronicler, will often be motivated to sideline your hero, to avoid them, to try to accomplish their goals without crossing your hero at all. If you let them do that, you will be largely uninvolved in the story, have little chance for a happy ending, and indeed may find the game starting to drag on too long without you having even accumulated the minimum victory points needed to end the Ordeal.

Don't let that happen! Don't sit passively on the sidelines and wait for the story to come to you. Usually it won't. You are supposed to be the centerpiece of the story. But no one can make you that except yourself.



The Hero Player has precedence for becoming the next Chronicler. That means you can be Chronicler every other Chapter if you want. And most often, you should want. Get in fights. Figure out who the bad guys are. Pay attention when others are Chronicler. Charge in where angels fear to tread when it's your turn.

And make Vows! In addition to the extra dice sets and Legendary Aspects you will eventually earn, Vows are what supercharge your Hero. They are a guaranteed Refresh any time you need one that refreshes not only Used dice but Battered Dice too. Use them.

Crush your enemies and see them driven before you.

### **IMPORTANT!**

Remember that nothing narrated during the epilogue changes the Victory Points that were earned by the players.

# 8-13 VICTORY POINTS: A MOSTLY TRAGIC ENDING

This Epilogue isn't much better. It is without question a victory for the forces of darkness. However, the hero did at least have some impact, one thing that they did that leaves a little hope like a single flower growing in the cracks of a devastated wasteland.

The hero has still failed.

Start with the Opposed Faction Player and Aligned Faction Player reminding players of their goals as for the Entirely Tragic Ending.

- The Hero Player then starts with a very limited contribution. You may identify one character in the fiction that you were able to save. One person who achieves something that, given the rest of the narration about to occur, could be considered a modestly happy ending.
- The Aligned Faction Player followed by the Neutral Faction Players then contribute as for the Entirely Tragic ending above.

### 14-17 VICTORY POINTS: A LARGELY HEROIC ENDING

This is the first Epilogue that can be considered to be a good ending. The forces of darkness were not routed and certainly not defeated forever, but they were held at bay allowing this corner of the world to survive a little longer, and maybe even flourish for a time. The hero didn't walk away until they had made a difference.

The hero has succeeded but it is not a flawless victory.

- The Opposed Faction Player contributes first. Describe a successful ending for your Faction. If you did not achieve your Objective in play, describe how you manage to achieve it in the long run thanks to the opportunity the hero provided. Describe how those Factions that had targeted yours were defeated and driven back and how you recovered from any losses you suffered in play.
- The players of any Neutral Factions which achieved their Objectives then contribute in order from fewest Discarded dice to most. You



**ORDEAL'S END** 

can describe the status of any characters or objectives not already established by earlier players. Angle for your own lasting success within the situation the prior players have left you with.

- The players of any Neutral Factions which did not achieve their Objectives then contribute in order from fewest Discarded dice to most, as above.
- The Hero Player then contributes what lasting impact their involvement had on the situation focusing on thwarting the Aligned Faction and striking a blow against the Witch King.
- The Aligned Player contributes last in a limited fashion. You may select one character, either from your own Faction or the Opposed Faction, and describe a new ending for that character. This is the part that didn't work so well for the hero. It can be a narrow escape, or fast forward to an ultimate fate in years hence. Describe a final tragic ending for a beloved good character or an escape and minor triumph for a hated villain. It can't change the overall outcome from good to evil but should be meaningful enough to make the hero regret their shortfall.

# 18+ VICTORY POINTS: AN ENTIRELY HEROIC ENDING

This is a completely good Epilogue. Evil was thrown back in such a way as will take them a long time before their reach extends to this corner of the world again. Things are looking brighter and people are clearly better off for the hero's involvement.

The hero has succeeded and proven their worth.

- The Opposed Faction Player contributes first as for the Largely Heroic Ending.
- The Neutral Faction Players will contribute next, but this time their order is selected by the Hero Player who should allow the Factions they supported to contribute first so they can establish the endings they want in advance of the Factions who opposed the hero.
- The Hero Player then contributes as above.
- The Aligned Faction Player does not contribute at all.

# HERO'S VOWS

As Hero Player you can make a Vow any time during a Clash when it is your turn to Advance dice (on attack or defense). The Vow must be one of the following, and you can only use each once per Ordeal.

- Vow for a Faction to Fail: You must target either the Faction currently attacking you or that you're currently attacking. To fulfill this Vow that Faction must fail its Objective.
- Vow for a Faction to Succeed: You must target the Leader of the side you've currently joined. To fulfill this Vow that Faction must succeed its Objective.
- Vow to Kill an Enemy: You must target either the Faction currently attacking you or that you're currently attacking. To fulfill this Vow that Faction's Main Character must die before the end of the Ordeal

Making the Vow triggers a "super" Refresh for your hero. Regardless of any limitations on normal Refreshes, you may immediately Refresh not only all of your Used dice but all of your Battered dice as well. Reroll them and add them to the Available space on your Battle Mat as normal.

 You gain one Doom for every Vow you make.



#### IF YOU FULFILL YOUR VOW:

- You avoid gaining an additional Doom.
- You can achieve an Epic Ending to the Epilogue if you also score 24 or more Victory Points.
  - You earn a sobriquet awarded by the other players.

#### IF YOU FAIL TO FULFILL YOUR VOW:

- Your Doom goes up by another one.
- You earn a scar you select yourself.

# 24+ VICTORY POINTS AND A FULFILLED VOW: AN EPIC END

This is the story that will define the hero's legend. These are the events that leave the Witch King trembling in fear. Mere Victory Points are not sufficient to earn this ending. The hero must also have made a Vow and fulfilled it.

The hero has more than proven their might.

• The Hero Player contributes the entire Epilogue, establishing events for all characters and Factions exactly as they choose.

# THE HERO CHANGES

Other characters from the fiction may be reincorporated into future Ordeals if they are interesting enough to the players. But this is entirely voluntarily and when it happens those characters are completely recreated from scratch as if they were brand new. The game leaves it entirely to the players to decide how much of their past Traits and actions should be reused.

The heroes, on the other hand, return to play with their history intact. They are not recreated each time they are featured in an Ordeal. Heroes grow from one Ordeal to the next, building upon what came before.

- Heal and Recover.
- A new Legend Trait emerges.
- Improve your Traits.
- Who gained the Edge in the war between Hero and Witch King?
- Continue your Chronicle.
- Scars suffered and Sobriquets earned.
- Your Doom gets closer.





# HEAL AND RECOVER

All dice from all of your Components and all of your Edge Tokens from Edges are fully restored. All damage is healed. Devastated Dice slots and their dice and Traits are available again. The one exception is Features that were fully destroyed (all dice Devastated). Those Features are permanently lost and should be erased. The dice slots may be used again for a new Feature built with new dice, Traits and Aspects. Any Legendary Trait that was lost when the Feature was lost is lost for good, however.

Any Weaknesses the hero suffered or Oaths they made remain, however. It may be harder to justify calling upon them in future Ordeals (depending on how specific they were) but if the fiction fits, they can be.





# DETERMINE YOUR NEW LEGENDARY TRAIT

After each Ordeal your featured hero will earn a Legendary Trait depending on how many Victory Points you scored during play. Select one die of the indicated size (or smaller if necessary) from any of your hero's Components and circle its Trait. That die now has the Legendary Aspect in addition to whatever Aspect it already had (including Sorcery). From now on instead of being rolled it will always be set to its highest value.

**IMPORTANT EXCEPTION:** At least one Faction Player had to obtain their Objective during play. If not, your hero gets no Legendary Trait, regardless of how many Victory Points were earned. You actually have to choose a side, take a stand, and accomplish something to be remembered.

- 0-3 Victory Points: an incomplete and totally tragic epilogue. You do not earn a Legendary Trait.
- 4-7 Victory Points: an entirely tragic epilogue. You earn a d4 Legendary Trait.
- 8-13 Victory Points: a mostly tragic epilogue. You earn a d6 Legendary Trait.
- 14-17 Victory Points: a largely heroic epilogue. You earn a d8 Legendary Trait.
- 18+ Victory Points: an entirely heroic epilogue. You earn a d10 Legendary Trait.
- 24+ Victory Points while successfully fulfilling a Vow: an epic epilogue. You earn two d10 Legendary Traits.

# **IMPROVE YOUR HERO**

Choose any one Trait from your Hero Component that is smaller than your new Legendary Trait and increase it by one die size. You may improve two Traits this way with an epic epilogue. You should describe how the events of the just completed Ordeal led to this increase.

Note, this doesn't change the supply of dice you have available. It just allows you to assign a larger die to a Trait you already have.



# EDGE

Each Ordeal your hero has the chance to earn up to three Edge. You can do this by preventing Factions that are Aligned with the Witch King from achieving their Objective, or by helping Factions that are Opposed to the Witch King to achieve theirs. Additionally, if you write up the Chronicle of the Ordeal in one to two pages and recite it before the group at the beginning of the next session you can earn another point of Edge.

- +1 Edge: Aligned Faction doesn't achieve Objective.
  - If they do, the Witch King gets the Edge.
- +1 Edge: Opposed Faction does achieve Objective.
  - If they don't, the Witch King gets the Edge.
- +1 Edge: Recite one to two page long Chronicle of Ordeal.

# SCARS AND SOBRIQUETS

When you make a Vow and fail to fulfill it, you describe a scar your hero has suffered in the Ordeal, physical or of the mind and spirit. Scars have no mechanical impact; they serve as a reminder of past failures.

When you fulfill a Vow the other players collaboratively decide on and award your hero with a sobriquet or nom de guerre. This should be something suitably heroic and related to your achievements in the Ordeal. You should include it both in the fiction and when you Rise Up to relate your Chronicle.

It's bad form to refuse a Sobriquet. It's worse form to try to saddle a hero with a silly one. Fulfilling a vow is no mean feat. Reward the hero for their efforts.

# RECITING YOUR CHRONICLE:

Yes, that's one to two *pages* of story written and recited about your hero's adventure in your last Ordeal.

Edge is powerful and you don't get to have it for just a few sentences. And if anyone tries to weasel out by writing big on small paper, Challenge that punk.





# DOOM

Your hero started play with one Doom, the mark of your tragic origin. You gain one more Doom each Ordeal your hero is featured in. You also gain one more Doom every time you make a Vow and another if you leave the Vow unfilled.

- ▶ +1 Doom for every Ordeal.
- ▶ +1 Doom for every Vow made.
- +1 Doom for every Vow not fulfilled.

# **CONTINUE YOUR CHRONICLE**

On the back of your Record Sheet record the name the group has given to this Ordeal and highlight the key events you want remembered. Who you thwarted, who defeated you, what vows were fulfilled or broken.

# **UPDATE THE STANDINGS**

Now is the time for the Record Keeper to perform their final duties before passing the role on to the next Record Keeper.

Enter the die size of the Legend earned by the Hero Player next to their hero's name in the Featured Hero box on the Saga Record Sheet.

When all Featured Hero boxes for a Cycle are filled (no hero should appear more than once) the Cycle is over. Any heroes without a claim are retired. "X" off their hero name box on the record sheet.

All of the player's Victory Points should already have been recorded on the Saga Record Sheet. If not, do so now. In the row for the just completed Ordeal, record the Victory Points earned during play. Add in any bonus points for completing objectives (+10 for Faction Players only) or lasting the Ordeal without resorting to sorcery (+5 for any player). Subtotal the results.



- Mark an "H" in the box for the Hero Player.
- Mark "MDP" in the box for the player who qualified as the Most Devastated Player. That player will be the Record Keeper for the next Ordeal.
- Circle the Ordeal total for the player who earned the most Victory Points in this Ordeal and who still has a hero in the running and whose hero has not yet been featured this Cycle. That player will be the Hero Player for the next Ordeal.
- Record the Edge earned by the Witch King.
  - +1: Aligned Faction achieves Objective.
  - +1: Opposed Faction does not.

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# CHAPTER VIII CONFRONT THE WICH KING

The final Ordeal of the game pits the last remaining hero against the terrible forces of one of the Witch Kings. There is every possibility that the hero will not survive this encounter. After all, the 5 Witch Kings of Abalahn slew the very gods in their heavens and have had 1000 years to master their eldritch arts. They can throw arcane rituals powered by the souls of thousands; they can drain the life from the very world itself. How can a mere mortal expect to overthrow such a monster? Will your Chronicle end in triumph or tragedy?

# WHEN YOUR HERO IS RETIRED

You may Rise Up and provide a final coda on your hero's Chronicle or leave it a mystery for the ages.

- If your hero has at least as many successful Legendary Traits (d8s and d10s) as they have unsuccessful Legendary Traits (d6s and d4s), then they have a relatively peaceful fate. Perhaps they settle down to a good life, worth living if not worthy of legend.
- If not, then your hero has a disappointing, unfulfilling end. Perhaps they wind up dead from drink, lying in a gutter in some forgotten ally.
- Either way, if your hero has at least twice as much Doom as they have Legendary Traits (any size) then, in the end, the Witch King catches up to them and they die horribly and painfully at the hands of their nemesis.

# LEGEND JUDGING

The first Cycle will feature a different hero each Ordeal for four Ordeals. Those four featured heroes, assuming they survived, will continue on to the second Cycle. If there are more than four players, those players will not have the opportunity to play a hero this Saga, they should have tried harder. There are only three Ordeals in the second Cycle. When three different heroes have been featured, they will progress to the third Cycle. The fourth hero will be retired, their story at an end. The third and final Cycle has only two Ordeals. Again, the player who failed to get their hero featured will have their hero retired. When only two heroes remain (which may be quicker than nine Ordeals if several heroes died) it is time for the Legend Judging.

Instead of proceeding with another Ordeal like you have been doing thus far, it is time for the final showdown with the Witch King. But before that can happen, you must determine which of the last two heroes has earned the right to face down one of the lords of evil.

Compare the total size of all of the Legendary Traits each of the heroes has earned. Do this simply by totaling the largest number on each Legendary Trait die.

- The hero with the greatest total Legend will proceed to the Final Ordeal. The other hero will be retired.
- In the event of a tie the two heroes fight it out.

# TIED LEGENDS

Immediately begin a Clash with just the two heroes as participants. The Spoils are already set. The loser is retired, perhaps alive, possibly dead. There are no Vows, and no assistance. The fight ends when someone dies or Yields.

The Clash could be a literal fight in the fiction. If the heroes are different enough that despite their common enemy they could reasonably come to blows, than it should be an easy matter to engineer some encounter that goes badly between them. The Clash could also be metaphorical – representative of fate weighing each of the heroes and deciding who is worthy and who is not.



# SET UP THE FINAL ORDEAL

These rules completely replace those in Chapter IV.

- The Hero Player has already been decided by the Legend Judging.
- Of the remaining players, the one with the most total accumulated Victory Points will play the Witch King.
- The remaining players will choose their Faction from those already built for the Final Ordeal in descending Victory Point order from most to least.
- The player with the least accumulated Victory Points will be the Record Keeper. There aren't many duties for the Record Keeper to perform in the Final Ordeal.
- There is no Most Devastated Player.
- There are no Aligned or Opposed Factions.
- All Victory Point totals are now set to zero. From this point on, only Victory Points earned in the Final Ordeal matter.

Take some time to study the scenario, the Factions, and their various Objectives before choosing Factions. You will be using the scenario that corresponds to the Witch King you've been targeting for the entire Saga. If you manage to defeat them, you should choose a different one for your next Saga. If you ever defeat all five of the Witch Kings, then you've ushered in a new golden era of peace and prosperity for Abalahn. You have transcended this game and never need to play it again.

# THE HERO PLAYER

Begin the Final Ordeal with your hero as normal. You now have all three sets of your bonus dice (total of seven sets of dice) and will begin the Final Ordeal with all four of your Features in play. You'll be starting with nine dice slots in your Hero Component with the ability to fill in the 10th and final slot after winning your first Clash.

This one is for all the marbles. You don't get to walk away from this one, and the Victory Points you score don't really matter. The Ordeal ends when you die or kill the Witch King. Determining the winner is

# NOT PLAYING WITH FIVE? If you don't have five players

the Final Ordeal will work a little differently. If you have only four players, then one of the three pre-designed Factions won't get used. Which not to use is indicated on the Faction Record Sheet for that Faction.

If you have six players then you'll have to add a fourth Faction for the Final Ordeal. Do so as follows:

- Pick a character who has been seen in one of the previous Ordeals, a favorite recurring villain, perhaps. If there was a character that this hero had made a Vow to kill and failed to do so, this is a great opportunity to bring them back.
- The new Faction starts with zero Edge.
- Randomly roll an Objective and an Extra from the standard tables (reroll any Thematic results).
- The Faction Players collectively decide on the target and details of the Objective before Factions are chosen.
- If there is a particular reoccurring villain that the group really wants to see return, you can use this method even when you have only four or five players.



• Simply create the extra Faction as above and choose Factions as described.

 Whichever Faction doesn't get used is discarded obvious at that point. If you win, in addition to bragging rights you'll get a bonus that carries over to the next Saga you play.

# THE WITCH KING

You have a character sheet very similar to the Hero Record Sheet. It has already been partially filled out for you. The rest of the Features and Traits are available for you to define as you like.

- You get two bonus sets of dice (six sets total). One is the Witch King Bonus and one is the set the Most Devastated Player normally gets.
- You get Edge tokens equal to the Total Edge the Witch King earned over the course of all nine Ordeals. This could be as high as 18 if the Aligned Factions always succeeded and the Opposed Factions always failed. You will also have from one to five more depending on which Witch King you are.
- Write on your Witch King Record Sheet the total Doom that the hero accumulated.
- You have a number of Legendary Traits. How many and what size depends on how powerful a Witch King you are.

As a Witch King you don't have to discard a die to take a Sorcery Aspect for any of the predefined Traits you start the game with. You do for any created during play. You can also never, ever take a Blessed Aspect for yourself or any of your features. Even if you steal one in play, it will not function for you.

You are one of the lords of darkness, an elder master of ancient magic. You've lived for centuries and have slain entire armies with a wave of your hand. Some trouble making bumpkin with more brawn than brains thinks he can challenge you? End him.

# THE FACTION PLAYERS

There are three Factions already predesigned for each of the five possible Final Ordeals. Typically, one of these is clearly the strongest, and one clearly the weakest. The player who did the best will have first pick to get the strongest Faction.



During the Final Ordeal, you can't win. You had nine Ordeals to either score the most Victory Points and play as the Witch King or win enough Ordeals to keep bringing your hero back and you didn't do it. So what are you trying to accomplish during the Final Ordeal?

You are the Kingmakers and the spoilers. Now is the time for pay back. You are also playing for pride. No one wants to be the one to wind up in last place. In fact, there are special Victory Conditions for the Final Ordeal depending on whether the hero wins or the Witch King wins.

- If the Witch King wins, then the Faction Player who scored the most Victory Points in the Final Ordeal is rewarded with a second place finish and a bonus that carries over to the next Saga you play of the game. The player who scored the fewest Victory Points is reviled for coming in last and suffers a penalty in the next Saga you play.
- If the Hero Player wins there is no second or last place finish awarded.

# HERO VOWS IN THE FINAL ORDEAL

Vows work differently in the Final Ordeal. The effect of making one remains the same, but your hero now has an ultimate goal already established, overthrowing the Witch King. Supporting or opposing other Factions is only relevant as far as it helps achieve this goal. Therefore there is no power in making Vows about them.

As before, your hero can make up to three Vows during the Final Ordeal, but now the nature of those Vows has changed as has the reward for success and the penalty for failure. If making a Vow, you must make them in order.

# **VOW TO DEFEAT THE WITCH KING**

This is the first Vow you can make in the Final Ordeal. Rise up and declare to the other players how it is your destiny to slay the Witch King.

Making this Vow activates your Doom. Until you make this Vow, the Witch King Player cannot use your Doom in any way. Once you do, however, they are free to spend your Doom as desired.



# SPENDING DOOM

Once the hero has activated his Doom, the Witch King may begin to spend it.

You may spend Doom at any time during a Clash, even when you are not participating.

Each point spent forces the Hero Player to reroll any one die of your choice, even right up to the moment it is being Advanced (the Hero Player may elect to Advance a different die instead once the result of the reroll is seen).

This power does not affect Legendary Dice.

Each point of Doom can be spent only once. Mark it off the Hero's Record Sheet.
#### WITCH KING VOWS

Vows? From the Witch Kings? Let's consider:

Malevolent sorcerers who tortured and murdered the Blessed Daughter. Who then helped the Once Fulfilled slay the very gods and devour the soul of his own mother. Who then turned on their ally, bound him to his mother's throne for eternity and stole the lights from the heavens leaving him to slowly go mad in the darkness; before ushering in a thousand year reign of terror and torment.

No, Witch Kings do not get to make Vows.

### **VOW TO DIE FOR VICTORY**

This is the second Vow you can make in the Final Ordeal. Rise up and pledge your life for the cause. By doing so, you are committing to the death of your hero.

Even if you win and your hero is not dead at the end of the Ordeal, they will be slain in the Epilogue. They could be struck down by some final curse, caught in a trap, betrayed, ambushed by some unseen enemy at the moment of triumph, or perhaps they just succumb to their wounds after having fought on past the point a weaker hero would have perished.

#### VOW TO SERVE THE MAD GOD

This is the third and final Vow you can make in the Final Ordeal. Taking this Vow is an act of desperation. A Vow to serve the Mad God – the Forsaken One, is selling your very soul and akin to the pact the Witch Kings themselves made to slay the gods. Rise Up and address your Vow to the evil one. Feel his power flow through you as you recover your dice.

#### **IF YOU LOSE**

If you lose the Ordeal you must still fulfill your Vow. Your hero rises from the dead as an unholy revenant in the service of the Mad God. Add your revenant self to one of the Open entries on the Extra's List.

- You are a Required Component.
- The Faction you serve is automatically Aligned.
- Your four Legendary Traits become the Traits of the Revenant Component (they lose their Legendary Aspect and original dice).
- You provide three additional Edge. This increases by one each time you are featured in an Ordeal.
- You are doomed to Undeath until the Witch King is finally slain.

#### **IF YOU WIN**

If you win the Ordeal you must take the Witch King's place. Design a new Final Ordeal scenario modeled on those provided featuring your character as the new Witch King granted new powers by



your dark master. Redesign the scenario Factions based on how events turned out during this Final Ordeal. Replace Traits, Components, or entire Factions to represent those you surround yourself with now that you are an ascended Dark Lord.

# WINNING AND LOSING

The players of the Witch King and the hero are competing in the Final Ordeal to see who wins this Saga of **BLOOD RED SANDS**. The Ordeal ends at the end of the Chapter in which one of them dies or is Broken.

#### THE WITCH KING TRIUMPHANT

If the Witch King is alive at the end of the Ordeal, that player wins the game.

#### YOUR REWARD

If you play in another Saga of **BLOOD RED SANDS** with the same or a different group of players, you can claim a reward for your victory.

Your next hero is a descendent of this Witch King. You start play with:

- A 1d10 Legendary Trait instead of the usual 1d4. You must describe how you broke free of the Witch King's control as the origin of your Chronicle.
- A free Soul Reaper or Tormentor Sorcery Trait. If you take the Tormentor Trait, the victim whose soul provided the rune must have been someone close, perhaps someone whose sacrifice aided your escape.
- A Weakness: "Tainted Blood," claimable once per Ordeal by any Blessed character or any Aligned Faction.

#### THE RIGHT HAND OF THE WITCH KING

The Faction Player who scored the most Victory Points during the Final Ordeal becomes the Witch King's **RIGHT HAND**. You didn't win, but at least you beat the Hero Player and came in second.

## hat the Ordeal ends. The Hero Player can decide the Witch King's fate as part of the Epilogue.

If the hero Yields, or wasn't in the Clash, however, then all of the Witch King's Battered dice are available again at the end of the Clash and play continues.

**KILLING THE** 

WITCH KING

the Witch King is dead.

Like the hero, if all 10 of the Witch

King's dice slots are Devastated,

Like the hero, the Witch King can also be Broken if all of their

If the hero goes on to win the Clash where the Witch King is

Battered, they are captured and

remaining dice slots are Battered.



#### REWARDS AND PENALTIES

The subsequent rewards and penalties are on the honor system. You are expected to not claim a reward you didn't earn and to not duck a penalty you deserve, even if playing your next Saga with an entirely different group of players.

> Any player who violates this trust is a true loser. Their penalty is far greater than any this game can impose.

As a reward you get the following benefits.

- Change the Final Ordeal scenario so that this Faction is the 3 Edge Faction for the next Final Ordeal against this Witch King. Set the other Faction's Edge based on the Victory Points they scored this Ordeal.
- Between you and the Witch King Player, rewrite the Witch King and the 3 Factions to reflect the fictional impact of the Final Ordeal. Eliminate the Vanquished Faction and consider dramatically changing the other Faction if it had thrown in with that pathetic hero. When creating a new Faction consider promoting one of your secondary Component characters to Main Faction Character status.
- Your hero in the next Saga you play gets to start with one additional Edge (three instead of two) and no starting Doom.

#### THE VANQUISHED

The Faction Player who scored the fewest Victory Points during the Final Ordeal is **VANQUISHED**. You've come in last place. You have lost **BLOOD RED SANDS**.

You should probably never play this game again because you are so bad at it. But if you do, you must accept the following penalty for having lost.

- Change the Final Ordeal scenario so that this Faction is no longer in it. It has been utterly destroyed. The Right Hand player should invent a new Faction to take its place.
- Your hero in the next Saga you play starts with no Edge (zero instead of two) and one extra Doom (two instead of one).

#### **EPILOGUE**

As the Witch King Player, you have complete control over the Epilogue. Describe the ending of the other Factions as you choose. Establish how the high scoring Faction winds up as your new right hand. Describe the ultimate fate of the vanquished faction. If the Hero Player had taken the third and final Vow, describe how they rise up as an undead servant to evil.



Finish up with some final image, perhaps harkening back to some previous Ordeal, where you demonstrate the darkness closing in even tighter on the world of Abalahn. You may go back to any Ordeal where the hero had a heroic Epilogue and overturn that happy ending.

## THE HERO TRIUMPHANT

If the Witch King is dead at the end of the Ordeal, the Hero Player wins the game, even if the hero is also dead.

#### YOUR REWARD

If you play in another Saga of **BLOOD RED SANDS** with the same or a different group of players, you can claim a reward for your victory.

Your next hero is a descendent of this hero. If you won without making the Vow to the Mad God, your next hero starts play with:

- A 1d10 Legendary Trait instead of the usual 1d4. You must describe your pride in your lineage and the honor and duty of your heritage as the origin story of your Chronicle.
- Two extra starting Edge (four instead of two) representing the added strength of your blood line.
- A Weakness: "Burden of Expectations," claimable once per Ordeal by any Opposed Faction.

If you won, but did make a Vow to the Mad God, your next hero starts play with:

- A 1d10 Legendary Trait instead of the usual 1d4. You must describe how you broke free of the new Witch King's control (your ancestor) as the origin of your Chronicle.
- One extra starting Edge (three instead of two) representing the added strength of your blood line.
- One extra starting Doom (two instead of one) representing the flaw in your heritage that led to your ancestor's fall.
- A Weakness: "Tainted Blood," claimable once per Ordeal by any Blessed character or any Aligned Faction.







#### THE RIGHT HAND AND THE VANQUISHED

There is no Right Hand or Vanquished player if the hero wins. The second place finisher gets no reward for their success, which they may not like very much. The last place finisher suffers no ignominy from their poor performance, which they should be grateful for.

It is intended that this situation be a factor in Faction Players deciding who to support and who to oppose in the Final Ordeal.

#### **EPILOGUE**

As the Hero Player, you have complete control over the Epilogue. Describe the ending of the other Factions as you choose. Establish how other Factions went on to prosper, survive, or be destroyed. Describe your hero's death if you made the second Vow. If you made the third and final Vow, describe how your efforts to do good have been tainted as you take the mantle of power upon yourself.

Finish up with some final image, perhaps harkening back to some previous ordeal, where you demonstrate the breaking of the Witch King's power and growing freedom and prosperity of the people. You may go back to any Ordeal where you had a tragic Epilogue and restore some hope for the survivors.

# THIS IS THE END OF THE RULES OF BLOOD RED SANDS



## THE SORCERER AND THE SWORD EXCERPT FROM A STORY BY WILL HINDMARCH

In the language of the land where I was born, my name means hex, but I didn't want to be a hex. I wanted to be a sword.

My brother, whose name meant arrow, also wanted to be a sword. We played at swords by swinging sticks at each other in the woods outside the miserable towns we were dragged to by our mother. She was a sorcerer in the army of sorcerers. She gave us our names – Hex and Arrow – either because she foresaw our futures, as she said, or because she wanted to prescribe our futures, as Arrow said.

Neither of them wanted this for me – drunk in a rowdy tavern in a halfbroken north-country town that had suffered in its resistance against the sorcerer-army and failed in its efforts to heal its war wounds. But there I was, carousing with old enemies gathered together in a rare warm spot in the village.

Ourel and I stepped back to the bar. I tried to make eye contact with her but she was adjusting her sheathed blade. Then she exchanged a look with the innkeeper. Customers eyeballed Ourel, some sidelong, some straight away. People took their drinks and made room for other customers. No one here wanted to be near her, I imagine, because she was one who traveled with Epah.

"We should drink quick, I think," I said.

"I can drink quicker if you like." She tipped her tankard, chugging her drink as the crowd swayed and milled behind her to let someone through. She set her tankard down, wiped her wide mouth, and looked me in the eyes.

Then she was dead. Her hand fell, hit the bar, slid away.

#### WILL HINDMARCH is a writer, designer, and producer of fiction, non-fiction, and games. His work has appeared in McSweeney's Internet Tendency, The Thackery T. Lambshead Cabinet of Curiosities, and more. He co-founded Chicago's Story Club South Side live-lit show and Gameplaywright Press, somehow, in those rare minutes when he's not on Twitter. When he isn't working, he probably should be.



JULIA B. ELLINGBOE is a writer, editor, and role-playing game designer. Her writing and design draws from various folkloric traditions such as African American slave narratives (Steal Away Jordan), Japanese kaidan stories (Tales of the Fisherman's Wife), and the Francis J. Child Ballads. In 2010, Julia penned "Hag Ride," a campaign frame Mortal Coil (Galileo Games). An avid parlor larp player and writer, she has written several as-yet-unpublished larps. She has a bachelor's degree in Religion from Smith College and lives in Western Massachusetts.

## THE STUDENT BY JULIA B. ELLINGBOE

"Greet the beacon-holders." She says as retrieves a forged toy in the shape of a dragon with articulated limbs, glassy green enamel scales, ivory teeth, and lapis lazuli eyes from her satchel and places it on the soggy grass. Rina places the dragon in front of her and gently flicks the top of its head and the dragon utters a tiny childish yelp. It looks up at her, waiting for her instruction.

"What does it do?" I ask.

Dragon and child glance up at me. The dragon hisses and they look back at each other. Ignoring me, she chants to the dragon in a low whisper. The dragon chirps and squeals in response. Their unified chanting and screeching grow louder as the dragon spreads its wings and takes flight. It circles low above us.

Rina turns back to me. "It will accompany you." She says. "Do what you must to grant me a meeting with Zell, and if she is no longer the chieftain, get me a meeting with her successor."

"And if they deny me?" I ask.

"Then you will have proven yourself trustworthy, but useless, and my friend here will claw your eyes out. I'll find another way to speak with Zell." She smiles.

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"I suspect that his soul has been severed from his flesh." Rina says. "As his apprentice, he and I had a unique connection. So I came to hold any



artifact that he created. I see you have Zagailya, the spear Master Kailix crafted for you. May I?"

Zell summons the spear-holder. Rina takes the spear and inspects it, running her fingers in the grooves of the etched sword. Her voice barely rises above a whisper, and as she speaks and examines the spear, the blade awakens and changes from still, dormant black to a pulsating crimson. "Master Kailix told me that some believe that a Soul Forger's skill is best applied when she crafts a weapon. Our sorcery lends itself well to destruction. But every artifact we build houses a fragment of soul, very often our own. So every artifact we make, from the figurine designed to delight a child to the blade crafted to fell beast or man, must be fashioned with skill and care to envelop the soul in splendor. The more beautiful the artifact, the stronger the resonance of the soul it holds. Zagailya, you are one of my teacher's masterpieces." Rina raises the spear to her forehead. Waves of sobbing fill the room and Rina's slight shoulder shake. She drops the spear with a small, childlike cry, but Zell rushes to catch it before it hits the ground.

"Thank you, Zell." Rina whispers.

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Les Krown 1993

THE WITCH KING



# APPENDIX ONE: THE BIG EXAMPLE

## QUICK AND EASY HERO CREATION

- Assign six dice to your six hero slots. Tag each with a Trait and an Aspect.
- Assign four dice to your first Feature's four slots. Tag each with a Trait and an Aspect.
  - Discard a die of equal or greater size for every Sorcery Aspect you take.
  - Write a brief Origin Story.
- Choose one of your assigned d4 dice as your Legendary Trait.
  - Give your hero a name.

Albert, Bob, Christine, Dave, and Ed are sitting down to continue their **BLOOD RED SANDS** Saga. This will be their third Ordeal. Christine and Albert played heroes in the first and second Ordeals with Albert managing only a d6 Legendary Trait and Christine achieving a d8. Bob scored more Victory Points than Dave or Ed in the last Ordeal and so will play the hero for the current one. Dave and Ed both know that this is the next to last Ordeal for this Cycle. That means that whoever of them scores higher in this Ordeal will play a hero in the last Ordeal of the Cycle. The other will not have the opportunity to play a hero this Saga.

# **BOB CREATES HIS HERO**

Bob leaves the room while the other players begin to generate the upcoming Ordeal. He takes with him a pencil and a blank Hero Record Sheet and sets about creating his hero. Following the steps on the Hero Record he comes up with the name Barek and envisions him as having been a soldier serving in Astongetorix's Legion.

Bob knows his Dice Horde will start with the standard complement of player dice for his first Ordeal: 4d10, 4d8, 4d6, and 4d4. These are the dice he'll build his hero with.

Six of those dice will be spent defining his Hero Component. He will be able to add a seventh during this Ordeal following his first victorious Clash, and will be able to add three more if he makes it all the way to the Final Ordeal. Bob will invent a Trait for each die and assign them an Aspect that reflects Barek's approach to life; lots of Force dice.

All heroes also start with a 1d4 Legendary Trait. This Trait stems from their origin story which is the event that strips the hero of whatever status they had and sets them on the road, a destitute wanderer with nothing but their desire for vengeance on the Witch King to keep them warm. Bob gives some thought to the choice. He wants the Legendary Trait to be part of the Hero Component, because he wants his legend to be about him, not his gear. So he will need to make sure at least one of his starting Traits is a d4.



- Legion Born 1d10 Force
- Think Twice, Cut Once 1d6 Finesse
- No Patience 1d4 Force
- My Own Master Now 1d6 Fortitude
- Master of Spear and Shield 1d10 Finesse
- Righteous Fury
  1d8 Force

Choosing "No Patience" as his Legendary Trait fits into his intended origin story, which Bob fills in on the back of the Hero Record.

"Barek was a professional legionnaire in the army of Astongetorix. Tired of a particularly cruel centurion brutalizing the men of his file, he beat the man to death, taking the centurion's spear Doom Slayer before fleeing. Hunted ever since, he's a man on the run, looking for the opportunity to end it all – one way or the other."

Bob's concept gives him the obvious idea for his Feature Component, the spear **DOOM SLAYER**. He decides to take a risk and make a hugely powerful artifact that no doubt will be targeted for destruction or theft by the other players.

- Lightning Quick 1d8 Finesse
- Penetrate Anything
  1d8 Soul Forged
- Fire Crow Feather Totem 1d10 Soul Fused
- Cold Iron Shaft
  1d6 Fortitude

Bob's plan is to back up the Soul Forged, Soul Fused combo with Finesse dice to maximize his ability to use them. For the two Sorcery Aspects he discards 1d8 and 1d10.

With starting Doom and Edge already on the Sheet, Bob's hero is ready whenever the Ordeal is set up.

## **BOB'S DICE HORDE**

Bob has spent 3d10, 3d8, 3d6, and 1d4. Another 1d8 and 1d10 were discarded to the Bone Yard to pay for Sorcery.

That leaves:

1d6, and 3d4

Bob can use these dice to Contest, to pay for positioning in scenes, or to build another Feature.



## COMMENTARY

As Record Keeper, Christine fills out the Ordeal Sheet, recording all of the available Elements in the lists on the upper part of the sheet, starring those that are Thematic Elements.

Only one item is starred, the "Fallen Disciple" Sorcerer. As at least one Thematic element is required, and this is the only one on the lists, a portion of the matrix will get filled in automatically. Christine crosses the Sorcerer entry off of the list and enters it into the Faction column of the first row of the matrix. Since the Fallen Disciple is already identified as having the Opposed Alignment, Christine enters an "O" into the A/O column of the matrix. While she's at it she decides it makes sense that the Main Character for the Fallen Disciple Faction is actually the demoted sorcerer himself. So she writes "Sorcerer" in the Main Character Role space.

# GENERATING THE ORDEAL

While Bob is out creating his hero; Albert, Christine, Dave, and Ed set about creating the Ordeal. After having earned a d8 Legendary Trait for her hero in the first Ordeal, Christine was targeted in the second and wound up as the Most Devastated Player. She will be the Record Keeper for the Ordeal as well as receiving several benefits.

#### **GENERATE THE ELEMENTS**

The first order of business is to determine the geographical location for the Ordeal. Christine appoints Albert to look up the rolls on the Element Tables and Dave to roll the dice while she records the entries on the Ordeal Sheet. The first roll is on the Geography Element Table and gets an evocative locale for their adventure.

The Ruin Fields

Next up is rolling the Factions. With four Faction Players, five Factions will be rolled. The one that doesn't get used will be discarded. The Factions rolled are:

- A market town on a cross roads
- An internal rival to one of the other Factions
- Nomadic shepherds
- A Thematic Faction
- An independent warlord

All Ordeals must include at least one Thematic Element. In this case the rolls have indicated that one of the Factions will come from the Thematic Element Table. Christine consults the list and chooses "Fallen Disciple," indicating a sorcerer who has lost favor with the Witch King. She notes that this Faction will automatically have the "Opposed" Alignment.



With five Factions determined, Dave rolls for three Objectives. Each of these objectives will be attached to one of the Factions. The last Faction will get one of the two Standard Objectives: Oppose or Survive.

- Subjugation
- Conquest
- Become the Ruler

Next, four Extras are rolled:

- Required Component: Citadel
- General Effect: Extensive Tunnels
- Required Component: Natural Fortress
- Required Trait: Righteous Anger

Finally Dave rolls to see if there will be a Twist in this Ordeal. There is! Dave does not roll on the table to see what it is yet. That will happen only if the Twist is triggered in play. For now, Christine only notes that there is one.

## **ASSEMBLE THE SITUATION**

Albert has the fewest Victory Points and so will make the first choice. After that they will continue around the table in clockwise order, which at this table is: Christine, then Dave, then Ed. On their turn the players will choose one of the following options to assemble these pieces into a coherent picture. The situation should be a powder keg of factions all going for the throat of their rival. It should be something that, when Bob's hero wanders in, he'll immediately be seen as a potential ally to use against one's enemies. Albert's options are:

- Select a Faction, assign an Objective to it, and identify the target.
- Select a Faction, and assign an Extra to it.
- Select a Faction and determine its Edge.
- Select a Faction and assign it an Alignment.
- Select a Faction whose player will be the Initial Chronicler.



The rest of the options will be by player choice. The Ordeal sheet will get passed around the table so the players can make their choices. As the elements are chosen, they'll be crossed off of the lists and entered into the matrix at the bottom of the sheet.

Since Albert gets first pick, Christine passes the Ordeal Record sheet to him. Meanwhile she takes a Faction Record Sheet and begins to fill in what is known so far about the Fallen Disciple Faction.

### **ALBERT'S TURN**

Albert's first choice locks in another two of the five rolled Factions and also defines the role of the Main Character Component for those Factions.

Albert crosses off "Rival Factions," "Market Town," and "Become the Ruler" from the lists on the Ordeal Sheet. In the second column of the matrix he enters "Rival Faction of the Market Town" in the Faction row, and "Become the Ruler of the Market Town" in the Objective row. He leaves the Extra rows empty at this time but adds "Brother of the Town's Headman" in the Main Character Role row.

In the Faction row of the third column he enters "Market Town on a Crossroads" and enters "Headman" in the Main Character Role row, leaving the rest of the column blank.

Meanwhile, Christine grabs two Faction Record Sheets and begins to fill them out for the Rival Faction and the Market Town. Before beginning the selections, it's important to know what order Factions will be selected in. First pick will go to the Most Devastated Player from last Ordeal, that's Christine. Then it goes in order from the player with the fewest Victory Points to the most. Bob currently has the most, but he's the hero player. Christine has the second most which (since Bob isn't eligible) means she should be picking last. As the Most Devastated Player, however, she gets to pick first. Albert's pretty sure that possibility was what motivated her to nearly suicide herself in the last Ordeal. After Christine, Ed is in third, Dave's in fourth and Albert is currently in last place. That means Faction selection for this Ordeal will be: Christine, Albert, Dave, then Ed.

**ALBERT:** To start, Albert examines the list of Factions and Objectives that Christine has recorded: Warlord, Sorcerer, Town, Shepherds, Internal Rivals; Subjugation, Conquest, Become the Ruler. He then studies the special effects of each of the Extras.

- The Citadel gets two dice with double Aspects (Fortitude in addition to another Aspect).
- The Natural Fortress restricts opponents to bringing in only one Component at the start of a Clash there.
- The Tunnels mean that that player cannot be kept out of a scene if they want to be there.
- Righteous Anger is a Trait that will be assigned to the Faction's Main Character. It provides a sort of counter attack, damaging your opponent every time one of the character's dice are Devastated.

Albert's task is to begin assembling these elements into a situation that will be fun to play while attempting to manipulate things to his own advantage. Christine will be getting first choice of Faction, but Albert will be choosing second. Therefore Albert is motivated to make sure there are two strong, well-positioned Factions so that he'll get one of them. However, Christine has the second most Victory Points and is well ahead of Albert, so he also wants to make sure that the first Faction chosen isn't too good.

Some immediate possibilities come to mind. The Warlord might be seeking to become the ruler of the town; the Sorcerer might be seeking to become the ruler of the Warlord. An important trick to assembling



the pieces is to make sure that what's left after assigning the obvious ones makes sense and are equally interesting. In this case, they are all pretty aggressive beat-up-on-the-other-guy kind of Objectives.

The Sorcerer Faction is already in play. Instead of building off of that, Albert decides to lock in as much about the Ordeal as possible on his first turn. He selects the "Internal Rivals" Faction and assigns it to have the objective of "Become the Ruler" targeted at the "Market Town." As added details he declares that the rival Faction is led by the town leader's younger brother whose ambition is to replace his brother as headman. This first choice locks in two more Factions and provides roles for both Factions' Main Characters.

**CHRISTINE:** Christine knows that not all Factions are equally strong since they can have different Extra powers (some are much better than others, some are actually bad) and different Edges. However, since she's getting first pick she only has to worry about making sure one Faction is as strong as possible, the rest she'll be trying to hose. She also knows that just as important as raw strength is how the Factions are positioned against each other, which will be complicated by the relative scores of the players playing them. As the first and second place players, she and Bob will be natural targets.

Wanting to make sure a powerful Extra is in place for her to chose, she selects the Citadel and assigns it to the Warlord Faction. The fourth Faction has now been locked in, meaning that the fifth generated Faction, the Nomadic Shepherds, will be discarded unused. The Main Faction Character for the Warlord Faction could be the Warlord himself or perhaps a favored general or appointed representative. Christine decides not to bother clarifying, leaving that up to whoever winds up controlling the Faction.

**DAVE**: Three Ordeals in and Dave is in a difficult position in the game. He's in second to last place and he has only one shot left to get his hero featured. So Dave has one mission and one mission only this Ordeal. Score more points than Ed. You don't have to run faster than the bear, you just have to run faster than your friend.

Dave has the advantage of picking his Faction before Ed, so Dave's primary mission is to hose one Faction so badly that Ed, picking last, will be stuck with it and in no position to outscore him.



## **CHRISTINE'S TURN**

On her turn, Christine receives the Order Record Sheet from Albert. She crosses off "Warlord" and "Citadel" from the lists and enters "Warlord" in the Faction row of the fourth column of the matrix. She enters "Citadel" in the Extra row of that same column.

Every Faction except the Nomadic Shepherds has now been chosen. She crosses them off the list but does not enter them into the matrix.

After passing the Order Record Sheet on to Dave, she fulfills her Record Keeping duties by beginning to fill in a new Faction Sheet for the Warlord. She details the Extra's effect and fills in "Citadel" in the space for "Component #1' as it's a Required Component now for the Warlord Faction.

### **DAVE'S TURN**

Dave takes the Order Record Sheet as it's passed to him and crosses off "Conquest" from the Objective list.

He enters "Conquer the Market Town" in the Objective row of the Warlord's entry on the matrix.

## **ED'S TURN**

Ed takes the Order Record Sheet and crosses off "Natural Fortress."

He enters "Natural Fortress" in the Extra row of the Market Town's entry.

Christine adds this, and the details of its effects on the Market Town Faction Sheet.

#### **ALBERT'S TURN**

Albert crosses off the three Edge option from the list (which was already filled in) and enters the number in the Edge row for the Sorcerer.

Christine locates the Sorcerer Faction Record Sheet and enters "3" in the "Rating" line of the Edge box. Dave thinks about assigning the Zero Edge, since all of the Extras are at least somewhat good, that's the only really bad choice available. In fact, if Dave were concerned at all about Christine, he could seriously undermine the effectiveness of the Warlord's Citadel by slapping the Zero Edge on the Warlord. But Dave's plan is to stay on target.

Dave hits on a clever solution. He assigns the "Conquest" Objective to the Warlord Faction, and targets it at the Market Town. The poor Market Town is now targeted by two other Factions.

**ED**: Ed is in a tough spot. He's only in third place overall, but because of Bob being the hero and Christine being the Most Devastated Player, he's stuck picking last. Ed needs to outscore Dave to get a chance to play a hero, but he also wants to stay in striking distance of Christine who isn't that far ahead of him in points.

For his first choice, then, Ed tries to assign the Alignment of "Opposed" to the Market Town. That will typically encourage help from the hero and Ed could use that help if he gets stuck playing the town. However, Christine the Record Keeper points out that the "Opposed" Alignment has already been assigned to the Sorcerer Faction by the requirements of the Thematic Element list, and thus isn't available since there can be only one.

Ed decides then, that the next best thing is to give the Market Town a strong Extra of its own, to help ward off both opponents. He decides that the Market Town is situated on a bluff of hard rock with only a narrow winding trail leading to it. This serves as a "Natural Fortress" and has helped keep it free over the years. Ed could have chosen to give the Town an Edge of three instead, but figures with two Factions trying to attack the town, limiting the number of Components they can attack with will be more helpful in the long run. He fully expects Dave will nail him with the Zero Edge next time around.

**ALBERT**: Albert has a ton of options available to him. His primary goal is to make sure that there are two Factions that are notably better than the other two and roughly equal to each other, knowing that Christine will pick one and leave him with the other.

The two strongest Extras (he thinks) have already been assigned, but one of them is owned by the Market Town, which at this point isn't in that



great of a position. So Albert will probably get one of the two remaining. Of those he doesn't really have a preference, and neither would make the Faction they are assigned to particularly powerful which is his goal.

So Albert takes the Sorcerer and assigns it the three Edge. There are six Edge options, so only four will be used. Albert is thinking he'll either get the Warlord and the Citadel, or the Sorcerer and the three Edge.

**CHRISTINE:** Christine is relieved that the Ordeal Record Sheet made it all the way back to her without anyone having hosed the Warlord Faction with the zero Edge. It doesn't often work out so well, but she's happy to take advantage of Dave and Ed being focused on messing with each other.

Without much ado she grabs one of the two Edge options and assigns it to the Warlord Faction.

**DAVE**: Dave has some thinking to do. Ed's selection of the "Natural Fortress" Extra makes the Market Town a potentially attractive option, even with two Factions targeted at it. Maybe he should plan on taking that as his chosen Faction and turn his attention towards hosing the Internal Rivals.

Not one to dwell too long on over thinking his options, Dave nails the Internal Rivals with the dreaded zero Edge.

**ED**: Ed is feeling pretty screwed at this point. He'll almost certainly wind up with the Internal Rivals. There isn't much he could do to make the Market Town less attractive to Dave, and if he did...well, he'd just get stuck with his own sabotage. His only hope is to make the Internal Rivals as strong and well positioned as possible.

With that Faction's Objective and Edge already locked in, the only way he can make it any stronger is to pick a good Extra. The "Extensive Tunnels" would be a good choice. The Warlord will already be attacking the town, Ed could position the Internal Rivals such that he could ally with the Warlord... the Warlord could "conquer" the town and set up the younger brother as his representative "ruler." They could both get their objective. Or not, but either way, someone would be motivated to keep Ed out of the fight, and with the tunnels they wouldn't be able to. Ed also thinks that if he describes the tunnels as being within the town he might be able to Challenge that the power of the Natural



## CHRISTINE'S TURN

Christine crosses off one of the three available two Edge options and adds it to the Warlord entry.

She enters "2" in the "Rating" line of the Edge box on the Warlords Faction Sheet.

## DAVE'S TURN

Dave has the Order Record Sheet in his hand for about three seconds before settling on a choice and crossing out the "O Edge" item and adding it to the Internal Rival entry on the matrix.

Christine enters "0" to the "Rating" line of the Internal Rival Faction Sheet.

#### **ED'S TURN**

Ed takes the Order Record Sheet and crosses off "Subjugate."

He enters "Subjugate the Market Town" in the Objective row of the Sorcerer entry.

Christine wonders why it took so long for Ed to think of that, it was pretty obvious to her as she adds the information to the Sorcerer's Faction Record Sheet. Fortress would be negated based on what makes sense in the fiction. Of course, being an "internal" rival, he already has grounds for trying that Challenge and seeing if it flies with the group.

The "Righteous Anger" Trait is also appealing. It works well with the fiction, the angry younger brother feeling justified in his coup. Plus, it inflicts damage every time the Main Character suffers damage – thus potentially scoring more points, which is what Ed is looking for.

However, since all the Extras will eventually be assigned, there's no need for him to waste his turn choosing one of them if he's equally happy with either. So he thinks some more about the other options.

The Subjugate Objective is still available, as is hitting the Market Town with an Edge of one so Dave doesn't get to pick an Edge of two. The Aligned Objective is also still available. Making a Faction Aligned is most likely to make an enemy of the hero. Assigning it to the Warlord is almost pointless as Bob and Christine are likely to be fighting each other anyway since Christine will be trying to keep Bob from besting her d8 success with her hero while also trying to catch up to him in points. Assigning it to the Market Town would be one way of making the Town less attractive to Dave, but then Dave would likely just go for the Rival Faction.

Ed starts thinking about that Subjugate Objective. If he assigns the Market Town the Objective he could force Dave to attack while trying to defend against two attackers. Of course targeting it at either the Warlord or the Internal Rivals wouldn't do much, since the Town is already fighting those and Dave could just wait for them to come to him.

But, he could force the town to try to Subjugate the Sorcerer. Ed thinks someone may Challenge that choice on the ground it makes little fictional sense, but before trying to come up with a justification, Ed analyses whether it would even be worth it. The Market Town would have to attack the Sorcerer, which would mean leaving the safety of the Natural Fortress. The hero is at least theoretically allied with the Sorcerer (as the "Opposed" faction) so that would essentially make it a four-onone gang up against the Market Town. Talk about "dead man walking." Dave would totally pass on that leaving Ed to drink his own poison.



But wait. Give the Sorcerer the Objective of Subjugating the Market Town. Yes, that's brilliant! That will put all three Factions trying to attack the Market Town. But the Warlord and the Sorcerer can't be allies because if one conquers the town, the other one can't. That puts the Internal Rivals in a position to be king maker, throwing themselves in with whichever side lets them be their puppet ruler. Regardless, it makes the Market Town and Internal Rivals roughly equally bad off, and since Ed's primary goal is to outscore Dave, that's about the best he can do, especially if he manages to prevent Christine from getting her goal in the process.

**ALBERT:** Albert was a bit surprised by Ed's choice. He had been planning to assign the "Aligned" Objective to the Warlord Faction to solidify his ability to rely on Bob as an ally, assuming he winds up playing the Sorcerer. If Christine chose the Sorcerer instead, then Albert would get the Citadel and Bob would probably go after Christine anyway. But with both the Sorcerer and the Warlord Factions gunning for the Market Town, not to mention the Internal Rivals, Albert takes a different tack. He looks over the remaining Extras and decides that if there's going to be a three-way cage match over the fate of the Town, he wants to make sure he gets in on the action and not cut out of any scenes. You never know when you might want to join someone to help soften the town up and then join the town to hold off some other claimant.

By assigning the "Extensive Tunnels" to the Sorcerer he ensures that whenever there's a fight going on, he can be sure to be there.

**CHRISTINE**: The options are dwindling. The Righteous Anger Trait is going to the Internal Rival Faction by default. The Market Town still needs an Objective and an Edge. The Aligned Faction is still available, and some Faction needs to be assigned as the Initial Chronicler.

Christine starts to assign the Market Town an Edge of one (the lowest remaining option) to weaken it for her attack. But then says, "Oh, wait!" as she realizes the mistake she almost made. If she does that, Dave will be free to give the Market Town the Objective of "Opposing" one of the other Factions. That would allow him to achieve his Objective as long as the specified Faction fails theirs. Which means he could throw in with one of the other would be conquerors, to prevent that one Faction from winning. Even though the Town gets conquered the Town Player

#### t Christine immediately sees the f, effectiveness of that Extra the way

**ALBERT'S TURN** 

Tunnels" item and adds it

to the Sorcerer entry.

Albert crosses off the "Extensive

this Ordeal has shaken out and starts thinking about claiming the Sorcerer instead as she fills out the information and details on the Sorcerer's Faction Record Sheet.

## CHRISTINE'S TURN

Christine crosses off the Standard Objective, circling "Survive" as the option chosen and enters it into the Town row of the matrix.

She likewise fills in the Market Town Faction Record Sheet. Since she's noticed that the "Righteous Anger" Extra has become a nonchoice (it must go to the Internal Rivals as the only Faction left without an Extra) she fills it in automatically on the matrix and the Internal Rival Faction Sheet.



#### **DAVE'S TURN**

Dave crosses off one of the two Edge items and enters it into the Town entry on the Matrix.

> Christine dutifully fills the number in on the Town Faction Record Sheet.

would still score their +10 Victory Points. Since Christine is in second place and Albert is in last place, Dave or Ed would almost certainly throw in with Albert.

Dodging a bullet, Christine gives the Market Town the Objective of "Survive."

**DAVE**: Dave had been hoping Christine wouldn't catch that. But seeing that she did, the only thing he has to do is decide whether he wants the Market Town or the Rival Faction when it's his turn to pick. He knows the Internal Rival Faction will have a little easier time because their Objective is pretty flexible – they can ally with just about anyone to get what they want, and so both the Sorcerer and Warlord will likely be seeking them out as allies. However, the Warlord's Citadel won't be that valuable in attacking the town and the Town's Natural Fortress will be very tough for attackers to deal with. The other two factions should be at each other's throats almost as much as they are fighting the town, and Dave thinks he can play them off against themselves. Plus, with everyone looking to fight him, he'll have ample opportunity to score Victory Points in Clashes, which with the ability to triple them can easily be worth more than the standard +10 if he can keep the Headman alive. Since he's in second to last place, the other players (save Ed) won't be trying too hard to keep him out of the points.

So, Dave gives the Market Town Faction an Edge of two (instead of the one he would have if he was leaving it to Ed).

**ED**: Dave has clearly signaled that he's planning to take the Market Town. So Ed has to figure out what he can do with his last turn to put the Internal Rivals in a better position. There are only two options left, who is going to be the Aligned Faction and who is going to be the Initial Chronicler.

Ed really doesn't want Christine to be the Initial Chronicler as that will give her enormous ability to frame the situation and get the jump on everyone. Ed is still harboring hope that Christine won't gain too much ground on him. But if he takes Initial Chronicler for himself (or more precisely, the Faction he's likely to get) that will leave Christine to pick who the Aligned Faction is. She may nail the Internal Rivals with it as a way to help keep Ed from catching her.



Ed grins. Bob is crafty. He's going to want to score points to keep his first place lead and get a good legend for his hero. He's also going to want to see Christine beat on since she's currently in second. Christine is going to be attacking the town. Ed wouldn't put it past Bob to defend the town from Christine, and in the process decide that the Natural Fortress means he can team up with the town and take on all comers and score crazy points that way. In fact, the more Ed thinks about it, the more that sounds like exactly a Bob sort of thing to do.

Ed makes the town the Aligned Faction. Bob will be less likely to join the town knowing that doing so will hurt his hero in the long run by generating Edge for the Witch King. Plus, that makes perfect sense with the younger brother's Righteous Anger Trait. He's not just an ambitious usurper; he's a heroic rebel against the Witch King's influence over the town.

**CHRISTINE**: Gives Ed a funny look as she says "I guess that leaves me to choose who the Initial Chronicler is."

Christine knows she wants to be the Initial Chronicler so it comes down to which Faction she's going to pick to be hers. The Sorcerer is clearly in the strongest position. The Extensive Tunnels ability to allow the Sorcerer to join any scene desired will be very useful in the three-way battle for the town, the three Edge is the strongest in the game, and being the Opposed Faction is best positioned to win the assistance of Bob's hero. The way the Ordeal shook out, that Citadel looks to be less powerful since most of the action is likely to take place in the town and the Citadel is immobile. Christine is pretty sure that if she tried to draw the Citadel in the town when it comes time to draw the Ordeal Map that she'd be immediately Challenged for it.

So, she decides the Sorcerer Faction will be the Initial Chronicler.

#### **FINALIZING THE ORDEAL**

Now that the matrix is complete, the players double check that everything is in place. There are four Factions, each with an Objective and an Extra and no Faction has more than one. All have been assigned an Edge. The requisite Thematic Element is in place, an Aligned and an Opposed Faction has been identified, and the Initial Chronicler selected.



## ED'S TURN

Ed crosses off "Aligned" on the list and enters an "A" into the O/A Alignment row on the matrix for the Market Town.

Christine notes the alignment on the Faction Record Sheet.

## **CHRISTINE'S TURN**

Christine puts a check mark in the Initial Chronicler column of the matrix for the Sorcerer Faction.

All of the elements are accounted for; all of the Faction Record Sheets are filled out to the starting situation.

#### COMMENTARY

Christine marks the location of the Market Town and the roads on the Saga Map, placing it in the Ruin Fields south of the Blood Flume River. She draws the north-south road leading across the river and marks a ferry before continuing the road through the northern Haradras and into the Drained Lands, originating at the City of Rule. Some time is spent on clarifying Objectives more precisely. After some discussion, all agree that "Conquest" and "Subjugate," while different in flavor, are essentially the same and, at least for purposes of this ordeal, will be treated as mutually exclusive. The Warlord and the Sorcerer cannot both successfully take control of the town. Whichever of them is in control (if either) when the Ordeal ends will succeed and the other faction will fail. The group decides differently for the Internal Rival's Objective, however. The Internal Rival's goal is for the brother of the current headman to rule the town. Since the brother could do so on their own or on behalf of an outside conqueror, it is possible for them to win by selling their allegiance to one of the other attackers.

Next the group provides input while Christine draws the map. Starting from a blank Map Sheet they really only have a handful of features to draw. Going roughly through the center of the page in both directions, dividing the map into uneven quadrants, are two highways. The Town is located at the cross roads at the center drawn as a small crenellated wall atop a large wedge shaped rock. The Citadel is located near the left (western) edge of the map drawn with 3 stacked crenellated walls and a couple of towers. The City of Rule, Astongetorix's city, is shown to lie far to the north with an arrow, indicating the direction the Sorcerer would have come. Strewn about around the town between the roads are crudely drawn piles of rubble representing the Ruin Fields.

Christine sections off a large section of the empty lower right corner of the map, which the players decide can be used by whoever becomes the Market Town Player to draw a sketch of the town layout and defenses.

#### **CHOOSING FACTIONS**

Finally it's time for the Factions to be chosen. First Christine announces the player status of all of the players. Bob currently has the most Victory Points followed by Christine, then Ed, then Dave, then Albert.

At this point, barring a surprise move, it's fairly clear to everyone who is going to wind up with each Faction.

As Most Devastated Player, Christine selects first. She takes the stack of Faction Record Sheets she has been filling out. Having already made her decision, she pulls out and claims the Sorcerer Faction before handing the rest to Albert.



Albert is slightly disappointed. Because the Ordeal wound up being everybody attacking the town, his efforts to make the Sorcerer Faction almost as good as the Warlord, actually made it better. The Warlord will have limited ability to use the Citadel component and only has an Edge of two. Albert is in last place, by a lot. The Warlord may be the second toughest Faction in the Ordeal, and everyone expects him to take it, but it's not necessarily the best positioned to score a ton of points quickly. The Market Town on the other hand is at ground zero for constant Clash action. The Natural Fortress should help with survivability and the x3 VPs for the Survive Objective could score way more points than a +10 for taking the town. Plus, survival shouldn't be that hard since being in last place the other players shouldn't be trying overly hard to kill him, especially if he holds out the possibility of letting one of them take the town. Albert, in a surprise move, takes the Market Town.

Dave is disappointed. He had made the exact same analysis as Albert and had planned on using that x3 Victory Point Survive Objective to race past Ed. Dave toys briefly with the idea of taking the Internal Rivals and working towards some brotherly reconciliation, but then decides he'd have more fun cutting deals with Bob to betray Christine, and takes the Warlord.

Ed, as expected, gets the Internal Rivals. He's encouraged, however, that he won't have to outscore the point making machine that, barring bad rolls, the Market Town is likely to be. He's already thinking about ways he can work a three way alliance to have Christine subjugate the town, appoint him as its ruler, while allowing Albert to survive, and ganging up on Dave and Bob. Ed's willing to help Christine score points if it means beating Dave this Ordeal and making ground on the leader Bob.

The players let Bob know he can return to the room. He stands and relates the Chronicle of his hero thus far, noting key abilities, and the presence of his Soul Forged and Fused spear. Christine immediately twigs on Barek's background as an ex-legionnaire and how to tie that in to her own sorcerer who is also on the outs with Astongetorix.

She bears these thoughts in mind as she begins setting the stage for the first scene of Chapter One.





Christine places the totem on the Ordeal Map at a spot in the north western quarter to mark where the initial scene is taking place.

She's introduced Barek into the scene and deferred to Bob's Dominion over Barek to describe how he's been traveling before using her Chronicler's Voice to set the stage.

Christine then introduced Dave into the scene. She made the assumption that a Warlord would have an army. While she deferred to Dave to describe what his army looks like, if desired, Dave could have stated that his Warlord had no army, perhaps relying on some other source of power. But, since he was also figuring that a Warlord should have an army, he went along.

It is normal to allow the Chronicler some leeway to infringe on your Dominion to maintain story flow.

Dave's not sure he wants to be in this scene yet, Christine no doubt wants to pounce on him outside of his Citadel. But the hero is here so maybe there will be an opportunity to throw a wrench in Christine's plans. Knowing that most of the Ordeal will probably not take place in the Citadel, Dave doesn't yet spend many dice on it. Instead he builds the "First Division" of his army as Component #2 creating

# **CHAPTER ONE**

When Christine selected the Sorcerer Faction she became the Initial Chronicler for Chapter One.

**CHRISTINE:** Bob, would Barek be heading towards the City of Rule or away from it?

**BOB**: Away, definitely. He escaped from there after killing his commanding officer.

CHRISTINE: Ok. So Barek's arriving from the north, tell us about that.

**BOB**: Ok. Barek's been heading south following the old King's Road but at a distance. While there's hardly any trade and the road is little more than an overgrown track after so many centuries of neglect, it's safer to remain just out of sight of any travelers.

#### **CHRISTINE**: Makes sense.

Barek had traveled far from the City of Rule following the artery of a long dead kingdom back to the crumbled remains of its no longer beating heart. When he came up over a small rise, he realized it was not a rise at all, but the mostly buried remains of an ancient building. He surveyed the terrain around him, squinting into the lowering sun and saw the vast plain of the Haradras continuing on to the horizon. But for nearly as far as he could see, the view was broken by what he first took for exotic rock formations until realizing he was gazing upon the ruined remains of some vast ancient city. Towers, walls, the shells of old palaces. He was standing in the midst of a cemetery of civilization.

Off in the distance arose a cloud of dust of the sort made by armies on maneuver.

Dave, what does your army look like?

**DAVE**: My army? Um, ok. <after some thought> My army is traveling to the southeast in good order. It's small but well disciplined with a core of heavy infantry at the center and several towering armored War Mammoths in the rear. In the vanguard and spread out on the flanks are a light cavalry of sorts, mounted on elongated, almost serpentine, hairless cats with long fangs and three barbed tails. A knot of giants in armor surround the draconic banner of the Warlord, Dreghan.

**CHRISTINE:** As Dragon's army moves to the south...



DAVE: Dreghan.

#### CHRISTINE: Dreghan?

DAVE: Dreghan.

**CHRISTINE**: As Dreghan's army moved to the south there came a dry ripping sound as if the very fabric of reality was being torn asunder. A hole full of violet energy crackling with power blossomed in the air and from this hole came forth one by one a caravan of wagons, the massive war wains of a legion's rolling camp.

**ALBERT:** A hole in reality?

**CHRISTINE**: Of course. No one said my "Extensive Tunnels" had to be underground.

The wains are tall and armor plated and get narrower at the top where there are defensive crenellations. There's no visible means of locomotion. They roll into a large square formation that continues to advance across the flat plain, roughly in your direction Bob.

Standing on top of the tallest largest wagon at the front of the formation is a tall slender figure draped in black and white cloth in the fashion of the desert people and bearing a tall staff topped with an eye. He's surveying the terrain and orchestrating the advance. As the gaping hole in space closes with a whoosh, you recognize this as the mobile camp of one of Astongetorix's legions commanded by one of his elite Battle Casters. However, you notice that the Banner of Rule is not flying from the command wagon. Instead a different banner flies there, a black eye on a field of red.

**BOB**: So the wagons are still moving, heading towards the higher ground where Barek is, right? When they get here, I'm going to hail the Battle Caster.

**CHRISTINE**: Right. The camp rolls steadily across the plain, the formation opening and reforming seamlessly to flow around rubble or decaying buildings.

The army of Dreghan the destroyer, the slayer of children, halts when it scouts report the appearance of the legion camp. In a disorganized panic it disintegrates and flees back to Dreghan's stronghold too afraid to confront a true legion's might.

Dave, take a Constraint to your First Division Component restricting them to your Citadel for the rest of this chapter and the next, and a Weakness "Intimidated by Craddock's forces." Here's a d8, a d6, and a d4 from the Bone Yard.



the Heavy Infantry, War Mammoths, Leonine Cavalry, and the Giant Guard each as Traits. That leaves him flexibility for what else to create depending on what he needs.

Christine establishes the flavor of her faction and goes to some lengths to establish her Sorcerer as ex-legion, just like Barek. She knows it's just a matter of time before they wind up throwing down but hopes to get a bit of use out of Barek first. She also established some effective color for her tunnels which goes unchallenged. She also correctly surmised that Dave wasn't willing to Clash with her just yet outside of his Citadel, with less Edge and being uncertain whose side Bob would take. She made the initial terms of her Pain pretty extensive to show Dave she was serious and more than willing to fight over them, but really she was mostly interested in getting Dave out of the way for a couple Chapters so she could focus on other things without interruption.

Dave was willing to cede the story initiative to Christine at this point and accept the dice in order to wait for a more advantageous time to strike. He adds the d8 and d4 to his Horde and waits to hear what occurs between Bob and Christine. By narrating his detachments of cavalry he's creating fictional justification for Dreghan being aware of what's going on. He was hoping Christine would just let that go as part of the fiction with no mechanical weight, but Christine threatened Challenge to enforce her Constraint and so Dave invented a new Component with more of his bizarre cat-like cavalry. **DAVE**: Uhhh, no. I don't think so. But how about if Dreghan, concerned with the appearance of this wild card in his plans, retires in good order to his Citadel to see what develops, with no Weakness and I'll take a Constraint to the First Division only for this Chapter.

**CHRISTINE**: The First Division only for this Chapter and the next, for a d8 and a d4 and no Weakness.

**DAVE**: Fine. Wheeling in perfect formation the elite forces of Exarch Dreghan turn back to the west and arrive in good order at their Citadel of Iron Hold. Detachments of cavalry break off from the main body and melt into the Haradras to shadow the movements of this new arrival.

**CHRISTINE**: The cavalry are part of your First Division, and the First Division is Constrained to the Citadel.

**DAVE**: Fortunately I can create another Component of Outriders who aren't Constrained.

**CHRISTINE**: Right then. <Turning from Dave to Bob> As the wagons near your position, they roll to a halt. The figure on top of the command wagon calls down to you where you were concealed in the high grass and fallen stones. "Enjoying the view, Barek?"

Here we'll leave the rest of the blow by blow dialog of Chapter One to your imagination. Christine presented her Sorcerer Craddock to Bob as a fellow legionnaire who Barek knew by reputation and who was also on the run from Astongetorix's wrath. She could not confirm that Craddock was the "Opposed" Faction unless Barek joined a Conflict on the opposite side from her, but she strongly implied it. She told him of a town, loyal to Astongetorix, which controlled this region in the name of the Witch King and sent the land's tribute of goods and slaves back to Rule. Passing through this area would be dangerous. But if Barek helped Craddock take the town, he'd be able to continue south out of the reach of the Witch King. Christine attempted to extract an Oath from Barek that he would stand with her as an ally until the town was taken, but he agreed only to an Oath that he would help in at least one assault on it. The two then proceeded to establish their base camp at the foot of the bluff below the town, which Albert had named Tor-Mandrill, where they fought and won a small skirmish for small Spoils against Albert bringing the chapter to a close.





Here Dave is using the Voice of the Chronicler to set the stage and introduce characters into the scene. Since Craddock is prevented from attacking Tor-Mandrill again this Chapter or next, Alain and Ealon feel safe leaving the city. Otherwise, Christine might have grounds to Challenge that they could not return from the Citadel in time to defend the city against her next attack.

Albert took some hefty damage in the assault, leaving him vulnerable to Ed. He's persuaded Ed by accepting an Oath that he'll turn over the rule of Tor-Mandrill to Ealon, if he accompanies Alain to Iron Hold to request the aid of Dreghan. This discussion prompted Dave to frame the scene the way he has.

Dave is happy to gain control of Tor-Mandrill without having to fight for it. That will allow him to move his forces into the city without being resisted by Albert and his nasty Natural Fortress. However, the price for his help will be Albert agreeing to join him in attacking Ed at the Citadel. Ed will get to claim Alain's violated Oath, but Dave is confident Albert will go along.

After naming Alain and Ealon as the other Components present in addition to his own, they brought with them the Components they desired, as well.

# **TRIGGER A CLASH**

As a further example of how conflicts develop, we jump ahead to another scene in a later Chapter. In the last Chapter there was a huge battle between Christine and Bob against Albert. Ed had earlier agreed to a Constraint keeping him out of that battle, and Dave had not participated. Bob yielded after taking some hefty Battering choosing not to make a Vow to recover. Albert had a slight advantage thanks to his "Natural Fortress" and some amazing rolls, so Christine negotiated a settlement. She agreed to yield, but for much lower Spoils than had been originally established. Albert forced her to take a "Defeated By" Weakness and also to agree to have her entire Faction Constrained from the Tor-Mandrill location for two additional Chapters.

Dave is the Chronicler for this Chapter, playing the Faction of Dreghan, Exarch of Iron Hold.

**DAVE**: Three days had passed since the Sorcerer's failed assault on Tor-Mandrill. In the Hall of Judgment, Dreghan, Lord of Iron Hold sat upon his throne of iron, a throne made at his command to be hard and sharp and cold lest he grow too comfortable sitting in it. With him is his Iron Guard and beyond, garrisoned in his Citadel, the troops of the First Division.

Before him were summoned Alain of Tor-Mandrill [Albert's Main Character] and his brother Ealon [Ed's Main Character]. They had come to offer their fealty to the noble lord to keep their city free from the vile sorcerer Craddock.

**ED**: And with me are my Cadre of Supporters and Ethan the captain of Tor-Mandrill's guard who has pledged his loyalty to me against my unjust brother.

ALBERT: And with me are my house guards, and my champion Alexander.

BOB: I believe Barek will arrive to this little summit as well.

**CHRISTINE**: Indeed, he arrives with me. My "Extensive Tunnels" means you can't keep me out, Dave, and I'm bringing Barek with me. A tear rips open in space at the far end of your hall, and I step through with Barek and my acolytes, wielding my staff of power. Elsewhere in your "Iron Hold" my Fell Archers are taking up positions where they can snipe at your troops.



**DAVE**: Fine, "Ahh, we have guests. Make yourselves comfortable, I'll be with you momentarily..."

**CHRISTINE**: *That's not how I remember it*. And here's an Edge Token that says my memory is better than yours.

**DAVE**: So you're Contesting with an Edge Token? Fine, I can always use more Edge. Do tell us how you remember it.

**CHRISTINE**: As I remember it, the moment Craddock stepped through the portal, before anyone had time to react, a single bolt of violet energy burst from the eye atop his staff. Such was the violence of this raw power that a hole the size of a dinner plate was burned through Dreghan's chest and the very back of his throne, slaying him instantly.

DAVE: Uhhh...no. I believe that's not, in fact, how it happened.

**CHRISTINE:** Fine with me. On to the Spoils. My first Pain is that if you lose Dreghan is killed.

**DAVE**: Wow, you're really going for it all in one fell swoop, eh? You're like bidding six Devastated Traits. Ok. I'll respond in kind... if you lose, Craddock is killed, how many Traits will that take? four? So two Traits off your staff of power too, the two Sorcery ones, of course.

**CHRISTINE**: And also, your Citadel is destroyed, brought down around your ears as you die.

DAVE: Those are some bold Spoils, you believe this Bob?

BOB: She's playing hardball, you have the stones to stand up to her?

**DAVE**: I believe I do, but I'm not letting you bid all four of those Traits at once, because I'm going to Call on my next bid. So I assume you want to go for the d10 dual Force/Fortitude Trait?

**CHRISTINE**: Fine. Ok, that's that. I'm the leader of my side, Dave's the leader of the other, going clockwise from me that brings us to you Ed.

**ED**: I think it's time for you and me to throw down directly, Dave. Christine, will you accept an Oath to make me ruler of Tor-Mandrill once you capture it?

**CHRISTINE**: Absolutely.

Dave has successfully forced Christine's hand. Fighting Albert's Natural Fortress has proven costly, and Dave can't take his powerful Citadel Extra into battle with him. By bringing Albert and Ealon to his Citadel, he can ensure that they agree to let him into the city unopposed, or else he can kill them right there using his Citadel and avoiding the Fortress. Meanwhile Christine is Constrained from attacking the city which will give Dave plenty of time to describe how his forces occupy it. So, she wants to knock him out of the running right here.

Dave would love to be able to spend a die (or possibly even an Edge Token for something this important) to keep Christine out. But her Extra means she doesn't have to accept it, so he's stuck with her. He could have Challenged over Barek using her tunnels if he'd wanted to. While it makes sense in the fiction, there's nothing in the Extra's power that suggests she can use the power for others as well. But, as Christine's about to find out, Dave's more than happy to have Barek there.

Christine immediately Contests for the role of Chronicler. She could have used a die to do so, but if Dave had refused with a die of his own, she may have lost the roll and the opportunity. Instead, she



goes straight to an Edge Token. Dave can't beat that so instead he takes Christine's Token, adds it to his own, and cedes the role of Chronicler almost before he had a chance to do anything with it.

She doesn't waste any time before inflicting massive Pain on Dave, seeking to Destroy his Main Character instantly. Dave, as expected, invokes the ritual phrase, "That's not how it happened," and a Clash is triggered.

Christine was actually hoping she could get Dave to Flinch. That would end the Chapter before any agreement with Albert had been reached, and help fast forward through her Constraint time. If Dave had escalated again, she would have Flinched; but he Called -- so now it's on! **ALBERT**: Ed, I already gave you an Oath to do that. Little brothers are so unreliable. Dave, if you pledge to come to my aid whenever I'm attacked I'll join your side.

DAVE: Done.

CHRISTINE: Bob?

**BOB**: Barek has decided he doesn't like Astongetorix's little pet sorcerers any better than he likes Astongetorix. I'm joining Dave.

**CHRISTINE**: I knew you'd get around to betraying me sooner or later. At least I get to claim that Oath you took to help me take Tor-Mandrill.

**BOB**: Actually, I believe that the Oath was to help you capture Tor-Mandrill, once. Since we've fought there twice I believe I've fulfilled the terms of my Oath, and therefore you can't claim it as if I'd broken my word. It's not my fault that your assaults failed both times.

**CHRISTINE**: Yeah, I guess you got me there. Ok I'm committing Craddock and his Staff of Power as my first two Components. The Acolytes and Fell Archers will be available for Reinforcing. Dave?

**DAVE**: I'm bringing Dreghan and the Citadel. I'll leave the Iron Guard and the First Division for Reinforcements.

**ED**: I've got Ealon and Ethan, with the Cadre of Supporters for Reinforcements.

**ALBERT:** I've got Alain, and Alexander, with my House Guard as Reinforcements.

**BOB**: I've got Barek, and the spear Doom Slayer. And a whole mess of dice to create a new Feature for Reinforcing if I need to.



In play, as each of the Components are being committed the players would have been announcing their Traits and Aspects rolling their dice and moving them to the appropriate spots on the Battle Mat.

Christine's side will make the first attack. Unless her dice roll incredibly well, she'll probably let Ed make the first attack so that he'll qualify to reinforce. Dave is likely to attack Ed himself, and Christine is happy to let Ed absorb some punishment.

This battle is shaping up to be the epic climactic Clash of the game. There will probably be some mopping up afterwards, and the final disposition of the city will need to be determined. But this Clash promises to be huge. Christine and Ed are at a decided disadvantage being outnumbered and with Christine being rather beat up. Albert is also rather beat up, but Dave is fairly fresh and Bob still has Vows to take; probably calling for the Death of Craddock.



Here we see some of the strange bed fellows and unexpected results that help enrich the fiction due to bringing the competitive concerns of the players into their role playing of the characters. By all rights, Barek, as the Hero, should naturally be aligned to Craddock and want to help her and Ealon overthrow the Witch King's minion Alain. But, Bob is far more concerned with beating Christine and doesn't mind helping Dave and Albert in the process.

So, how can he reconcile that? what fictional reason would Barek have to throw in with Dreghan and Alain? Perhaps Barek doesn't really see himself as an enemy of Astongetorix at this point in his career. Perhaps he's just a loval soldier on the run from a vindictive Centurion with hopes one day of returning to service; and defeating this upstart sorcerer could be the way back into Astongetorix's good graces. Finding the in fiction justification for these meta level decisions can provide enormous opportunities for character development that wouldn't otherwise be available in such brief scenarios. In fact, if Barek eventually fails to advance, Bob could well decide its because he did return to serve the Witch King and thus no longer qualified as a "Hero".



on Mountains Great Northern Tundra ghi Steppes Cares Northern Haradras The God Bridge Shard Sea Chains Southern Haradras he Blood Flume The Ruin Fields he Great The Southern Jungle

# THE WORLD OF ABALAHN

# APPENDIX TWO: SETTING COMPENDIUM

The world of Abalahn is yours to explore. The ability to create your own Components means you are also creating the world as you go. This section includes a handful of entries that form a loose structure for you to hang your own creations from. It's organized alphabetically so that you can browse the entries for inspiration, or quickly look up an entry from one of the element tables.

# SORCERY

All sorcery is powered by the life force of the soul and this energy can be used to power magic. Adept practitioners can power modest magic with the strength of their own souls using only the amount of soul stuff that can be restored through rest and nourishment.

More powerful black magic can be powered with the strength of the souls of others. Such magic doesn't have to limit itself to restorable amounts but can rip forth the entire soul of as many people as needed, allowing for nearly unlimited power. Those who have their souls stolen by the dark arts don't die, but nor do they truly live. They become the Unliving.

### STANDARD EXTRA POWER: ADEPT

- Gain 1d4 Soul Reaper or Blessed Aspect for free.
- This Component may not have any other Sorcery Aspects.

## ADEPT

Any practitioner of sorcery is an adept but the term is most often reserved for neophyte adepts, individuals who are sensitive and have some ability to manipulate their own soul stuff but lack any formal training. Adepts are sought after as apprentices and novices by sorcerers and the Blessed alike. They are also often slain out of hand to prevent them from becoming threats later.

#### **BLESSED SORCERY**

#### Spiritual power through the purity of your own Soul.

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE**: A life of purity and spiritual training gives the Blessed access to the powerful protective energies of their own souls. These energies manifest as auras of light, warmth, and comfort; shimmering curtains of gold and silver, and the blazing fires of righteous fury.

**NARRATIVE EFFECTS**: The protection offered to the Blessed might take the form of a shield of purity which surrounds them and wards off damage, a dancing sword of light and fire which parries incoming attacks, near instantaneous healing of wounds, becoming incorporeal, or even simply the power of the Blessed's own calming voice which keeps their opponent at bay.

**MECHANICAL EFFECTS:** In the game, the Blessed die serves as a strong shield protecting you from all of the Aspects your enemy might use



against you. By Battering the die (symbolizing a life of sacrifice to your code) you can avoid the damage caused by Force Dice and Soul Forged Dice, completely halt the additional power of Soul Fused Dice, prevent Fortitude and Soul Reaper dice from helping your enemy recover, and even blast away Finesse Dice so that your other Aspects take effect. Such is the power of your finely tuned soul.

In addition, when you Advance a Blessed die against a sorcery die it is set to its highest value regardless of the number actually rolled.

**PRACTITIONERS**: The Blessed were originally those disciples who learned at the feet of the Blessed Daughter as she roamed the lands ministering to the suffering. The Blessed of today are the spiritual descendents of those initial practitioners. Their magic is powered only by their own souls, but thanks to a life of purity and sanctification, their souls are powerful indeed. As a result they've been hunted down and harvested ruthlessly over the years by sorcerer and Tormentor alike so that only a few remain. In the 1000 years since the Blessed Daughter was slain, communication among her disciples has been sporadic at best, and often completely cut off. As a result there are a variety of sometimes bizarre and extreme splinter groups. Some groups live together in small convents in lives of quiet contemplation and servitude. Other groups are much more militant, crusading through the countryside with all the ferocity and destructiveness of zealots. Others live as solitary hermits, some dispensing cryptic wisdom from the top of mountains, others wandering from place to place bringing solace and healing to far flung communities. Some follow practices of self mutilation as punishment for their sins. Regardless, all Blessed adhere to a strict code which they believe to be the direct words of the Blessed Daughter. Breaking this code taints their soul and weakens their power. This can be reflected in the game by inflicting Devastating Pain on Blessed Traits described as the breaking of vows. Described below are some of the varied orders that have appeared in our Sagas. You may adopt these or merely use them as inspiration for your own orders.

**SISTERS OF LIGHT:** This order is perhaps closest to the original teachings of the Blessed Daughter. Their senior chapter was a convent hidden deep in a blind canyon. A natural fountain sprang directly from a Life Nexus giving them access to extraordinary power. They rescued oppressed women when they could and lived simply, providing healing




and other services to a nearby town. Unfortunately they were destroyed by the Iron Lord Turok and the Mother Superior driven mad into exile.

**ORDER OF ST. ALBERT:** A militant order of holy knights who ride out from an unknown bastion to crusade against the sorcerers. It is a particular duty of their code to slay all Unliving they find. They consider it a mission of mercy to end the empty existence of those who can no longer know even suffering.

**THE WHITE:** An order of wandering zealots who bring their version of purification wherever they wander, often leaving as many corpses as saved souls in their wake. Their uncompromising code leaves little room for mercy and the condemned are often burned or drawn and quartered.

## SOUL FORGED SORCERY

#### Wield weapons and artifacts of colossal destruction.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE: Soul Forgers gather soul stuff and hammer it into the metal, weave it into the cloth, work it into the clay, or carve it into the wood and stone of the artifacts they create. This process can take days, weeks, months, and even years. The Trait represents the work that was created, not the process of fashioning such things. Oversized weapons capable of chopping through stone, slicing through steel, or crushing the foundation of mighty walls are the most common. Armor can break the weapons that strike against it or even lash out against the attacker. Walls can be made impervious with defenses that crush and burn. Anything that can be made or fashioned can be Soul Forged as long as its primary function is to damage and destroy. Statues can become animated golems, armored war machines can walk across the battlefield on spidery legs, mechanical horses can become mounts and small pet figurines come to life. White practitioners can imbue the items they forge with small bits of their own souls crafting works of precision and beauty. But the most powerful artifacts have bound within them the souls of many. The most powerful artifact ever forged is the Soul Forged Chain which binds the Twice Forsaken to the Everlasting Throne; the souls of slain gods bound within its links.

**NARRATIVE EFFECTS:** Like Totems, Soul Forged artifacts are objects and as such the narration surrounding them should match the nature of the Trait that describes them. Swords should cut, hammers smash, giant



metal scorpions should scuttle across the battle field snapping with claws and spearing with their stings. These artifacts have the power to topple pillars, bring down walls, and chop three men in half with one swing.

**MECHANICAL EFFECTS:** Advancing an orange Soul Forged die allows you to choose an opponent's die to Devastate, starting with the dice that were Advanced, and then, if all of those are already Devastated, choosing from Used dice and finally Available dice. You must think twice before attacking a wielder of a Soul Forged weapon or you will find yourself losing your most valuable assets. Use it wisely however, for a blue Fortitude die can rescue a die Devastated in this manner just as it can any damaged or used die.

**PRACTITIONERS:** Soul Forgers are rare and highly prized. Many of the most powerful artifacts are works of an entire lifetime. The artifacts themselves can typically be used by anyone, although some of the more complex and autonomous devices require knowledge of a certain command phrase or possession of a key to activate and control. In play it is far more common to find artifacts than artificers. As they are highly prized, when found they will typically be in the possession of the most powerful person in the area. Warlords often possess Soul Forged artifacts as it's usually the power of the artifact that gave them the strength to carve out their territory to begin with. Astongetorix the Unliving is obsessed with finding and collecting all of the artifacts of power he can, many of which gather dust in his tower treasure rooms.

#### SOUL FUSED TORMENTOR SORCERY

## Sear the souls of others into your flesh with runes of blood and brands of fire.

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE**: The Tormentors are practitioners of an ancient art where powerful runes are carved, tattooed, and branded onto their flesh. They do not cast spells per se, but their runes grant them superhuman strength, speed, agility, memory, perception, and other talents. They acquire these powers through the souls of their victims which are stolen and bound within their runes.

Tormentors get their name from way they harvest these souls. Their victims are carefully and precisely tortured to bring them to the brink of ultimate torment. When that happens, based on the specific methods







applied, their bodies will contort in unfathomable pain. Done properly, the contortions will be in the exact shape of the desired runic symbol and at that moment the soul will be harvested and bound within the Tormentor's brand. For that instant, the Tormentor feels all of the pain their victim has suffered concentrated into the time it takes for iron to sear flesh. The most skilled practitioners are able to invent new runes and so achieve powers unknown to their brethren. It is said that if a Tormentor is killed, the trapped souls will be freed to return to any victim still alive.

**NARRATIVE EFFECTS:** Leap over walls, punch through stone, block an axe with the hardened flesh of your arm, hurl a spear through an entire file of legionnaires, sprint faster than a horse for days, walk through fire unburned, see for miles, hear the sound of a falling snowflake, regenerate lost limbs, walk across the bottom of a lake without needing to breathe, attack with such blurring speed that three men are dead before they even saw you move. In short, you can do anything a normal person can do, only magnified to superhuman levels of ability.

**MECHANICAL EFFECTS**: In the game, a green Soul Fused Sorcery die allows you to add that die to the other dice you advance without it counting as another die. It allows you to attack with three dice instead of two. It allows you to defend with three dice without taking damage. It doesn't give you any additional effects. It essentially lets you do exactly what you were going to do before, only magnified to a superhuman score.

**PRACTITIONERS:** Master Tormentors are typically solitary practitioners perhaps taking on a few apprentices, few of whom will survive. There is a definite hierarchy amongst Tormentors, preserved through battles between superhuman warriors to prove who is superior. Runic lore is carefully guarded and often the prize of such battles.

The Rune Bound are those who lack the knowledge of runes themselves but have been branded with a rune by a Tormentor in order to create a powerful guard, soldier, or gladiator. Rare is the Centurion in a Witch King's legion who's tough enough to keep his command without at least one brand. Being gifted with a brand is often a reward for service, like a medal seared permanently into the flesh – typically in the face for all to see.



#### SOUL FUSED TOTEM TAKER SORCERY

#### The strength of your enemy confined in a trophy.

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE**: Totem Taking requires the slaying of a beast or monster in a ritualized hunt. At the moment of its death, a portion of its soul is bound within a totem symbolizing the nature of the power taken. Teeth, claws, talons, pelts, tusks, feathers, bones, stingers, and shrunken skulls are all common totems – carried, worn as jewelry, or as part of a weapon. As long as the tribesmen have them, they benefit from the power of the beast they slew. While Totems can be used by any who carry them, using a Totem of a beast you did not kill is considered weak at best or blasphemous theft at worse, save for the Totem inherited from a parent or master. As such the Totems are typically destroyed upon death to allow the trapped souls to pass freely to the other world. Failure to destroy a brother's Totems when he falls is considered bad luck among many of the tribes.

**NARRATIVE EFFECTS:** The power of the Totem is the power of the animals and beasts they come from – strength, speed, stealth, venom, alert senses, heavy protective hides and scales. When you define the Trait, define the nature of the beast or animal it comes from and tie that into the narration you use. Also tie it into the narration you use, even when not using the Trait directly. Leap like a hunting cat, harry your prey and go for the throat like a wolf, trample them with power like an armored war beast. When the poison tail sting of a death viper is turned into a knife blade, it doesn't just slice your enemy, its venom blackens their skin and inflicts horrendous pain. Draw upon the imagery and capabilities of the beast you Totemized and the nature of the trophy you took.

**MECHANICAL EFFECTS:** The game effect of a Soul Fused Totem die is identical to that of the Soul Fused Tormentor die. However, the Totem die is part of an object. This could just be a single Trait of a character: a Warrior Component with a Blood Eagle Claw Totem, for example. However, a more powerful Totem might be created as a separate Component altogether (especially for heroes). In this case the other Traits and Aspects of the Component can be a part of the overall magic of the Totem, even though they function just like normal Traits and standard Aspects.



#### OPTIONAL FACTION RULE: NIGHT HUNTERS

If you have a Night Hunter Faction in your game you can use the following rules:

- A Night Hunter's Totem dice can never be higher than d6. Man is not as powerful as monster.
  - However, a Night Hunter can advance as many Totem dice as desired at the same time rather than the usual one only.
    - Night Hunters can never possess ordinary Totem Taker dice if using this rule.

**PRACTITIONERS:** Totem Taking is practiced by the southern tribes. Its power has allowed the tribes to remain largely independent of (but by no means unscathed by) the Witch Kings. Each tribe has its own rituals, beliefs, social structure, and culture, and often widely varying life style and ethnicity. For some the hunt requires weeks of careful preparation, prayers, hallucinogenic vapors, and bloody war paint. For others, a few whispered words at the moment of the kill is sufficient.

Typically the tribes hate each other. The swamp people who live in huts of leaves and vines on stilts barely visible through the boggy mists hate the forest people who live in wooden long lodges and stalk through the forest wearing camouflage of twigs and brush. The Horse Lords of the plains tribes with their fiery stallions and long lances and breast armor made of bones hate the desert tribes, swathed in long wraps and hiding in burrows and shallow caves to kill with their small bows and barbed arrows. The silent killers of the Razor Sward, with their hardened leather armor protecting them from the thorns and slicing edges of their home hate the jungle tribes with their stone pyramid pueblos rising from the rain forests who send their elite fur draped and feather decorated warriors to capture slaves from their neighbors.

**NIGHT HUNTERS**: The Night Hunters are a much feared and despised caste among the tribes. They are the warriors charged with protecting each clan's borders and driving off (usually by slaying) trespassers. As such they are also the primary messengers and negotiators between the clans as any others who crossed clan boundaries would be slain, but Night Hunters, even from rival clans, will grant each other the professional courtesy of First Parley. They are tolerated by the rest of the clan but apart from their duties no tribesman would willingly associate with them for long, although most are wise enough to not raise their anger. They are so feared and despised because like their clan brothers, they are Totem Takers, but they take their Totems from men.



#### SOUL REAPER SORCERY

#### Devour the souls of others to power your eldritch magics.

**WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:** Often called True Sorcery by its practitioners, Soul Reaping is the most versatile of the techniques taught by the Forsaken One. The claiming of souls takes many forms; from precise rituals performed in a prescribed fashion, to snaring the life energy of others as opportunity presents. Imagery includes circles of power, the casting of rune stones, and forcefully ripping a ghostly image of the soul from the body and devouring it. This soul energy is then used to power any variety of supernatural effects, all with a dark, vile, or corrupt manifestation. Common imagery includes smothering darkness, black bolts, roiling clouds, desiccating flesh, mists of blood, deep purples and shots of violet.

**NARRATIVE EFFECTS:** Fly, summon foul creatures, hurl objects, reduce things to rubble, blast them with eldritch forces, suffocate them with cloying mists, blind them by searing their very eyes in their sockets, melt them with acid rain, call forth storms and lightning and quaking earth. The damage you do is dependent on the dice played, and the scale of the effects should be in line with the scores of the dice and ultimate results of the exchange; but the colorful description is virtually unlimited – try to remain more horrific and macabre than classic fantasy.

**MECHANICAL EFFECTS:** In the game, Advancing a purple Soul Reaper die allows you to Refresh any one single used die. This represents the draining of life energy from those around you, sufficient to rejuvenate yourself. It is important because it effectively allows you to bypass the normal Refresh rules entirely and, with multiple Soul Reaper dice Refreshing each other, keep recycling your dice.

Alternatively, if a die is Devastated during the exchange, even one of your own (including by red Force dice, or orange Soul Forged dice) you may steal any one of those dice (instead of Refreshing a die) and add it to your Dice Horde instead of discarding it to the Bone Yard. This represents draining even more powerful soul energies that are released with injury and destruction. It is important because it allows you to actually grow in strength during play.



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**PRACTITIONERS**: There is a hierarchy of power among practitioners of Soul Reaping sorcery.

WITCH KINGS: At the top are the Witch Kings. Originally, these were the survivors of the cabal of sorcerers who slew the Blessed Daughter, devoured her soul, and used its strength to make war on heaven and destroy the gods. Those who returned had the power to rule over the whole of the world from their mighty tower citadels. Today they number five, some members of the original cabal – still alive after 1000 years, others who were raised up or usurped their position. Sitting on top of the most powerful of Life Nexuses, lording over vast cities of persons who know only lives of misery followed by Unlives of labor when their souls are inevitably harvested, the Witch Kings are like unto gods playing games with the world.

WHITE PRINCES: Next in the hierarchy are the White Princes. These get their names from the tall towers of alabaster they raise up in imitation of the Witch Kings. They are rooted sorcerers, which means they have the knowledge to tap into a Life Nexus and the strength to keep it. Their towers drill as deep into the earth as they soar into the sky, defiling the lands around them by draining the life from the very earth like taking water from a well. Some have rooted their towers in the deep wilderness, far from civilization and prying eyes. Others have conquered towns and cities in order to claim their Nexus. Others set themselves up as rulers of some minor state. All hope one day to acquire enough power to take their place alongside the kings. Most are killed by their peers in their own quest for more power, and those few who become powerful enough to challenge the Witch Kings usually learn, to their detriment, just how much more powerful the Witch Kings are.

**SORCERERS:** Unrooted sorcerers often serve in the retinue of their more powerful brethren, either holding some office of authority or serving as apprentices, hoping to learn more. Some serve as Battle Casters in the legions of the Witch Kings, others wander the world hoping to recover lost knowledge, and possibly stumble upon a Life Nexus of their own to claim. A few set up cabals for mutual protection and to share knowledge among their members.



**WITCHES**: Witches are despised by their betters for they lack the knowledge to harvest souls from still living victims. They can only harvest souls through clumsy rituals of death sacrifice and blood drinking where most of the latent soul power is lost. Organized into covens for sharing and mutual benefit they can alternate between being the protectors and the extorters of rural villages.

**ADEPTS**: Adepts are sensitives who can detect, feel and use the power of their own soul but yet lack the knowledge to take and use the souls of others. When such persons are discovered they are typically destroyed or are recruited as apprentices to be taught deeper knowledge. Some are found by the Blessed and taught a different path.

## GAZETEER

## **ALABASTER TOWER**

The Alabaster Towers are the abodes, citadels, centers of power, and in some ways, even prisons of the White Princes, those sorcerers strong enough to lay claim to at least a share of a Life Nexus. The towers are not so much built as grown, rising deathly pale and nearly translucent in delicate spires as if coalesced directly of soul stuff; their height in direct proportion to their master's power.

The towers penetrate below ground like a spike the same distance as they rise above, draining life energy directly from the earth. Over time the area around an Alabaster Tower becomes a dry and dead wasteland.

In the major cities of the Witch Kings a dozen or more towers rise above the hovels and alleys of the masses, each beholden to their master for access to the prime sources of power. Other towers rise solitary in the wilderness, wherever an ambitious sorcerer finds a source of power they feel strong enough to keep.

#### BARCA

Barcas are musk ox-like mammals the size of a small elephant, with long forward sweeping horns. Their shaggy coat has developed to keep them



#### OPTIONAL FACTION RULE: WITCHES

If you have a Witch Faction in your game and want to mix things up a bit, use the following rules:

- Components in a Witch Faction can take unlimited free Soul Reaper dice of d4 or d6 size without paying the cost of discarding an extra die.
- However, all Soul Reaper dice possessed by the Witch Faction lose the power to Refresh one die when advanced, having only the second power of stealing a Devastated die.

cool in the heat of the desert and the desert tribes weave the long hollow hairs into light weight fabric for robes and tents.

Normally fairly lethargic in the heat of the day, when aroused a barca is fearsome to behold. When bulls are fighting over mates, entire tribal villages have been flattened.

#### BESTIALS

Bestials are humans who were caught in the backlash of powerful sorcery or trapped by a raging Soul Storm. Exposure to such concentrations of Life Energy twisted them into monstrous forms almost universally mad and filled with hunger and rage.

Most bestials appear as a mix of human and animal traits. This seems to be a quality of merging with whatever animals were present at the time, so dog, horse, goat, pig, and cattle bestials are most common, although packs often have a variety. A common legend is of the Soul Storm that struck a gladiatorial arena while a variety of man vs. beast and beast vs. beast fights were being staged. The resulting rampage wiped out the entire city; a city whose ruins are said to still be inhabited by the bestials' monstrous descendents.

Some sorcerers have tried to create bestials on purpose to use as soldiers, but they've proven largely uncontrollable and Huntsmen are far more effective for those powerful enough to create them.

## THE BLOOD FLUME

The Blood Flume is the largest river in Abalahn. What it was called before the coming of the Witch Kings no one remembers, but after their conquest so many dead were thrown into its waters that legend says it ran red with blood for 100 years.

Formed from the glacier melt of the Iron Mountains the river carved its way through the very rocks in the Canyon Country and flows south through the Haradras before turning east to the sea. At its mouth it breaks into dozens of braided channels as it enters the flooded swamp of the Marsh Country.



## OPTIONAL FACTION RULE: BESTIALS

If you have a Bestial Faction in your game you can use the following rules:

- Any of your Components can be designated a pack of bestials by discarding a die of any size to the Bone Yard.
- Whenever you roll the dice for this Component (at the start of a Clash or on a Refresh) set any one of its Traits tagged with a Force Aspect to its maximum value.

## STANDARD EXTRA POWER: BESTIALS

 Whenever you roll the dice for this Component (at the start of a Clash or on a Refresh) set any one of its Traits tagged with a Force Aspect to its maximum value. As Abalahn has been drained of its life energy, it has become more arid. The Flume, once well over two miles wide at its widest point, is now barely a quarter of that. Most of its tributaries have dried up and those that remain often flow only in the rainy season.

Only the God Bridge spans it. Despite its shrunken size, only a powerful sorcerer could build a bridge to cross it. All other ancient bridges have either crumbled with time or been destroyed by the Witch Kings to keep the Horse Lords from returning to the Northern Haradras.

#### THE BLOOD SANDS

Scattered throughout the Haradras are bare patches of ground where nothing grows, some a few dozen miles across. The earth here is sandy loam, stained a deep rusty red.

According to legend, these are spots where entire peoples who would not submit to the rule of the Witch Kings were slaughtered. Thousands and tens of thousands killed and left to rot, their blood staining the soil forever. Their bones, bleached and broken in the sun, still peek from the surface, though most have long turned to dust.

Despite the soil, nothing grows in the Blood Sands and these regions are said to be haunted and given wide berth by sane men. In the Southern Haradras, the Horse Lords will lay their fallen heroes and chiefs to rest on raised biers in the Blood Sands so their spirit can ride with those of fallen heroes from past generations and protect their descendents. When challenged by expeditions of the Witch Kings, clans of Horse Lords have retreated to the Blood Sands and called upon these spirits for protection.

#### **BLOOD STONES**

Rare and highly sought after, Blood Stones are fist sized spheres like pearls, lustrous and smooth. They are rather warm to the touch and glow red from within like the heat of molten lava. Crushing the stone releases a viscous blood like fluid which has the property of restoring anything it touches to a state of "how it was." This fluid can heal nearly any wound, mending flesh and organ and bone, and even repair inorganic material, sealing cracks in foundations, mending armor, and rejoining pieces of a broken sword.



## SANDS

 Ghost is automatically one of the available Extras and must be assigned to the Opposed Faction.

#### STANDARD EXTRA POWER: BLOOD STONES

- Any time one of your Faction's dice are Devastated, discard the Blood Stone Trait's die to the Bone Yard and immediately replace it with a die of a smaller size.
- The Devastated die is rerolled and returned to Available status instead of being discarded to the Bone Yard.



Some sorcerers are known to mix this fluid into concoctions designed to extend their lives, restoring themselves to how they appeared in their youth.

#### THE BOULDER FIELD

Nestled between an arm of the Iron Mountain foothills and the canyons at the head waters of the Blood Flume is a region of the Northern Haradras studded with stones ranging in size from slabs as big as a wagon to boulders bigger than a house.

According to legend, in ancient times giants held stone throwing competitions and this was their contest field. If that's true the Witch Kings must have slain all the largest giants for there are none who remain big enough to hurl these stones.

#### **CANYON COUNTRY**

In the far north, at the headwaters of the Blood Flume, the glacier melt waters from the high peaks of the Iron Mountains have carved canyons and ravines into a jagged edged maze so deep that at their base the sky is only a thin sliver above. The canyons are home to giant centipede-like wall crawlers who bore in and through the rock.

The river's action has exposed veins of ore and precious metals and clusters of gems. Several clans of Iron Lords have built their strongholds high into the cliff sides, often bridging the canyons with flying buttresses that lead to the scaffolds and water-powered wheels of the mining operations. The canyon crawlers are a constant threat and hunting them and guarding against them a constant duty of the Forge Knights.

Here, where cavalry are all but useless, the lords' Forge Knights are more likely to be foot archers firing siege engine-size arrows, driving wall crawling war machines, or riding on fire drakes captured in the Fire Lands to the south west.



#### OPTIONAL GEOGRAPHY RULE: CANYON COUNTRY

 All Factions get a second Extra during Ordeal Generation.
That additional Extra must be chosen from the following list.

- ► A Forge Knight
- A Horde of Treasure
  - A Monster
  - A Blood Stone
  - A Soul Forge
- The Monster Rampage Twist is automatically in play without needing to be rolled. It still must be triggered normally.

## THE CLIFF OF CAVES

The Cliff of Caves is a tremendously tall, near vertical cliff extending for hundreds of miles between the Iron Mountains and the sea. At its top is the great plateau known as the High Steppes. The cliff is pierced with thousands of caves both natural and constructed, either by man or magic. Some are mere dimples in the rock face, others are extensive mazes of tunnels. Some connect to other caves on other levels.

The Cliffs are surprisingly populated. Food can be raised by baskets and winches from below or from hunting on the plateau above. Various fungi and darkness loving vegetables are grown within the caves themselves. The caves are often hideouts for escaped slaves, bandits, or enemies of the Witch King seeking refuge. They exist in a complex web of alliances, privileges, and rights of way for the limited safe routes.

When the Cliff is the geography for an Ordeal, the map page represents the vertical cliff face with the various caves marked on different "altitudes" and various routes such as chimney crevasses, thin ledges, climbing holds, and rope ladders marked between them.

#### **DESPAIR STONES**

Despair Stones are what's left when a Starlight Stone is fully drained of its original essence. Where before it glowed with the light of creation, now it absorbs with the dark of the void.

Wherever the stone is, it drains its surroundings of hope, happiness, and joy, the very stuff of souls. Sorcerers find that using the stones makes it easier to harvest souls as those exposed for long enough lose all desire to live and so their soul is easily parted.

#### **DRAINED LANDS**

A drained land is any area, usually a few miles in radius, which sorcerers have defiled by draining away all of the available life energy. These are usually found spreading out from the base of an Alabaster Tower.

The term Drained Lands, however, typically refers to the sizeable region in Eastern Abalahn where all five of the Witch Kings have their citadels.

#### OPTIONAL GEOGRAPHY RULE: CLIFF OF CAVES

In every Clash the Chronicler designates as being fought out on the cliff face or in a treacherous cavern, there is added danger. Opposed Factions are assumed to be established residents of the cliffs and thus are exposed to less danger. Aligned Factions are assumed to be outsiders and thus exposed to more.

- Whenever a die rolls a one it is automatically damaged (no points or bonus draw is awarded).
- You may immediately spend an Edge to reroll the die to avoid the damage.
- For Neutral Factions reroll the die. Odd it is Devastated, Even it is Battered.
- For Opposed Factions it is automatically only Battered.
- For the Aligned Faction it is automatically Devastated.
- Extensive Tunnels is an automatic Extra available in the Ordeal.

#### STANDARD EXTRA POWER: DESPAIR STONES

- Build Component as normal.
- Plus it has four special one-use Doom Tokens attached to it useable against any other player.
- these tokens reset in future Ordeals.



STANDARD EXTRA POWER: FAIR FOLK

- Has one Blessed Aspect for free.
- Also, whenever the Blessed die is advanced it is immediately set to its highest value, not just against Sorcery.
- Cannot have any other Sorcery.
  - If a Devastated die of this Component is stolen by Soul Reaper Sorcery, the sorcerer gets an immediate free bonus draw from the Bone Yard of equal or lesser size

#### STANDARD EXTRA POWER: FIRE DRAKES

- The drake has a required Trait for its fiery molten breath.
- This Trait has a Force Aspect in addition to its normal Aspect (i.e. a double Aspect).

The aggregation of White Princes and lesser sorcerers here has left the land a dry dead dustbowl where nothing grows.

The lands surrounding the cities are collections of abandoned villages, most occupied by aimlessly wandering Unliving, dens of bestials, or brigands daring enough (and foolish enough) to operate so close to the Witch Kings. The once fertile farms are empty and the farmers have been moved farther out into the Haradras. Here and there a Deadwood stretches skeletal fingers towards the sky.

## FAIR FOLK

The Fair Folk were the First People. Prior to them, the world was inhabited only by animals. Their souls were fashioned by the Blessed Daughter and were the purest, most perfect souls ever created.

As a result, the First People were tall, well proportioned, and almost divinely beautiful with an intellect to rival the gods and the kind generous nature of their creator.

When the Forsaken One fashioned man, he used souls created by his sister like those of the Fair Folk, but he damaged them so they became rapacious and aggressive. When he taught man the secrets of sorcery, to use the souls of others to power magic the Fair Folk became favored targets. Their perfect souls can fuel powerful magics indeed. As a result the First People have been hunted, drained and tormented to near extinction.

The few who remain live hidden and secluded lives, sometimes living secretly among humankind, but usually far from civilization in the deep wilderness or even underground.

## **FIRE DRAKES**

Fire drakes are enormous condor-like birds with draconic heads. They secrete a flammable reddish oil from their jaws that glows faintly when they preen it into their feathers. This oil occasionally ignites into a spectacular fire ball which singes off damaged feathers in lieu of molting. The undamaged feathers of a fire drake are otherwise fire proof and thus highly sought after to fashion into cloaks to protect travelers in the Fire



Lands where the drakes are found. Their fire oil can also be spit a fair distance where it burns like acid in addition to potentially catching fire.

The most daring Forge Knights of the Canyon Iron Lords will capture a young fire drake to tame and ride as a mount, soaring above and through the canyons of their home.

The eggs of a fire drake are also highly sought after. The drakes do not tend their nests but rather lay their fist sized spherical eggs in shallow pools of lava which keeps them warm while incubating. Few recognize that the red glowing pearls known as Blood Stones are actually these eggs.

#### THE FIRE LANDS

South of the Iron Mountains and north of the Shard Sea is a region that is pure unleashed hell, a region of heavy volcanic and tectonic activity where the sky forever glows red. Volcanoes, smokers, and magma vents are common here, as are geysers spouting superheated steam, and rivers of lava. The ground is layer after layer of black cracked igneous rock and sharp edged pumice.

The region is plagued by earthquakes, eruptions, noxious clouds, and fiery rain. Few creatures can survive these conditions, but fire drakes make their home here, soaring on volcanic thermals to hunt large game out in the Haradras or Shard Sea.

#### THE FLUTES

Between the Canyon Country and the Fire Lands is a region where water erosion has left behind only a series of tall, thin rock spires. The nearly perpetual wind has hollowed out the rotten rock and now it plays haunting tunes as it whistles through the formations.

During the day the music is melodious, but just sharp and off key enough to be jarring and set nerves on edge. But at night, when the wind shifts, it becomes low and mournful and filled with dread promise. It is a tradition among the Iron Lords of the Canyon that spending too much time amongst the Flutes will leave a man cursed with madness.

## STANDARD GEOGRAPHY POWER: THE FIRE LANDS

- Natural Disaster Strikes is automatically the Twist for this Ordeal
- Earthquakes, eruptions, and other volcanic activity.

## STANDARD GEOGRAPHY POWER: THE FLUTES

• Curse is automatically one of the available Extras.



#### STANDARD EXTRA POWER: FORGE KNIGHTS

 Gain one free Tormentor or Soul Fused Aspect.

## FORGE KNIGHTS

Forge Knights are the elite warriors of the Iron Lords, the most powerful heavy cavalry in Abalahn. Each lord is known for the steeds he mounts his knights on. Some favor enormous horses trained to savor the taste of human flesh, others low-slung battle lizards, or the shaggy musk oxlike barcas. Others mount their knights on two legged raptors with rows of razor-sharp teeth, and some on nearly unstoppable rhinos with their horns sheathed in steel.

The knights owe fealty in the form of service in war and advice in peace. In exchange they are provided with a kit of plate armor for man and steed and all the weapons they can carry, much of it Soul Forged. Some few are rewarded with a rune, or two becoming Rune Bound in service to lords wealthy enough to afford it.

The charge of the armored Forge Knights has broken the legions of the Witch Kings for hundreds of years, but their numbers are dwindling. How much longer can they preserve the Iron Lords' independence?

#### THE GLASS FLATS

In the southwest of Abalahn where the Haradras meets the Razor Sward to the south and blends into the Shard Sea to the west is a small elliptical region where the crystalline sand has been melted into glass by some long ago sorcerous duel. For miles in every direction, a nearly completely flat hard surface bakes and shimmers in the sun. Nothing lives out here for long. Under the thick clear glass can still be seen the bodies of the dead who fought at that battle. If you stare too long, you may even see them moving.

#### THE GOD BRIDGE

The God Bridge is a single arch nearly five miles long, half a mile high, and two miles broad crafted from a single piece of stone. Legend says it was created by a god when the world was young. The only permanent bridge to survive across the Blood Flume, the much reduced river seems but a trickle running beneath it.

The arch rises slowly and steadily into the sky and buildings and towers have been built like walls along its edges. Tier after tier of



## OPTIONAL GEOGRAPHY RULE: THE GOD BRIDGE

All Factions get a second Extra during Ordeal Generation. That additional Extra must be chosen from the following list.

- Pack of Bestials
  - The Unliving
  - A Mad Hermit
- A Cryptic Prophecy
- A Horde of Treasure.

neighborhoods, now largely abandoned and in ruin, step up on its span and a large park once ran down its center, now mostly dead and overrun with parasitic and carnivorous vines.

Once a jewel of the world, the God Bridge is now home only to bands of Unliving who aimlessly wander its streets and the packs of bestials who feed upon them. A few brave souls still hunt the ruins for whatever treasures might be left behind from an older age.

#### THE GREAT FOREST

The Great Forest is the last remaining temperate greenwood of any size in Abalahn. It is an ancient wood stretching from the Marsh Country south to the jungle. Within it are enormous trees, centuries old.

The forest has been steadily shrinking as man encroaches upon it for wood and the Witch Kings launch expeditions against its protectors. Several clans of Totem Takers reside in the forest, living in long low lodges and prowling through the wood with stealth and camouflage. It is said that some of the last families of Fair Folk remain hidden in the deepest parts of the wood.

#### THE HIGH STEPPES

The High Steppes occupy a vast plateau above the Cliffs of Caves and extending north to the tundra. It is home to a variety of ice age mammals and primitive peoples most refer to as ogres. Life is cold and harsh there but hunting parties from the south will frequently go in search of exotic game to capture. Many examples find their way through passes in the Iron Mountains where the Iron Lords seek to tame them for their mass and strength.

#### THE HOWLING WASTES

Just west of the Marsh Country on the north side of the Blood Flume is a region so terrifying even the Witch Kings hesitate to enter. In ancient times, shortly after the Witch Kings returned from the home of the gods, there was a great war between them to settle who would rule Abalahn now that the gods were dead.

#### OPTIONAL GEOGRAPHY RULE: THE HOWLING WASTE

- All Factions get a second Extra during Ordeal Generation.
  That additional Extra must be chosen from the following list.
  - Pack of Bestials
  - Ghost
  - Fiend
  - Well of Souls
  - Curse
- The Soul Storm Twist is automatically in play without needing to be rolled. It still must be triggered normally.



#### OPTIONAL FACTION RULE: HUNTSMEN

If you have a Huntsmen Faction in your game you can use the following rules:

- Any of your Components can be designated a Huntsman Band by discarding a die of any size to the Bone Yard.
- Whenever a Huntsman Band die is damaged, immediately select any other Available die from that Component and set it to its maximum value.

#### STANDARD FACTION POWER: IRON LORDS

• Gain one Soul Forged Aspect for free. The last battle was fought here and the sheer power of the magic and the number of dead souls released transformed the land into a vista of macabre horrors. The ground has the texture of melted rock hardened into flowing shapes. Rising from ground are strange and twisted rock formations that from certain angles take the appearance of spirits, fiends, and terrified souls frozen in agony. The wind howls through these formations ceaselessly giving the region its name.

But the devastation unleashed at that battle isn't finished yet. Soul Storms rage through the wastes at irregular intervals altering and transforming the rock formations again and again until all landmarks have been erased and all maps become useless. In its wake it leaves the restless spirits of the trapped dead and packs of mutated bestials.

#### HUNTSMEN

The Huntsmen fight in small bands of warriors magically linked together and sharing a common soul. As a result, when one is killed their life force flows into their brothers making the survivors that much stronger.

Huntsmen are the result of a sorcerous perversion of the Totem Taking ritual with elements of Runic Lore. Each warrior takes on a rune from each other member of the band, not strong enough to render them Unliving or be treated as a Tormentor die but enough for each member to become, upon death, a sort of totem for the others.

#### **IRON LORDS**

The Iron Lords are clan chieftains who style themselves as princes and kings. Their wealth comes from their control of mines and furnaces. Their power comes from their Soul Forgers who fashion the ore into weapons and armor of amazing power.

Each lord reigns from his seat, a fortress of stone and iron, plotting against his fellows for the best means of gaining control of their mines. About the only thing that can unite them is the threat of another attempt by the Witch Kings to conquer the mountains and take the ore by force.

A generation ago, the Witch Kings began trying a new tactic, turning individual lords against their fellows with gifts and promises of power, thus breaking their unity. Some lords have sold their loyalty for luxury



and armies of Unliving slaves to work the mines. Now the balance is tipping in favor of the Witch Kings, it is unlikely the Iron Lords can remain independent for another generation.

For now the Iron Lords rule with their lances of Forge Knights from their craggy strong holds wearing armor of plate and weapons that can cut down the very mountains.

#### THE IRON MOUNTAINS

The Iron Mountains stretch across the north of Abalahn from the far west to near the sea in the east ending at the Cliff of Caves. The mountains themselves tower into the sky, all steep crags and rocky slabs, the peaks shrouded in clouds and snow.

The range's name is not subtle. Beneath its harsh exterior lies the richest deposits of ore in all of Abalahn. The valleys between and the rolling layers of hills spilling out at their feet are the domain of the Iron Lords.

#### LIFE NEXUS

Deep beneath the earth, energy from the heart of the world wells up, merges with the thin layer of life energy at the surface and spills into currents, large and small, which flow underground, crisscrossing, merging, separating, and shifting.

Sorcerers call a place where these upwellings occur, or where several channels come together, a nexus. The world above is often rich in life, good fortune, and breathtakingly beautiful. It is here where a White Prince will plant their Alabaster Tower which will drive down into the earth like a parasitic tap root and begin to draw up this energy until the land becomes drained for miles around.

#### MARSH COUNTRY

Marsh Country is a large region of wetlands on either side of the many channeled delta where the Blood Flume reaches the sea. The borders of the region are more open marsh and dangerous bogs. Deeper in the interior it becomes a true swamp with deep water channels cutting between hummocks of spreading trees draped with lichen and moss.

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## OPTIONAL GEOGRAPHY RULE: IRON MOUNTAINS

- The Opposed Faction may take two Soul Forged Aspects for free.
- The Neutral Factions may take one Soul Forged Aspect for free.
- The Aligned Faction gets no free Aspects.

#### STANDARD EXTRA POWER: LIFE NEXUS

- Immobile.
- You may buy two Blessed or Soul Reaper Aspects instead of one when you discard a die to buy a Sorcery Aspect.



The Marsh Country is home to a tribe of Totem Takers who live in the deepest most secluded areas in huts set atop stilts, plying the waterways in small boats. They are elusive and wary as their proximity to the Drained Lands makes them frequent targets of Witch King incursion.

#### THE NORTHERN HARADRAS

The Haradras north of the Blood Flume has been long subjugated by the Witch Kings, and the once numerous tribes of Horse Lords slain or driven south, the largest herd animals devastated.

The region is a patchwork of petty tyrants, warlords, and self styled kings. Each tries to win favor, and thus more power, from the Witch King they're sworn to by waging near perpetual war against the vassals of other kings. But whenever one grows powerful enough to be a threat, one of the Kings sends a legion to crush them.

The Northern Haradras is crisscrossed with primitive roads and crudely restored ancient highways. Settlements are rarely more than a day apart where serfs and Unliving laborers till the soil alongside the occasional free holder to raise the food needed to feed the teeming multitudes of the Witch King cities.

## THE PALACE OF THE GODS

It was on this site where the Blessed Daughter was ambushed and imprisoned by a cabal of evil sorcerers led by her brother the Once Fulfilled God. It was here that she was Tormented for days until at last her flesh gave up its soul which fed the lusts of her murderers and granted them the power to raid the very gates of heaven.

When the surviving sorcerers returned, each was covetous of this spot which still resonated with enough power to make any of their number drunk with it. They went to war with each other and their numbers dwindled until, at last, Astongetorix, the Bound God's first pupil, exerted his will over the others.

Even in defeat the remaining Witch Kings refused to remain far from this holiest of places and so built their towers and citadels in a ring around it, each at the precisely same distance so that none of their fellows could be said to be closer to it than they.



And above this place Astongetorix caused to be raised a towering palace, round and stacked tier upon tier soaring into the sky taller than any structure yet built, even by the ancients. Bristling with spires, minarets, and turrets; nearly every surface both within and without is covered in carvings of the most horrible scenes imaginable.

In the main hall are found five thrones in a circle. On the floor between them are channels cut into the stone in the shape of the Goddess Rune, the shape her body contorted into as she died.

The palace is largely empty. It is used only when all five Witch Kings come together for a summit, its purpose to prevent another open war like the one that almost destroyed them all.

#### THE RAZOR SWARD

At edge of the Haradras, adjacent to the southern rain forest, is a wide band of rocky steppe known as the Razor Sward. It is inhabited by a few clans of Totem Takers who eke out a living as semi-nomadic hunters on the plain.

The sward gets its name because the plants that grow there typically sport every manner of edge, spine, barb, and thorn imaginable. The tall grasses are extremely stiff and have an edge more than capable of slicing flesh. Running heedlessly through the grass land and scrub will undoubtedly draw much blood.

For this reason animals which live on the sward tend to be either small enough to crawl among the foliage and avoid the thorns and barbs or large and thick hided enough not to care. The tribesmen wear hardened leather as proof against the barbs and craft knives and spear points from laminating layers of sharp grass together.

### OPTIONAL GEOGRAPHY RULE: RAZOR SWARD

In every Clash that the Chronicler designates as being out in the Razor Sward, apply the following:

- When you Refresh identify the highest number among all rolled or previously Available dice, and reroll that die.
- If you reroll a die using an Edge token and it would be the highest die among all Available dice, reroll it.
- In either case if there are multiple dice now tied for the highest number, you may choose which die to reroll.



#### STANDARD EXTRA POWER: TAMED REAVER BEAST

- Required Trait signifying the Component is the master of a tamed reaver.
- That Trait is tagged with Finesse (yellow), Fortitude (blue), and Force (red) Aspects on the same die (triple Aspect).

### **REAVER BEASTS**

These vicious creatures resemble giant hyenas three to four feet tall at the shoulder, with powerfully built forequarters and heavy jaws. Reavers' bodies are covered in scale like osteoderms, especially around the neck and shoulders where they form a mane of long razor edged plates that can be raised for aggressive display or lain flat for protection.

If taken from the pack at a young enough age, a Reaver can be tamed like a dog, albeit one always on the verge of going feral and which could turn on its master at any moment.

#### THE RUIN FIELDS

In the heart of the Southern Haradras lie the ruins of a city so vast that it could encompass all human settlements in Abalahn today within it. One can only imagine the greatness of the ancient civilization that built it, the civilization that came to an end when the Witch Kings slew the gods and came to power.

Today, the city exists only in the imagination. It has been completely overtaken by the Haradras. Peeking above the waving sea of grass are stones outlining the foundations of great buildings. Here and there structures several stories tall tower above the landscape, broken but still standing, every surface carved and detailed. Elsewhere individual blocks of stone lay scattered about with nary one standing atop another and pieces of broken statuary and columns lie half buried in the dirt. Occasionally large patches of road, courtyard, or square can be found; the grass only just starting to force its way between the tightly fitted paving stones.

Several smaller settlements can be found here, recycling walls and buildings or carting away stones to be used in their own construction. They cannot compare to the grandeur this ancient city once had.

## THE SEA COAST

If sea faring was ever common in Abalahn it isn't today. The eastern coastline stretches from the frozen tundra of the far north, past the Cliff of Caves, the Drained Lands, the Marsh Country and the Blood Flume



delta, down to the Great Forest and the Southern Jungle where giant trees tower right to the water's edge and a thin strip of beach.

There is no oceanic travel at all. Ships are limited to a handful of fishing villages whose small boats never leave sight of land. With timber so limited, each ship is a prized possession and the poorer fisherman are limited to hide boats and coracles.

The Witch Kings maintain small navies consisting largely of long broad galleys designed to ship large numbers of men down the coast. It is rumored that they would like to seize the Great Forest and use its plentiful wood to build an enormous fleet to send south to form a beach head and open another front against the southern tribes, or perhaps conquer new lands beyond.

#### THE SHARD SEA

As the Haradras continues west it grows progressively drier until it transforms into a vast desert that forms the western border of Abalahn. The eastern edge is hard baked earth and gravel but on into the interior it becomes a sandy desert of dunes and scattered Oasis.

The desert gets its name from the sharp, crystal, almost glass-like shards mixed with the sand. When the wind picks up and blows up a sand storm, the shards can strip a barca to the bone in seconds.

One tribe of Totem Takers in their varied clans make the Shard Sea their home, traversing the deep dunes with their domesticated barcas and sheltering in shallow burrows from which they can ambush enemies with small bows and poisoned barbed arrows.

#### **SOUL STUFF**

Souls are little pieces of divine power that are the generators of life. The gods who created the living things of Abalahn placed small quantities of soul stuff in each to bring them alive. The Blessed Daughter, due to her untainted goodness, was able to create soul stuff of such purity that the beings who carried it were not just alive but sapient. These were the First People or the Fair Folk. It was the Blessed Daughter's soul stuff that her brother, the Unforsaken, damaged before placing into the heart of humankind, the Second People.



## STANDARD GEOGRAPHY RULES: THE SHARD SEA

- Natural Disaster Strikes is automatically the Twist for this Ordeal.
- Flaying Sandstorm strikes.

#### THE SOUTHERN HARADRAS

The Haradras is a vast plain that stretches from the Iron Mountains in the north to the Razor Sward in the south. It is split diagonally through the middle by the Blood Flume river. The Southern Haradras is bounded by the Shard Sea in the west, and the Great Forest and the Marsh Country in the east.

Vast herds of large animals, both mammal and reptile, roam the plain, many prehistoric in appearance. The Southern Haradras is also home to the Horse Lords, a tribe of nomadic Totem Takers renowned for their riding skills and the quality of their mounts.

#### THE SOUTHERN JUNGLE

#### OPTIONAL GEOGRAPHY RULE: THE SOUTHERN JUNGLE

 The Opposed Faction may take two Soul Fused Totem Aspects for free.

• The Neutral Factions may take one Soul Fused Totem Aspect for free.

 The Aligned Faction gets no free Aspects. Abalahn is bounded to the south by a dense wall of jungle which opens into a canopied tropical rain forest in the interior. Perhaps the tribes which make their home there know how far it stretches, but to the people of Abalahn it is the end of their world.

Several powerful clans of Totem Taking tribesmen make their home in the deep rainforest using slash and burn agriculture to clear land for their farms and cities. A jungle tribe city is essentially a single enormous pueblo built in the shape of a hollow step pyramid with a central open court yard. Their largest cities may have three or more such structures in close proximity. Entrances to the structures are in the upper levels accessible only by long, easily defended ramps and stairs. Large baskets winched to the top on lift lines allow access for those too weak or wealthy to walk.

The rain forest is such a rich source of life that the Witch Kings covet it more than anything. It is said that they seek the power of the Soul Forges of the Iron Mountains primarily to acquire weapons sufficient to clear a highway into the heart of the jungle and topple the pyramid cities of the southern tribes.

They are a long way from succeeding. Periodic expeditions into the jungles are typically lured deep into the interior and never heard from again. While the jungle clans war amongst themselves, they do so in largely ceremonial battles to prove who has the greatest warriors. When



they fight enemies from the outside, they fight for real, and their Jaguar Warriors are great indeed.

Wearing raiment of jaguar pelts and brightly colored feathers the elite warriors of the southern tribes carry Totems from a dozen or more beasts and monsters. Striking fast and hard, often from ambush, they use misdirection to sow confusion and then finish things with hammer like finality. So far, they've kept their jungle free from being defiled.

#### **STARLIGHT STONES**

In the cosmology of **BLOOD RED SANDS**, the gods lived beyond the sky where they observed the world they'd created. The celestial heaven forms the roof of the now empty god realm, and the stars hanging there are actually crystals of power which glow with primal energy trapped at the dawn of creation.

Following the god wars, the victorious Witch Kings removed a large number of Starlight Stones that had illuminated the vast Hall of the Gods, plunging the throne room, where they had imprisoned the Unloved Son on his mother's throne, into absolute darkness. To this day a large oval of the night sky is empty and black and known as the God Hall.

Centuries later, one of the Witch Kings bargained with the Bound God for the arcane secrets of Defiling Sorcery and the god's price was the return of a Starlight Stone to bring light to his dark prison. But the Witch King cheated him, and the stone he returned was all but fully used, glowing only a dim red that cast just enough light for the Bound God to realize how truly dark it was. On a clear night a sharp eyed person can spot a faint red dot glowing in the heart of the God Hall which is the very site of the Everlasting Throne.

The stones themselves held vast reservoirs of soul stuff, although wild, untamed and difficult to control. Most of them have been mostly or fully drained over the centuries but the few that are left are highly coveted items.

So far, the Witch Kings have stymied each other's efforts to cross back over and collect more, knowing that the sorcerer who does so could destroy the balance of power between them.



#### STANDARD EXTRA POWER: STARLIGHT STONES

- Build Component as normal.
- Plus it has six special one-use Edge Tokens attached to it.
- These tokens reset in future Ordeals, unless the rerolled die rolls a 1. Then that token is permanently drained.
- When all tokens are drained the stone becomes a Despair Stone.

#### OPTIONAL FACTION RULE: UNLIVING

If you have an Unliving Faction in your game and want to mix things up a bit, use the following rules:

- You may declare any of your Components as Unliving, either an individual or a group.
- Build the Component out of dice and tag the dice with Traits as normal. However, do not assign any normal Aspects.
- Each die is tagged instead with a special Unliving Aspect.
  - In a Clash set these dice in the margin of the Battle Mat.
    - When an Unliving die is Devastated and discarded to the Bone Yard, replace it by immediately drawing another die of lesser size.
- Do not cross the Trait off. The replacement die is immediately rolled and Available.
- Because the Unliving are already fully drained of soul energy, Soul Reaping does not function against these dice; the sorcerer cannot steal any Devastated die.

## UNLIVING

Souls are resilient things. Given time and some emotional nourishment a partially drained soul can recover. Neophytes, White Soul Forgers, and the Blessed all spend from their soul without lasting damage, and many victims have recovered from having had their souls partially drained by a sorcerer.

Taking a soul completely, however, provides far more power than any small "safe" amount can do. And when you are a Witch King with many thousand slave citizens to draw from, you have no problem taking everything and leaving behind an empty husk.

Fully drained victims are still technically alive but they are left devoid of emotion, love, passion, desire, fear, or drive. In this Unliving existence, more hollow than the deepest of depressions, the individual goes through the motions of life without any of its meaning.

Depending on how deeply the sorcerer cut, the Unliving can appear almost fully functioning and human, if empty inside; or mostly mindless, capable only of following simple instructions in a most desultory fashion, barely even feeding or caring for themselves. At the most drastic levels, the body loses the ability to fully heal or recover from injury effectively and so gradually begin to look shabbier and shabbier with open festering wounds and poorly mended limbs.

The Witch Kings maintain armies of the Unliving as laborers and shock soldiers harvested from the thousands they use to power their sorcery. Some wander off and there is little effort to collect them as they are a plentiful renewable resource. Other sorcerers lack the resources to maintain such servitors and simply abandon the ones they don't kill.

As a result it is not uncommon to find Unliving wandering aimlessly in the wilderness, or semi-organized into groups approaching a settlement by higher functioning Unliving or, occasionally, members of the Blessed trying to ease their suffering. Some few may even be found in the homes of their families at least until the arrangement becomes too cumbersome.



## WELL OF SOULS

A Well of Souls is a powerful containment, often in the form of an actual well, more rarely in the form of a transportable artifact.

It was designed and built to hold souls so that a sorcerer could harvest them on a massive scale, and then draw upon them at their leisure. As such they are extremely valuable and closely guarded secrets. A strike against a rival's Well of Souls can be a crippling blow.

On occasion they are so well hidden and protected, that even after the sorcerer has been felled by their rivals, they remain unfound for years, even centuries. When a lost well is discovered, it can kick off an immediate power struggle for control of its valuable contents.

#### STANDARD EXTRA RULE: WELL OF SOULS

- Usually immobile.
- When you use an Edge Token you can temporarily change the Aspect of the die you reroll to Soul Reaper Sorcery.





# APPENDIX THREE: OESIGN NOTES ANO INSPIRACIONS

#### WHERE CAN I FIND MORE ABOUT THESE GAMES?

#### **SORCERER & SWORD**

by Ron Edwards adept-press.com/ role-playing-games/sorcerer/

#### THE SHADOW OF YESTERDAY

by Clinton Nixon

The setting for this game has its ancestry in an old AD&D campaign of mine from the mid 80s. Many of the images and setting elements of that campaign have been recycled again and again in my games. One such time was a few years back at DemonCon, a small game convention held at DePaul University. At the con, Ron Edwards ran a workshop on how to build an effective **SORCERER** one-sheet for a campaign. We were working off of **SORCERER & SWORD**, the sword and sorcery supplement, and I drew upon all the imagery and themes that I'd been returning to since that original campaign.

I was really grooving on these ideas and had a strong hankering to take another stab at pulling off a fantasy RPG. I had considered doing a **RIDDLE OF STEEL** campaign, a setting for **THE SHADOW OF YESTERDAY**, even a mini-supplement for Sorcerer using this setting but none of those had gotten off the ground when I started thinking about another project.

The first goal of the new project was to do a competitive RPG. There had yet to be a competitive role-playing game that I felt really allowed for no holds barred, head to head, player vs. player play and that seemed like a great challenge. I'd been spending a lot of time thinking about how much RPGs could learn from board games and benefit from some of the concepts board games use. An RPG designed with the precision of a board game could fit the bill.

The second goal was to demonstrate innovation without novelty. To design a game where nothing could be said to be bleeding edge mechanically, and yet the game play itself will be unique. To do this, I decided that for the first concept draft of the game I would use no rule that hadn't already appeared in some other game. Thus, none of the pieces would be new. The innovation would have to solely occur in how the pieces are assembled.

Of course at this point the project was just design goals with no actual game. The solution, was to meld these goals to that oft returned to campaign setting and so **BLOOD RED SANDS** was born.

The timing couldn't have been more inconvenient. I was supposed to be finishing up Robots & Rapiers a game I've been working on since 2002. But this game took over my creativity and demanded to be made. So R&R was back burnered in late 2007. By the end of the year the first Alpha play test version of **BLOOD RED SANDS** was ready. In early 2008



the next version incorporating that play test experience was finished, and by May we began work on the Beta version that was sold at the Ashcan Front booth at GenCon. Play testing continued and by October a radically improved second Beta was finished. In April of 2009, the third Beta was finished. By this point, the game had been so refined into its own game that most of the pieces lifted from other games were much harder to detect.

At this point, real life intervened and by mid 2010 it became. apparent that **BLOOD RED SANDS** wasn't going to get published any time soon unless I found someone willing to shoulder the burden of the production work I no longer had the time to do. Enter **GALILEO GAMES**. With Brennan's partnership in taking charge of the production, and thanks to a successful 2012 Kickstarter campaign, this game has at last made it to you.

For this design I borrowed from many games. If you're reading this book, you probably already know many of them, but if not, you can treat this as much as a list of recommendations as influences.

**INSPECTRES:** One of the early indie game designs, InSpectres is a classic that still enjoys a tremendous amount of play. InSpectres introduced a pacing mechanic where the case the players are investigating can't be solved until a certain number of 5s and 6s have been rolled. This found its way into **BLOOD RED SANDS** as the rule that prevents the hero from leaving the Ordeal until they've scored a certain number of Victory Points.

**MY LIFE WITH MASTER:** One of the all time classic indie RPG designs, My Life with Master is also one of the most heavily borrowed from by other designers. The game introduced the idea of a hard and fast end game in which the character's fate is decided by a comparison of their final score in various attributes. Like many others before me, I've borrowed this notion for **BLOOD RED SANDS** and combined it with the pacing mechanic from InSpectres. The more Victory Points the hero player accumulates during a single Ordeal the more favorable the epilogue they achieve. Too few and the ordeal ends in tragedy. High enough and the hero has actually managed to obtain a happy ending for others.

om many games. If you're reading this book, many of them, but if not, you can treat this

**GALILEO GAMES** 

galileogames.com

**Brennan Taylor** 

INSPECTRES by Jared Sorensen www.memento-mori.com/inspectres/

MY LIFE WITH MASTER by Paul Czege www.halfmeme.com/master.html



#### **BEAST HUNTERS**

by Christian and Lisa Griffen www.berengad.com **BEAST HUNTERS:** A game that never got the buzz it deserved, Beast Hunters' text conceals a real tiger of a game engine that allows players to compete against their own best efforts with a Game Master providing both opposition and encouragement. The game is played with only one player and the GM so the story can focus on a single character. This was the inspiration for each Ordeal of **BLOOD RED SANDS** featuring only a single hero with the rest of the players playing opposition for that hero. In my old campaign setting the southern tribes were originally called Beast Hunters and drew upon similar iconography. I renamed them Totem Takers to avoid encroaching on Christian's IP but clearly a case where we share similar enthusiasms.

LEGENDS OF ALYRIA

by Seth Ben-Ezra www.darkomengames.com/alyria.html

> IN A WICKED AGE by Vincent Baker www.lumpley.com/wicked.html

**LEGENDS OF ALYRIA**: One of the early indie designs, Legends of Alyria was also a big influence on my first published game, Universalis. In Legends of Alyria, scenarios are created relatively spontaneously though a group brainstorming process that results in characters being placed in a situation on the verge of conflict with the players then selecting which characters and sides of that conflict they wish to play in the game. Many subsequent games have drawn upon this notion of positioning players in conflict with each other and letting the plot develop from those intra player rivalries. I had to make this process far more specific and rigorous given the competitive nature of **BLOOD RED SANDS** but it is the primary influence for the Ordeal generation process.

**IN A WICKED AGE:** The source of one of my all time favorite campaigns as a player, this game touches on a similar fantasy vein although one much more subtle and sophisticated than the brutal savagery of **BLOOD RED SANDS**. Its oracle is the third generation of a concept designed to generate intense situations for spontaneous scenario creation. To this it adds the notion that each scenario will be a stand alone story and each story will introduce a new cast of characters as well as some reoccurring characters through the mechanism of the "we owe list" from previous stories. In this way an anthology of tales based in the same loose setting is accumulated. I adapted this idea to **BLOOD RED SANDS** in that each Ordeal is a stand alone story which will introduce new characters and situations while building on and returning to characters introduced previously. To this I added the hero characters in lieu of the "we owe" list who will walk through these stories giving them a common thread.



**ROBOTS & RAPIERS:** A game of my own design that was suffering from the problem of tracking too much character currency to produce snappy play. I fixed this by turning the dice themselves into currency which could be lost and then regained without needing to be separately tracked - providing a cycle of effectiveness with a minimum of book keeping. I also used the roll to resolve not only the task at hand but to provide other information about the status of the character. In **BLOOD RED SANDS** I initially tracked separate resources with the same lack of snappy play. So I went to Robots & Rapiers for a similar solution. Later versions of **BLOOD RED SANDS** went to using dice as currency tracking injury by losing and refreshing dice and reading the result in a variety of ways to generate game state information. I also repurposed Robots & Rapiers' scenario generator. More randomized than Alyria's free form brainstorming and more layered and specific than In a Wicked Age's oracle, the random tables from Robots & Rapiers proved ideal for the more precision application of generating Ordeals for a competitive game.

**UNIVERSALIS** and **DIRTY SECRETS**: In my own design, Universalis, Mike and I gave a great deal of power to players to create and invent the world and events of the game. To ensure that a player wouldn't unilaterally (and typically unintentionally) violate the standards and sensibilities of the rest of the players, Universalis includes a Challenge system, where other players can question a player's narration and use the game's resources to veto things they can't accept through an auction-style bidding mechanic. Dirty Secrets uses a simpler challenge mechanic that plays quicker and to much the same effect. Any player can veto a player's narration at any time, but the veto can be over ridden if at least one other player asserts their support of the original narration. This allows players to signal their preferences without allowing any one player to set the standards for everyone. The initial Challenge rule in **BLOOD RED SANDS** was lifted directly from Dirty Secrets. Through play this was revised to the current system where players vote by Rising Up.

I also drew upon the way players use resources to create characters and world elements on they fly during play in Universalis. In Universalis, Coins are used to purchase Traits that can provide dice in a Complication. In the earliest versions of **BLOOD RED SANDS** Resource Points purchased Traits that provided dice in Conflicts. As noted above,

#### a **BLOOD** this was o.

#### **ROBOTS & RAPIERS** by Ralph Mazza – coming soon:

by Raiph Mazza – coming soon: www.ramsheadpublishing.com

#### UNIVERSALIS

by Ralph Mazza www.ramsheadpublishing.com

#### **DIRTY SECRETS**

by Seth Ben-Ezra www.darkomengames.com/secrets.html



#### **BLACK FIRE (ALPHA VERSION)**

by Ron Edwards: www.indie-rpgs.com/articles/22/

> AGON by John Harper www.agon-rpg.com

#### **AGON**: A competitive RPG where the players are competing for glory by overcoming threats established by the game master, Agon is one of my favorites. It includes a system where characters can win oaths from other characters by defeating them in contests and then use those oaths to force those characters to help them win future contests. You can see this influence in **BLOOD RED SANDS** in the Weakness and Oath rules; a late addition as a result of play testing by the LAGamers crew.

#### POLARIS

by Ben Lehman: http://www.tao-games.com/?p=1 **POLARIS**: One of the all-time classic RPG game designs, Polaris single handedly redefined what conflict resolution can look like with its narration driven system. Instead of the usual back and forth between players owning different characters, in Polaris one player (The Heart) directs the narration. Other players (the Moons) have ownership over different aspects and influence the narration, but it is the Heart player who frames the scenes, positions the characters, and even resolves the characters' actions and their outcomes; essentially dictating the entire course of the story. Only when the Heart player narrates something that the Mistaken Player wishes to antagonize is there any conflict about what happens. Through the use of key phrases like "But only if..." or "And furthermore..." the players negotiate back and forth to come to a mutual



the current version of the game skips the Resource Points and builds Components directly out of dice.

**BLACK FIRE:** Black Fire is an unfinished work by Ron Edwards created to be an example of Gamist design to accompany his article on Gamism. Thematically the game taps into the same Heavy Metal sword & sorcery vibe as **BLOOD RED SANDS** with heroes wearing straps and tatters striding across a land corrupted by the corpse of a dead god while players roll dice with icons of swords and skulls. In Black Fire heroes can have a stated goal they are pursuing which gains them advantages upon success or costs them upon failure. These goals are intended to create opportunities for conflict amongst the players and an additional Vow mechanic actively puts players into a position of opposing each other's goals. In **BLOOD RED SANDS** each of the players controlling Factions have goals that are often at cross purposes. Succeeding at a goal earns the player Victory Points that are used to win the game. Hero players have the opportunity to make Vows to aid or defeat a Faction but this exposes them to Doom if they fail.

**DESIGN NOTES** 

agreed upon outcome. But there is always the possibility to declare "It shall not come to pass..." and decide the outcome on the roll of a die.

**BLOOD RED SANDS** places much more emphasis on deciding the outcome on the roll of dice and repurposed the formal phrases and importance of ritual, but the narrative structure is very similar. One player (The Chronicler) frames scenes, positions characters, and resolves outcomes unilaterally within limits set by the other players. The Faction Players each have Dominion over certain areas and the Chronicler's narration continues until one of the players wishes to provide opposition. Spoils are set by a back and forth negotiation that uses specifically defined elements of Pain rather than ritual phrases.

**PUPPETLAND**: The second rule of Puppetland is that as long as a player is sitting in their chair every word that comes out of their mouth is spoken by their character, and they cannot describe their character taking any action except by saying in character what they are doing. I didn't go to that extreme in **BLOOD RED SANDS** but the **VOICE OF THE CHRONICLER**—which requires the player to speak using the past tense in the voice of a future story teller relating the tale being played in the game is a direct descendent of this idea of having rules guiding, not what a player can say, but how they're allowed to say it.

**BLOOD & BRONZE:** This game isn't an RPG but rather a board game with a significant narrative component. In the game players are competing to be "Without Peer" in the arenas of god, hero, king, and army. The narrative component, however, gives an entirely new level of depth to the game where decisions that impact "winning and losing" are influenced by and themselves influence fictional elements of the narration which have no direct mechanical ramifications. There's a tension between what is mechanically the right "move" vs. the rivalries and grudges the narration has established. Similarly in **BLOOD RED SANDS** the narrative component of the fiction provides the arena for play. The narrative isn't what is being fought over, it's instead one of the weapons the players are fighting with.

**DOGS IN THE VINEYARD AND THE RIDDLE OF STEEL**: The core resolution mechanic for Dogs in the Vineyard is extraordinarily fun and tactical while being elegantly subservient to the theme of the game. I was looking for a fun and tactically engaging system for **BLOOD RED SANDS**,

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#### PUPPETLAND

by John Tynes *johntynes.com/revland2000/ rl\_puppetland.html* 

#### BLOOD & BRONZE by James Brown www.blankshieldpress.com/blbr.html

**DOGS IN THE VINEYARD** by Vincent Baker

www.lumpley.com/games/ dogsources.html

#### THE RIDDLE OF STEEL

by Jake Norwood – out of print: www.trosfans.com/forum/ but had different thematic priorities. I was looking for a system where the skill of the player can guide their character to victory just as much as the roll of the dice. **RIDDLE OF STEEL** did this fabulously well, and I toyed for a long time with basing the rules on Riddle. The drawback was that the Riddle mechanics didn't adapt themselves well to the "create on the fly" game play I was looking for.

My breakthrough design moment was in realizing that the core mechanic of Dogs is conceptually nearly identical to the core mechanic of Riddle. The differences are entirely marginal or superficial. Both games involve rolling a pool of dice and making key choices about how to use those dice to defeat your opponent. In Dogs you roll the dice first and then push forward exactly 2 to make an attack whose strength is the number on the dice. In Riddle you push forward as many dice as desired before rolling to make an attack whose strength depends on the result rolled. In Dogs you defend by pushing forward dice to block attacks and compare the attack and defense totals to determine whether Fallout is taken. In Riddle you defend by pushing forward dice to block attacks and compare attack and defense successes to determine whether damage is taken. The fact that Riddle uses all d10s while Dogs uses a variety of dice sizes, or that in Dogs you roll then choose, while in Riddle you choose then roll, are really just variations in implementation. This was an important realization because while Dogs subordinates the tactical dice play to the game's theme, Riddle features the tactical dice play as one of the key joys of playing, and that's what I wanted. So with this realization, I was able to repurpose the Dogs in the Vineyard dice mechanics to have more of a Riddle of Steel sensibility.



**DICTIONARY OF MU:** Dictionary of Mu isn't so much an inspiration for **BLOOD RED SANDS** as it is a kindred spirit. The imagery and savagery of this Sorcerer & Sword supplement has much the same vibe as I want for my setting. Mu is presented like an encyclopedia with an alphabetical listing of settings and characters and plenty of room for players to add more. This led me to present the intentionally sketchy setting and background of **BLOOD RED SANDS** in a similar format while encouraging players to keep a record of the people and places of their stories not only so they can return to them later but as a record of their journeys that literally builds the world around them.

**CHARNEL GODS:** Like the Dictionary of Mu, the Sorcerer supplement Charnel Gods shares a similar appreciation for dark and cruel worlds of savage sorceries where heroes of questionable morality wield weapons of awesome, world destroying power. While the Fell Weapons of Charnel Gods weren't the direct inspiration for the Soul Forged Artifacts of **BLOOD RED SANDS**, the games clearly share an affinity for the coolness of incredibly powerful yet sinister and somewhat tainted weapons.

**DARK SUN:** And lastly, I mention a major source inspiration which has colored my passion for sword & sorcery settings since I first encountered it in the early 1990s. Much of the raw savage feel of **BLOOD RED SANDS** and much of its specific details are directly inspired by the setting, although as a supplement for Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, it inspired none of the mechanics. Specifically, both games feature an ecologically barren land whose environment was destroyed by vile sorceries. The Witch-Kings of Abalahn are close cousins to the Sorcerer Kings of Athas, and while, they took a much different path, the Tormentors of **BLOOD RED SANDS** have their antecedents in the psionically boosted warriors from Dark Sun. Themes of resource depletion, survival, and slavery are common to both.

#### **DICTIONARY OF MU**

by Judd Karlman: www.indiepressrevolution.com/xcart product.php?productid=16196

#### **CHARNAL GODS**

by Renee Knipe: www.sorcerer-rpg.com/ product-listing.php

#### DARK SUN

by Timothy Brown & Troy Denning (out of print) www.athas.org


# **PLAYTESTERS**

In the end, this game owes as much to its play testers as it does to its designer. Almost every improvement and refinement over several iterations of the game was the direct result of play testing feedback and observations. I am particularly indebted to:

- Go Play Friday, my local Friday night gaming crew: Seth & Crystal Ben-Ezra, Gabrielle Worent, Keith Sears, and Raquel Evans.
- The LA Gamers: Mark Vallianatos, Judson Lester, Colin Jessup, Tony Delgado, and Josh Roby.
- And all of the players who participated in convention play sessions, gave me feedback on early rules editions, and purchased the GenCon Ashcan edition, including: James Brown, Luke Crane, Paul Czege, Andy Kitkowski, Dave Michalak, Mike Holmes, Willow Palecek, Kevin Senkowski, Matt Snyder, and Julie Stauffer.

Extra thanks to Keith Sears who conceived of the Infinite Library, the Order of St. Albert and several characters who made it into the final text of this game.

Special mention to Bill Burdick who was so inspired by **BLOOD RED SANDS** he took an early version of the rules and hacked it into his own game **DEATH OF THE VELE** before **BRS** was even released.

### DEATH OF THE VELE

by Bill Burdick: https://sites.google.com/ site/deathofthevele/



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# APPENDIX FOUR: PLAY AIOS

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# **ELEMENT GENERATOR**

# **GEOGRAPHY**

SUMMARY OF ELEMENT

▶ 1 Aligned, 1 Opposed, 1 Neutral

WITH 3 FACTION PLAYERS

 1 Three Edge, 2 Two Edge, 1 One Edge, 1 Zero Edge
 Roll once for a twist

WITH 4 FACTION PLAYERS

 1 Three Edge, 3 Two Edge, 1 One Edge, 1 Zero Edge
 Roll once for a twist

▶ 1 Aligned, 1 Opposed, 2 Neutral

Roll 1 Geography
 Roll 5 Factions

Roll 3 Objectives,

plus 1 standardRoll 4 Extras

**TABLE ROLLS** 

Roll 1 Geography
 Roll 4 Factions

 Roll 2 Objectives, plus 1 standard
 Roll 3 Extras

1 <b>-3</b>	1	The Iron Mountains	Towering alpine mountains in the north, rich with metals. The canyons and foothills are home to the Iron Lords*
	2	The Shard Sea	To the west, the Haradras grows progressively drier until its soil turns to sharp crystaline sand. The desert is known for its flaying sandstorms. (Natural Disaster Strikes is automatically the Twist for this Ordeal flaying sandstorms).
	3	The Boulder Field	A region of the northern plains. In ancient times giants from the foothills held throwing competitions, leaving the area strewn with massive boulders
	4	The Southern Haradras	Vast grass lands and savannas south of the Blood Flume to the Razor Sward; home of the Horse Lords and many varieties of megafauna.
	5	A Walled City	Large cities are rare. When found they are usually walled for defense, and a central feature of the region.
	6	The High Steppes	A vast plateau atop the Cliffs of Caves which stretches to the far north and ends in tundra and glaciers.
	7	The Razor Sward	An arid steppe of thorny plants and razor sharp grasses from the Haradras to the southern Jungle. $\!\!\!\!\!*$
	8	Marsh Country	A poorly drained region of bogs and fens and fell swamps where the Blood Flume meets the sea.
	9	A Greenwood	Few forests remain, and these few are jealously guarded and ruthlessly exploited until they too are gone.
	0	A Ford	Rivers too deep to cross are few, but where they exist, the way across is often contested. (Bridge/Ferry is an automatic Extra)
4-6	1	The Howling Wastes	Site of a war between Witch Kings in ancient times. Now a wasteland of twisted rock, raging Soul Storms, and the ceaseless howling of bound souls*
	2	Canyon Country	Glacier melt from the Iron Mountains carve a lacework of canyons before feeding into the Blood Flume.*
	3	The Cliffs of Caves	A shear cliff a mile high that stretches from the Iron Mountains to the sea and north along the coast. Pierced with thousands of caves and tunnels (Extensive Tunnels is automatic Extra)*
	4	The Southern Jungle	South of the Razor Sward and the Great Forest lies millions of acres of untapped jungle and rain forest, home to many tribes and fierce beasts*
	5	A Major Thoroughfare	In ancient times, civilized man built mighty highways. Most go nowhere now. Some are still traveled often enough to remain.



	6	The Ruin Fields	A vast series of ruins larger than any city. None now know what it was, but little remains but broken walls, large stones, and fallen masonry.
	7	The Sea Coast	No one knows what lies beyond the Eastern Sea. It is far too treacherous for any but coastal fisherman and the War Barges of sorcerers.
	8	A Fertile Valley	In an age where defiling sorcery has drained the land of its life, a valley that is still fertile is a prize of prizes.
	9	The God Bridge	A single arch 2 miles wide and 5 miles across, formed of a single solid piece of divinely crafted stone. Entire towns have been built on its span.
	0	A Deadwood	When the defilers drain the world of its life, what is left behind are stark skeletons of what once was.
-9	1	The Blood Flume	The main river flowing south from the Iron Mountains before turning east to the sea. Once two miles wide, now it is barely a quarter of that.
	2	A Ruined City	The ancients built many large cities, most of them lie in ruins. Parts of this one are relatively intact.
	3	The Glass Flats	A thousand acres of desert and dunes blasted into a sheet of solid glass by powerful magics. Some claim to have found valuable gems here.
	4	The Flutes	A section in Canyon Country where only tall narrow spires of stone re- main uneroded. The wind plays haunting music in the rotten and hollow rock. (Curse is automatically one of the available Extras)
	5	The Blood Sands	Patches of the Haradras where the soil and plants have a dark red hue as if forever stained by the blood of some long forgotten battle. (Ghost is automatically one of the available Extras and must be assigned to the Opposed Faction.)
	6	The Fire Lands	Between the Shard Sea and the Iron Mountains is an area of lava geysers, burning fountains, and molten rivers. (Natural Disaster Strikes is automatically the Twist for this Ordeal earthquakes, eruptions, and the like.)
	7	The Drained Lands	A dry dusty parched land where the 5 towers of the Witch Kings can be found. A land of fear and slaves and dark powers.
	8	The Northern Haradras	The grass lands north of the Blood Flume. Largely subjugated by the Witch Kings. Intensively farmed to supply food and slaves to their cities.
	9	Open	Invent One and Record
	0	Open	Invent One and Record

**O** Thematic Geography The Record Keeper should choose a Geography from the Witch King Elements.

### WITH 5 FACTION PLAYERS

- ▶ Roll 1 Geography
- Roll 6 Factions
- ▶ 1 Aligned, 1 Opposed, 3 Neutral
- Roll 3 Objectives, plus 2 standard
- ▶ Roll 5 Extras
- 1 Three Edge, 3 Two Edge,
  1 One Edge, 1 Zero Edge
- Roll once for a twist



# **FACTIONS**

1

# **FACTIONS AND ASPECTS**

Some Factions grant free Aspects which must be taken by the Faction's Main Character.

1	1	A small village							
	2	A fortress town							
	3	A market town on a crossroads							
	4	A settlement of Unliving (consider using optional rules)							
	5	A settlement of free holders							
	6	A master craftsman							
	7	An isolated outpost							
	8	A school of warrior scholars							
	9	A struggling homestead							
	0	A newly founded community							
2	1	A prophet and his followers							
	2	A hidden family of Fair Folk (consider using optional rules)							
	3	A pack of Huntsmen (consider using optional rules)							
	4	A pack of Bestials (consider using optional rules)							
	5 A pack of feral children								
	6	Bandits							
	7	Slavers							
	8	Traveling Mendicants							
	9	A traveling freak show							
	0	A gang of thugs							
3	1	A white prince in his alabaster tower (gain 1 Soul Reaper Aspect for free)							
	2	An exiled prince and his entourage (gain 1 Soul Reaper Aspect for free)							
	3	An unrooted Sorcerer (gain 1 Soul Reaper Aspect for free)							
	4	A Tormentor (gain 1 Tormentor Aspect for free)							
	5	An Iron Lord (gain 1 Soul Fused Aspect for free)							
	6	Totem Takers on the hunt (gain 1 Totem Aspect and the hunt a Monster Objective for free)							
	7	A convent of Blessed (gain 1 Blessed Aspect for free)							
	8	A coven of Witches (gain 1 Soul Reaper Aspect for free, or 2 if using optional rules)							
	9	A troop of Night Hunters (gain 1 Totem Aspect for free, or 2 if using optional rules)							
	0	A Soul Forger (gain 1 Soul Forged Aspect for free)							



4	1	Nomadic shepherds	7	1	An apprentice Tormentor
-	2	A tribe of nomads		2	A Forge Knight and his so
	3	A clan of tribesmen (gain 1 Totem Aspect for free)			Aspect for free)
	4	A caravan		3	An emissary of the Witch
	5	A clan of Horse Lords (gain 1 Totem Aspect for free)			Blessed or Totem for f
	6	An independent warlord		4	An order of Blessed (gain
	7	A company of sell swords		5	A journeyman Sorcerer (g
	8	An invading army		6	A Rune Bound captain (g using optional rules)
	9	Refugees			A Monster (gain 1 Sorcery
	0	A tribe of cannibals (gain 1 Totem or Tormentor Aspect for free)		8	An unbound Fiend (gain 2 free)
5	1	An internal rival to one of the other Factions		9	Migrating Tribesman (gai
	2	Runaway slaves		9	A blood cult (gain 1 Sorce
	3	A guild of merchants	. —	0	A DIOOU CUIL (gain 1 Soice
	4	A charlatan (you may not take any Sorcery Aspects)		Record Keeper Selects a Them	
	5	An order of flagellants	9	Poll	twice and combine into one
	6	An organized gang of cut throats and thieves	<b>7</b>	KUII	
	7	Traveling tinkers	0	0pe	n: Invent One and Record Be
	8	A beast master and his menagerie		1	
	9	An order of assassins for hire			
	0	Land Pirates		2	
6	1	Survivors from a defeated army		3	
	2	A stable of gladiators		4	
	3	A band of fortune seekers		5	
	4	A patrol of soldiers		6	
	5	A group of hunters			
	6	A famous warrior and his students		7	
	7	A local petty tyrant		8	
	8	A gang of highwaymen and their king		9	
	9	A law judge and his free riders			
	0	A garrison		0	

1	An apprentice Tormentor (gain $1$ Tormentor Aspect for free)						
 2	A Forge Knight and his squires (gain 1 Tormentor or Soul Fused Aspect for free)						
3	An emissary of the Witch King (gain 1 Sorcery Aspect except Blessed or Totem for free)						
 4	An order of Blessed (gain 1 Blessed Aspect for free)						
5	A journeyman Sorcerer (gain 1 Soul Reaper Aspect for free)						
6	A Rune Bound captain (gain 1 Tormenter Aspect for free, or 2 if using optional rules)						
 7	A Monster (gain 1 Sorcery Aspect except Blessed for free)						
8	8 An unbound Fiend (gain 2 Sorcery Aspects except Blessed for free)						
 9	Migrating Tribesman (gain 1 Totem Aspect for free)						
0	A blood cult (gain 1 Sorcery Aspect except Blessed for free)						
Record Keeper Selects a Thematic Faction							
Roll t	wice and combine into one						
	wice and combine into one : Invent One and Record Below						
 Open							
 Open 1							
 Open 1 2							
 Open 1 2 3							
 Open 1 2 3 4							
 Open 1 2 3 4 5							
Open 1 2 3 4 5 6							
Open 1 2 3 4 5 6 7							



# **OBJECTIVE**

1 <b>-2</b>	1	Kill a Main Character	7-8	1	Hunt a Monster (Monster is an automatic Extra)	
-	2	Access to Water		2	Negotiate a Treaty	
-	3	Obtain Supplies		3	Obtain an artifact (Soul Forged Artifact is an automatic Extra)	
-	4	Acquire Slaves		4	Provide assistance (help another faction obtain their goal)	
-	5	Plunder		5	Travel to a safe or sacred place	
-	6	Rescue Hostages		6	Learn magic from another Faction (and buy a d10 Sorcery Trait)	
-	7	Subjugation		7	Crush the Hero (Hero must leave with no more than 15 VPs)	
-	8	Scout for future conquest		8	Acquire a Component from another Faction	
-	9	Steal something important		9	Sow Devastation (score more VPs than any other Faction)	
-	0	Secure a marriage		0	Destroy an Artifact (Soul Forged Artifact is an automatic Extra)	
3-4	1	Perform a ritual 9		1-3	Roll twice and combine into one	
-	2	Eliminate a dangerous enemy		4-0	Record Keeper selects a Thematic Objective	
-	3	Obtain critical knowledge		Oper	n: Invent One and Record Below	
-	4	Found a new settlement	0			
-	5	Escape from a powerful enemy		2		
-	6	Get Revenge on another Faction		3		
	7	Obtain Justice from a Faction		3 		
-	8	Conquest				
-	9	Collect taxes / tribute / on a debt		5		
	0	Infiltrate a spy into another faction		6 7		
5-6	1	Arrest a Main Character		8		
	2	Recruit another Main Character		9		
-	3	Marry another Main Character		0		
-	4	Destroy another Faction				
-	5	Recover lost Souls	·······			
-	6	Open a Trade Route				
-	7	Secure an Alliance				
-	8	Win a contest				
-	9	Become the Ruler				
-	٥	Ruild something un				

0 Build something up



# EXTRAS

1	Required Component: A Soul Forged Artifact Has 1 Soul Forged Aspect for free
2	Required Component: A Starlight Stone Build Component as normal. Plus it has 6 special one-use Edge Tokens attached to it. Once used discard out of play.
3	Required Component: Despair Stone Build Component as normal. Plus it has 4 special one-use Doom Tokens attached to it useable against any other player.
4	Required Trait: A Soul Forge You may buy 2 Soul Forge Aspects instead of 1 when you discard a die to buy a Sorcery Aspect
5	Required Component: A Well of Souls Immobile: When you use an Edge Token you can temporarily change the Aspect of the die you reroll to Soul Reaper Sorcery
6	Required Trait: A grimoire of lost sorcery You may buy 2 Soul Reaper or Tormentor Aspects instead of 1 when you discard a die to buy a Sorcery Aspect
7	Required Component: A Life Nexus Immobile: You may buy 2 Blessed or Soul Reaper Aspects instead of 1 when you discard a die to buy a Sorcery Aspect
8	Required Component: A horde of treasure Each die and Trait must represent some valuable treasure. In addition to using the Component normally, at any time you may give one of the dice to another player to require that player to: join a Clash they are eligible to join on the side of your choice (and not yield until their Leader does), not join a Clash they are eligible to join, attack the target of your choice in a Clash, or Yield during a Clash (but not if they are the Leader). They add the die to their Dice Horde.
9	Required Component: A Monster Has 1 Sorcery Aspect except Blessed for free
0	Required Component: A Summoned Fiend

Has 2 Sorcery Aspects except Blessed for free

# **EXTRA EFFECTS**

Positive effects are lost when the Trait is Devastated or the Component Destroyed. Negative effects are not.



2 1 Required Component: A band of Huntsmen

Whenever one of this Component's dice are damaged in a Clash, immediately reroll any or all of its remaining Available Dice or Refresh any one of its Battered Dice (including just battered).

- 2 General Effect: An epidemic You may claim 1 "infected" Weakness from each opposing character during the ordeal.
- 3 General Effect: A famine At the beginning of each Clash, each of your opponents must Batter one diefrom one of their characters
- 4 Required Component: A plague of locusts Once per Clash you may require an opponent to choose 2 different dice to attack with (if they have them available.
- 5 Required Trait: Righteous Anger Whenever one of this Component's dice are Devastated in a Clash, your opponent must immediate damage an Available die (as for Force)
- 6 General Effect: A curse Opposing Leader may claim a Weakness against you each Clash you are in
- 7 Required Component: A fortification Immobile: Any one of the Component's dice gain Fortitude Aspect in addition to their normal Aspect (i.e. 1 die has double Aspects)
- 8 General Effect: A traitor Once per Ordeal an opposing Leader may force you to Yield a Clash (at the point where you'd normally have the option)
- 9 Required Component: a colony of lepers

Once per Clash, if there are multiple players on your side, you may require an opponent attacking you to attack someone else on your side

0 Required Trait: Master Tactician

Once per Clash when you attack, you may declare one of your opponent's dice unavailable to defend with.

If your side suffers 2 or more dice devastated in a single Exchange, your opponent must move one Available die to Used (their choice) 2 Required Component: A gallows tree During a Clash when you're advancing dice, you can discard any die from this Component to the Bone Yard and temporarily change the Aspect of any die you've Advanced to any other Aspect (including Sorcery) for that Exchange. 3 Required Component: A retired Hero Tag any one of the hero's dice with the Legendary Trait in addition to another aspect, as for any hero. 4 Required Component: A famed teacher Gain 2 additional Edge Tokens 5 Required Component: A traveling entertainer Once per Clash where this Component is Committed you may Refresh any one die at any time. 6 Required Component: Sacrificial Followers When one of your dice are Devastated in a Clash, you may Batter that die and discard one of these dice instead.

1 Required Trait: Energy Draining Aura

3

- 7 Required Component: A Citadel Immobile: Any two of the Component's dice gain Fortitude Aspect in addition to their normal Aspect (i.e. 2 dice have double Aspects)
- 8 Required Component: A Pack of Bestials When this Component is rolled in a Clash, immediately select any one of its dice tagged with a Force Aspect and set it to its highest value
- 9 Required Component: Human Shield When one of these dice are Devastated for any reason you gain 1 Victory Point.
- 0 Required Trait: Master of Deception
  - Special Standard Aspect: Set this die in the black special section of the Battle Mat when Available or Used. When this die is advanced to attack, you may swap out either of your Advanced dice with another Available Die after seeing your opponent's defense. Your opponent is stuck with the dice they advanced. If the Defense Score is no longer high enough, they must Advance additional dice.



### 4 1 Required Component: A mad hermit Gain 1 Edge Token

2 General Effect: A cryptic prophecy Once per Ordeal may require 1 opponent to Yield (at the point they would normally have the option).

### 3 Required Component: a ghost

Gain 1 Free Soul Fused Aspect (this is neither totemic nor runic, it is the power of the dead). This Component can never be constrained or prohibited from joining a scene or Clash regardless of time or distance.

4 Required Trait: a ghost

Your Main Character is a ghost. They can never be constrained or prohibited from joining a scene or Clash regardless of time or distance

5 Required Trait: A hostage

At the beginning of the Ordeal identify 1 Faction or hero who you've taken a hostage from. Once per Ordeal you may give this hostage die to that opponent (devastate on your sheet, opponent adds to their Dice Horde) to require that opponent to Yield (at the time they'd normally have that option). That opponent then gains 1 Edge Token. Alternatively you may at any time devastate and discard the hostage die to the Bone Yard to cause opponent to lose 1 Edge Token.

6 General Effect: Owed a Debt

At the beginning of the Ordeal identify 1 Faction or hero who owes you. Once per Ordeal when that player is present in a scene you can require them to join your side in a Clash. They cannot Yield until the Leader does. May also be used as a Weakness.

7 Required Trait: Shape Shifter

Special Aspect: Set this die in the black special section of the Battle Mat when Available or Used. When Advanced it can be any Standard Aspect you wish.

8 Required Component: A child prodigy Gain 2 Edge Tokens

9 General Effect: Extensive Tunnels The Chronicler cannot pay to keep you out of a scene unless you choose to accept payment.

0 Required Trait: (un)Holy Vigor At any time in a Clash you can use an Edge Token to Refresh one Used die instead of Rerolling an Available Die. 1 Required Component: One of the Blessed Has a Blessed Aspect for free

5

- 2 Required Component: A wandering prophet When Committed to a Clash, each opponent must immediately Batter one of their Edge Tokens (out of the Clash).
- 3 Required Component: The Unliving

All dice of this Component are automatically tagged with a special "Unliving" Aspect instead of a regular Aspect. Use the Black Special Aspect space on the Battle Mat. Unliving Aspect effect: When Devastated, discard the die to the Bone Yard but do not cross out the die slot or tally a Discarded Die mark. Instead, draw a new die of lesser size to replace it with. If there are no dice of lesser size, then cross out the die slot as normal. These dice are also immune to being stolen by Soul Reaper Sorcery.

- 4 Required Component: An Avatar of the Bound God Your Main Character is possessed by the power of the Twice Forsaken. Your Aspects cannot be negated by Yellow Finesse or White Blessed dice. Gain 2 Soul Reaper or Tormentor Aspects for free. You lose 5 Victory Points if you fail your objective.
- 5 Required Trait: Enjoys Pain When one of this Component's dice are Devastated for any reason, you gain 1 Victory Point
- 6 Required Component: Wandering Flagellents During a Clash where this Component is present, you may voluntarily Batter any die of this Component to gain a Reroll or Refresh for any other die
- 7 Required Component: An old wise man Gain 1 Edge
- 8 Required Trait: Font of Wisdom Gain 1 Edge
- 9 Required Component: One of the Fair Folk

Has 1 Blessed Aspect for free. Also, whenever the Blessed die is advanced it is immediately set to its highest value not just against Sorcery. Cannot have any other Sorcery. If a Devastated die of this Component is stolen by Soul Reaper Sorcery, the sorcerer gets an immediate free bonus draw from the Bone Yard of equal or lesser size.

0 General Effect: You are not important

Completing your Objective will earn only 5 Victory Points instead of 10.



6 1 Required Trait: Soothing Aura

While this Component is committed to a Clash, when one of your side's dice is Battered by a Force Aspect it is only Used. When one is Devastated it is only Battered

2 Required Trait: Regeneration

During a Clash, at the end of an Exchange before dice are Cleaned Up, you may discard 1 Edge Token to the Bone Yard to recover 1 damage step from all of your dice that were damaged. Devasted Dice to Battered, Battered to Used, or Used to Available.

3 Required Component: A Bridge or Ferry

Immobile: Draw river on map. Owner may require other players give them 1 die from their Dice Horde to cross the river to get to and from scenes on the other side. "Crossing the River" is added. to the list of possible Pain and Spoils for this Ordeal. Destroying the Component merely eliminates control of the Bridge / Ferry, it can now be used to cross for free.

- 4 Required Component: A natural fortress Immobile: If a Clash occurs at this location, opponents can only bring in 1 Component at the start
- 5 Required Trait: Crippled That die has no Aspect, set it in the margins of your Battle Mat. Also lose 1 Edge.
- 6 Required Trait: Instruments of Torture You may buy 2 Soul Fused Tormentor Aspects instead of 1 when you discard a die to buy a Sorcery Aspect
- 7 Required Trait: Tamed Reaver Beast This Trait is tagged with Finesse (Yellow), Fortitude (Blue), and Force (Red) Aspects on the same die (triple Aspect).
- 8 Required Component: Family Heirloom Has 2 free Sorcery Aspects. Choose from Soul Forged, Soul Fused Totem, or Soul Reaper
- 9 Required Trait: Small magical artifact Trait has Free Sorcery Aspect of any kind
- 0 Required Trait: Beloved Pet If this die is Devastated you lose 2 Victory Points

7 1 Required Trait: Glimpse the Future

Once per Clash, when you are the attacker, you may force the defender to Advance 2 dice in defense prior to you Advancing your attack. If their dice are insufficient to meet your attack they must advance additional dice.

- 2 Required Component: A band of orphans If you have the Opposed Alignment, you lose 2 Victory Points for every one of these dice that are Devastated. If you are Aligned, you may discard one of these dice to the Bone Yard at any time to grant any Advanced die a temporary Soul Reaper Aspect (in addition to its current Aspect) for this exchange. If you are neutral, its just another Component
- 3 Required Component: Neophyte Adept Gain 1d4 Soul Reaper or Blessed Aspect for free. This Component may not have any other Sorcery Aspects
- 4 Required Component: Rune Bound Guard Gain 1d6 or two d4 Soul Fused Tormentor Aspects for free. This Component may not have any other Sorcery Aspects
- 5 Required Component: A Night Hunter

Gain 1d6 Soul Fused Totem Aspect for free. None of this Component's Soul Fused Totem Aspected dice can be higher than d6. However, this component can add more than one of their Soul Fused dice to a single Exchange.

6 Required Component: A Giant Any two of the Component's dice gain Force A

Any two of the Component's dice gain Force Aspects in addition to their normal Aspect (i.e. 2 dice have double Aspects)

- 7 Required Component: A Forge Knight Gain 1 free Tormentor or Soul Fused Aspect
- 8 Required Trait: A Blood Stone

Any time one of your Faction's dice are Devastated, discard this Trait's die to the Bone Yard and immediately replace it with a die of a smaller size. The Devastated die is rerolled and returned to Available status.

9 Required Component: A Fire Drake

The Drake has a required Trait for its fiery molten breath. This Trait has a Force Aspect in addition to its normal Aspect (i.e. a double Aspect)

0 Required Trait: Divine Bloodline

As long as this Trait is not Devastated you may reroll 2 dice for every Edge Token played (or the same die twice). Place the token under either die.



### 8

Nothing Special Treat this normally, as an Extra to be assigned, which is worth nothing

### Record Keeper Selects a Thematic Extra 9

### 0 Open: Invent One and Record Below

2 3	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
0	

# **TRIGGERING TWISTS**

If there is a Twist use the following procedure: After every Throw Down roll 1d10. Target number is the number of the current Chapter in the game. When the Target Number or less is rolled, the Twist is triggered. Roll on the following table to determine what it is. Note: all references to player Victory Points refers to Victory Points earned this Ordeal.

# TWISTS

### 1-5 No Twist

A Thematic Twist.

Each Witch King has one. It can be used once only. Subsequently treat this result as "No Twist"

### 7-10 A Twist!

### 1 A new enemy emerges.

Roll a new Faction a new Objective and a new Required Component. Give the new faction 3 Edge and a Neutral Alignment. The player with the most VPs chooses the target for the Objective and fills in any additional detail around the Objective. Then, one Faction Player (choosing in order from least VPs to most) may abandon their current Faction for the new. The player starts with a fresh set of dice and a brand new Faction, exactly as at the start of the game. The old Faction is briefly narrated out, they no longer have any impact on the Ordeal. The player only gets credit for completeing the Objective of the new Faction. Any Victory Points earned during the Ordeal are carried over.

### 2 A Betrayal.

The player with the most VPs loses one Component (or Feature, but not a Main Character or Hero Component) to the player with the least. The receiving player chooses the Component and narrates the nature of the betrayal that caused the character to switch sides or item to come into their possession. Cross the Component off of the first faction's record sheet and copy it identically on to the second faction's sheet. Transfer any dice. The first faction marks tallies in the Discarded Dice box, exactly as if those dice had been Devastated, receiving player reduces Discarded Dice tallies.

If there are no available components on the receiver's sheet, either abandon an existing component or pass the option to the player with the next lowest VPs

### 3 A Hero Returns.

If no hero has been killed or retired from play yet, ignore the Twist. One player whose hero is out of play (if more than one, choose in order from most VPs to least) may abandoned their current faction (as for #1 above), and bring their hero into the Ordeal. Any Victory Points earned so far are carried over and the player can earn new VPs with their hero. The player should narrate how their hero came to be here and why. If the original hero dies in this Ordeal, this returning hero can take their place and return to play. Otherwise, they go back to retired status.

### 4 A Monster Rampage.

A new Clash is immediately started. The leader of the winning side of the just completed Clash becomes the leader of the opposing side in this Clash. A randomly chosen player who was not involved in the previous Clash plays the monster. If all players were involved, then the player who yielded first plays the monster. All other players who participated in the previous Clash (on either side) are automatically Assisting the Faction side as all factions fight for their lives against the beast. Battered Dice from the previous Clash remain Battered. No player may voluntarily yield for at least a number of rounds equal to the roll of the d10 that triggered the Twist. The monster player obtains all dice and Edge Tokens from the Boneyard to build the monster Component (these are returned to the Boneyard after the fight). The Monster never



yields but otherwise fights like any Faction. The Monster gets one super Refresh like a hero's Vow. Refresh all dice at will and recover all Battered Dice to Available status. Afterwards the monster leaves

### 5 The Bound God Manifests.

One Faction Player (choosing in order from least VPs to most) may narrate how the Bound God manifests in their Main Character, making them into his avatar. They may then draw dice from the Boneyard of any size to restore or replace all Traits of their Main Character and then draw 1 additional die of each available size from the Boneyard to add to their Dice Reserve. They also can make any Trait of their Main Character a Sorcery Trait for free. Their original Faction Objective is abandoned. Their new objective is to kill all other Main Characters worth 5VPs apiece.

### 6 A New Adept.

The Main Character of the player with the least VPs is revealed to be an Adept. The player can choose to change any two of their Main Character's Traits (including Devastated Traits) into a Soul Reaper Sorcery Aspect or a Blessed Aspect based on their view of the character.and draw new dice (any size) from the Boneyard to replace them.

### 7 The Witch King is Displeased.

The player with the most VPs must roll all of their Trait Dice one at a time starting with the largest die sizes. On an Odd result the die is Devastated and discarded to the Boneyard (tallying a Devastated Die). Continue rolling until all dice have been rolled or until 4 dice have been Devastated. The player of the Aligned Faction (may be the same player) then narrates how the fell sorceries of the Witch King manifests to punish that faction or hero, and why.

### 8 A Soul Storm hits.

For the rest of the Ordeal, players secretly vote on who the storm affects (tie = no one) after each Clash. The same player cannot be hit twice in a row. A random player then plays the Storm in an immediate new 1 on 1 Clash against that targeted player. The Storm Player selects up to 10 dice from the Bone Yard to fight with.These dice have no Aspect or Traits, they are just raw dice. The Storm is permanently weakened by Devastated dice.

VPs are scored against the Storm as normal. The player playing the storm does not score any VPs. The target player has all of their

Battered Dice from the prior Clash restored. The fight continues until the storm runs out of dice, or the target player Yields. All storm dice are then returned to the Boneyard, and drawn fresh for the next attack. The same player cannot be attacked twice in a row. A player who Yields to the Storm automatically takes a Weakness of "Storm Mutant" and describes some hideous physical and psychological mutation caused by the power of the storm. This Weakness can be used once per Chapter / Clash.

### 9 Natural Disaster

A natural disaster of massive proportion strikes (earthquake, volcanic eruption, sand storm, etc.). All players immediately roll all of their Trait Dice. Any die that rolls odd is damaged and rerolled. Any die that rolls odd again is automatically Devastated by the disaster and discarded to the Boneyard. The winning lead player of the triggering Clash determines the type of the disaster. Each player narrates the nature of their damage suffered.

### 0 Sorcerous Intervention

The Hero is magically teleported away. The current Ordeal immediately ends. Determine the epilogue as normal based on the VPs the hero has earned so far, but no Legendary Trait is awarded. Determine the Most Devastated Player based on damage suffered to that point. Then immediately generate a new Ordeal which features the same hero. One of the Factions is the sorcerer responsible for the intervention. He has plans for the hero related somehow to his objective in this new Ordeal. Begin play as normal, with all players choosing new Factions but keeping their running total of Victory Points. For Saga purposes this is the same Ordeal, just rebooted into a new scenario.



# SAGA RECORD SHEET

PLAYER NAME			
HERO NAME			

FIRST CYCLE	In each box, track VPs earned, running total, and indicate Most Devastated Player
ORDEAL 1	
ORDEAL 2	
ORDEAL 3	
ORDEAL 4	

# SECOND CYCLE

ORDEAL 5			
ORDEAL 6			
ORDEAL 7			

# THIRD CYCLE

ORDEAL 8			
ORDEAL 9			



### **Target Witch King:**

Witch King Edge:

### Featured Hero & Earned Legend

Add **10 Victory Points** to any player who achieved their **Faction Objective**.

Add **five Victory Points** to any player who did not create or use a **Sorcery Aspect** this Ordeal.

Mark an "H" in the box for the **Hero Player**.

Mark "MDP" in the box for the player who qualified as the **Most Devastated Player**.

Circle the **Ordeal total** for the player who earned the **most Victory Points** in this Ordeal who still has a hero in the running and whose hero has not yet been featured this Cycle. That player will be the **Hero Player** for the next Ordeal.

Enter the die size of the **Legend** earned by the **Hero Player** next to their name in the featured hero box.

Before each Ordeal, announce the running **Victory Point total** for all players and the accumulated **Legend dice** for all remaining heroes.

When all **Featured Hero** boxes for a Cycle are filled (no hero should appear more than once) the Cycle is over. Any heroes without a claim are retired. "X" off their hero name box on the record sheet.

# **LEGEND JUDGING**

Compare all of the **Legendary Trait** dice that have been earned by the two Heroes remaining (featured in the third cycle).

Highest total **Legend** will face off against the Witch King in the **Final Ordeal**.



# **ORDEAL NUMBER**

# **HERO PLAYER**

# DATE

# MOST DEVASTATED PLAYER/RECORD KEEPER

# **ELEMENT LISTS**

Record Keeper Selected Element Chosen from list, chosen from Thematic list, Returning from prior Ordeal, newly invented.

Geography Roll once.

Twist Roll only to determine yes or no. If yes, don't roll to determine what the twist is until the Twist timer is triggered. Timer is: 1d10 rolled after every Throwdown. Twist triggered if roll is =< Chapter #.

Yes / No

FACTION	
ALIGNMENT A/O	
OBJECTIVE AND TARGET	
EXTRA	
EDGE TOKENS	
MAIN CHARACTER ROLE	
INITIAL CHRONICLER	
PLAYER	



FACTIONS	ALIGNMENT	FACTION OBJECTIVES	EXTRAS	EDGE
1.	Aligned			3 Edge Tokens
2.	Opposed			2 Edge Tokens
3.	Neutral			2 Edge Tokens
4.	Neutral			2 Edge Tokens
5.	Neutral	Oppose another faction OR survive		1 Edge Token
6.		Oppose another faction OR survive		0 Edge Tokens

Factions Roll: 1 Faction per Faction Player + 1.

Alignment: Aligned and Opposed must be chosen.

Extras Roll: 1 per Faction Player

Edge: Choose 1 for each Faction. Not all will be used.

### Faction Objectives

Roll 1 Objective for every 2 rolled Factions (round up). Rolled Objectives must be used first.

**Oppose:** You succeed if target action fails. You fail if target succeeds.

Survive: Faction must be targeted by another Faction's Objective to choose this option. If Main Faction Character survives, get x3 VPs instead of the usual  $\pm 10$ 



# **FACTION RECORD SHEET**

# **FACTION PLAYER**

# **FACTION NAME**



This Ordeal









PLAY AIDS

# THE CHRONICLE OF

# ORIGIN

Ordeal Name	
Summary	

# **FIRST ORDEAL**

Ordeal Name			
Summary			



# SECOND ORDEAL

Ordeal Name

Summary

# THIRD ORDEAL

Ordeal Name

Summary

# **FINAL ORDEAL**

Ordeal Name

Summary



# HERO RECORD SHEET

# HERO PLAYER

# HERO (6+4 dice)







Add during 1st Ordeal	Add during 2nd Ordeal

Add during 3rd Ordeal Add during Final Ordeal









### FORCE



Place Here When Advanced

Opponent must Damage any one of their Available dice (their choice) Even is Battered Odd is Devastated Award bonus as usual

If opponent has no Available dice, they must damage a Used die of their choice, including from among those just Advanced.

> Place Here When Used

**FORCE** 



Protect any one Advanced die. After all other Aspects have been resolved, reroll all protected dice and return to Available status. (reroll tokens stay with it)

This means protected dice cannot be damaged or stolen. Award points to the opponent as normal but the die is immune.

> Place Here When Used



Soul rearer Sorcery



Place Here When Advanced

### CHOOSE ONE:

If at least one die (from either side) was Devastated, you may steal it and add it to your Dice Reserve instead of discarding it to the Boneyard. (not Weakness dice) OR

Refresh any one of your Used dice.

Place Here When Used



SOUL REAPER SORCERY

# BATTLEMAT

BLOOD RED SANDS

# SAGA MAP



# **ORDEAL MAP**



# **CLASH FLOWCHART**



# APPENDIX FIVE: THE WITCH KINGS

# A THEMATIC TWIST

### A Rune Worth Betraying Astongetorix

For: This Twist is only available if Draakon Rahn is a Faction in the Ordeal. If he is, and a Twist is called for, use this one instead of rolling. It can be used only once. Since the Twist is known from the beginning, it is in effect from the beginning of the Ordeal.

A Legendary Tormentor Rune: Before the Elements are assembled a new Extra is added to the list. It must be assigned to one of the Factions other than Draakon Rahn. It is a d10 Soul Fused Trait which is also tagged with the Legendary Trait Aspect (so it always rolls a 10).

Draakon's Faction has 2 Faction Objectives. The first one is whatever ordinary Objective is assigned to the Faction. In addition the Faction also receives a second special Objective: Acquire that Rune (Steal the die from the owning Faction).

Draakon's player only gets the +10 Victory Point Bonus for succeeding at this second special objective, however, when Edge is assigned at the end of the Ordeal it is based on the success or failure of the first ordinary Objective.

If Draakon recovers the rune as part of this Twist, then during the Final Ordeal the Draakon Rahn Faction will have 5 Edge instead of 3..

# ASTONGETORIX THE UNLIVING

Astongetorix is the oldest of the Witch Kings. He was the first disciple of the Forsaken One when he taught the ways of sorcery to man. He is tall in the manner of the original men, the Fair Folk whom he once called kin, over 7 feet and yet so thin from going weeks without eating as to appear even taller. So obsessed with the power that comes from draining Souls he did not spare even his own, and he is now himself one of the Unliving, a soulless immortal being. Devoid of joy, devoid of anger, devoid of all emotion and sensory pleasures, his indomitable will keeps him focused on the only goal remaining to him, the amassing of ever more power. Astongetorix: cold, ruthless, precise, and terrible.

# THEMATIC ELEMENTS

When a Thematic Element is called for on the standard Element Lists the Record Keeper selects one of the appropriate type from the list opposite. The Record Keeper may also select any element they desire from the list as their choice of element. If no Thematic Element has been selected by the end of element generation, then roll 1d10 on this table and add the result to the appropriate list. Remember, one Thematic Element must be a part of every Ordeal.



ROLL	CATEGORY	ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	ALIGNMENT
1	Geography	The City of Rule	The sprawling metropolis of white adobe and stone that houses legions of soul fuel and unliving laborers	
2	Geography	The Palace of the Gods	The towering and mostly empty citadel which periodically serves as neutral ground for summits between the Witch Kings. Built on the site of the Blessed Daughter's death by torture.	
3	Faction	Draakon Rahn, the Sum of All Men	Astongetorix's powerful right hand; a Tormentor nearly as obsessed with power as his lord. Draakon believes that he can achieve immortal godhood by branding himself with every Tormentor Rune in existence. Gain one Tormentor Aspect for free.	Aligned
4	Faction	An Expedition from the City of Rule	Periodically an expedition is sent from Rule to perform some mission in the name of Astongetorix. The expedition will typically be led by a favored sorcerer and include a legion of troops.	Aligned
5	Faction	A Disciple of Astongetorix	Astongetorix spreads his reach by raising sorcerers to the status of White Prince. They are then expected to do his bidding. Gain one Soul Reaper Aspect for free.	Aligned
6	Faction	A Fallen Disciple	Disciples who fail too frequently, grow too ambitious, or plot against Astongetorix suffer his displeasure. Astongetorix never takes it personally, but will seek to eliminate them as a threat and punish them to serve as an example to his other disciples. Gain 1 Soul Reaper Trait for free.	Opposed
7	Objective	Acquire a Source of Power	In addition to this Objective, add one of the Artifacts of Power below as an Extra if a suitable target isn't otherwise present. This objective requires the Faction to Steal that Extra from the other Faction	Aligned
8	Objective	Collect Tribute for Astongetorix	Pick a target. You must Steal at least 3 dice from their Traits or win Spoils with "Achieve an Objective" Pain related to collecting the Tribute.	Aligned
9	Objective	Administer the Witch King's Justice	One of the other Main Characters must wind up dead or captured.	Aligned
0	Extra	An Artifact of Power	Choose or roll for any of the entries listed under Extra table #1 on the element Generator: A Soul Forged Artifact, A Starlight Stone, A Despair Stone, A Soul Forge, A Well of Souls, A Grimoire of Lost Sorcery, A Life Nexus, A Horde of Treasure, A Monster, A Summoned Fiend	



# LOCATION

The Final Ordeal featuring Astongetorix takes place in his city, the **City of Rule**.

# **LEGENDARY TRAITS**

Traits in **bold** are Legendary.

# WITCH KING PLAYER

# WITCH KING (10 dice)

Astongetorix the Unliving			
l Tormented my own soul.	I am the law, ergo I am Just.		
1d10 Soul Fused Sorcery	1d10 Finesse		
Devoid of Emotions	Power, always Power		
1d8 Fortitude	1d6 Force		
Channeller of Souls	I think it, I desire it, I will have it.		
1d8 Soul Reaper Sorcery	1d8 Fortitude		
Dark arts from before time	Taught by the Mad God himself		
1d10 Soul Reaper Sorcery	1d10 Soul Reaper Sorcery		
Labyrinthine Plans	Aura of Quiet Terror		
1d6 Finesse	1d8 Finesse		



# **EXTRAS**

Required Component: Citadel (immobile)

Two of the Citadel's Traits are tagged with the Fortitude Aspect as well as another Aspect.

# **DICE HORDE**

The Usual 4 Sets of Dice <del>d10 d10 d10 d10 d8 d8 d8 d8 d6 d6 d6 d6 d4</del> d4 d4 d4

The Witch King & Most Devastated Bonus Sets d10 d8 d6 d4 d10 d8 d6 d4

REQUIRED COMPONENT	FEATURE 2 (2-4 dice)	FEATURE 3 (2-4 dice)	FEATURE 4 (2-4 dice)
The Alabaster Tower	The Brass Guard		
Blindingly White 1d8 Soul Forged	Enchanted Golems 1d10 Soul Forged		
The Gate of Skulls 1d10 Soul Fused/Fortitude	Impervious to Harm 1d8 Fortitude		
100 Floors, 1000 stairs 1d6 Fortitude	Shields and whirling blades 1d6 Fortitude		
Traps and dead ends 1d4 Finesse/Fortitude	Precision Machinery 1d6 Finesse		

# **EDGE**

Accumulated from Ordeals	5
--------------------------	---

### **DICE DISCARDED** VICTORY POINTS



# DOOM

first Vow.

Check when Hero makes	Hero's Doom	N



Mark Off When Spent

# **LEGENDARY TRAITS**








## THE SUM OF ALL MEN

## Don't use this faction in a 4-player game.

Draakon Rahn is believed to be the most powerful Tormentor in the world. He seeks to become the Sum of All Men, by which he means to achieve immortality when he has bound sufficient souls into his runes. He is always seeking new souls and new runes of power.

Currently he is serving as the commander of Astongetorix's legions, a position he is ideally suited for as he can create many Soul Bound followers out of their commanders and generally has first look at new prisoners being brought in.

He is looking for the ultimate soul to bind into the ultimate rune that will finally grant him ultimate power. That soul may well be Astongetorix's, or it could be the soul of the one brave enough to challenge Astongetorix.

#### Starting Dice Horde: 1d4

## **FACTION RECORD SHEET**

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

Draakon Rahn

#### EDGE

Edge Tokens
Rating 3/5

#### **FACTION OBJECTIVE**

Kill either the hero or the Witch King by inflicting the last die of damage or being the Leader of the side when they're slain

+10 VPs for achieving (or x3 for Survive)

## **EXTRA**

Required Component: The Hall of Torment (immobile)

You may buy 2 Tormentor Aspects instead of 1 when you discard a die to buy a Sorcery Aspect.

## MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)

cting of the	Draakon Rahn
	The strength of 100 men 1d10 Soul Fused
	Pain is Pleasure 1d10 Fortitude
	The power to break stone 1d6 Force
	So fast l'm just a blur 1d10 Soul Fused
	The knowledge of all my souls 1d8 Soul Fused
	Master of all weapons 1d6 Finesse
	DICE DISCARDED

This Ordeal



Tally one mark per die





## THE GOVERNOR

**Gordovan** is the governor of the **City** of **Rule**. The city exists to provide a never ending supply of souls to power Astongetorix's sorcery. The city is a tribute to Astongetorix's orderly mind. Every street is layed out with precision, every building exactly so. The City of Rule is laid out in a radial pattern of symmetry within symmetry, where everything is perfect, clean and ordered.

With nearly unlimited amounts of Unliving labor at his disposal, Gordovan maitains this perfection by constantly tearing down and rebuilding anything that is flawed. Every section of the city has a purpose and can only and will only be used for that purpose. As a result some sections are so empty the only sound is the wind whistling through the streets. Other parts are so packed with teeming multitudes of the Unliving that its impossible to move through them.

> It is Gordovan's job to see that nothing catches Astongetorix's undesired attention.

> > **Starting Dice Horde:** 1d10, 1d8, 2d6, 2d4

# **FACTION RECORD SHEET**

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

The City	/ of Rule
EDGE	EXTRA
Edge Tokens           Rating         2	Required Trait: Hostage, Chani's daughter Once per Ordeal may set free this die (devastate and give to opponent) to require Chani's Faction to Yield. That opponent then gains 2 Edge Tokens
FACTION OBJECTIVE	MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)
Put an end to the uprising of Unliving by ensuring the rebel Chani dies by any means. +10 VPs for achieving (or x3 for Survive) +5 Victory Points for no Sorcer	Gordovan         Able Administrator         1d10 Finesse         Wily and Weaselly         1d8 Finesse         Deliah, Chani's Daughter         1d4 Finesse         Afraid to Fail         1d10 Fortitude
	Anger builds slowly but surely 1d8 Force Unnatural Lusts 1d6 Fortitude
VICTORY POINTS	DICE DISCARDED
This Ordeal	Tally one mark per die







## THE REBORN

**Chani** was an Unliving slave in the City of Rule who somehow managed to regain her soul. She is now a cult figure in the city's underground, organizing and protected by the braver citizens while she seeks a way to reawaken the Unliving and free the city from bondage.

Recently, the brutal Gordovan discovered one of her safe houses and has taken her daughter hostage. Deliah's birth was the moment of Chani's reawakening, Deliah's death could shatter her. Chani will do anything to get her back.

Starting Dice Horde: 1d8, 1d6, 2d4

# FACTION RECORD SHEET

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

The Uprising				
EDGE	EXTRA			
Edge Tokens Rating 1	Required Component: Sacrificial Followers When one of your dice is Devastated in a Clash, you may Batter that die and discard one of these dice instead.			
FACTION OBJECTIVE	MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)			
Survive: Chani must live at the end of the Ordeal (have at least 1 die slot remaining)	Chani the Reborn			
	The soul of the Blessed Daughter 1d10 Blessed			
x3 VPs for Survive	I will slay those who enslaved us			



# This Ordeal



Tally one mark per die





## A THEMATIC TWIST

Eater of Magic: Adeina does not have the armies and ranks of subordinate sorcerers of Astongetorix, but she has perfected a ritual that no other Witch King knows and even mighty Astongetorix himself fears. The destruction of sorcery itself thereby robbing all sorcerers and artifacts within its reach of their powers.

Trigger this Twist normally during play. When Triggered, all Sorcery Dice (including Blessed Dice) in the Chapter immediately lose all Sorcery Aspects. They become plain dice with no Aspect for the remainder of the game. No bonus victory points are awarded for not using Sorcery in this session if this Twist is triggered and no new Sorcery dice can be purchased for the remainder of the session. Only Adeina herself is immune to this effect.

When Adeina is the Witch King of a Saga, whenever a Twist is called for in an Ordeal from a 7-10 result on the Twists Table, roll 1d10 when it is triggered. On an even result roll on the Twist Table normally. On odd result use Adeina's Thematic Twist instead.

> Unlike other Thematic Twists this one can occur multiple times during the Saga.

Every time this Twist occurs during the Saga, Adeina may purchase a Sorcery Aspect for free in the Final Ordeal..

## **ADEINA: EATER OF MAGIC**

The rumors about Adeina are many but there are few brave enough to spread them. The most widely accepted is that she was once the consort of the Mad God himself, another that it was she who convinced her peers to betray the Twice Forsaken at the moment of their greatest triumph. Regardless, Adeina is strong, independent, and uncowed. Ambitious without being reckless, calculating without being devoid of passion, and an effective steward of her desmesne without the possibility of being accused of kindness, her primary strategy for ascendency seems to be to wait until her peers destroy themselves. Her greatest triumph to date was to engineer the fall of the Witch King Omesh, trapped by his own arrogance, who'd dared to ask for her hand and expect to be granted it. While the only woman to ever have a seat in the Palace of the Gods, the last man to refer to her as the Witch Queen is still dying in agony in her dungeons 100 years later.

## THEMATIC ELEMENTS

When a Thematic Element is called for on the standard Element Lists the Record Keeper selects one of the appropriate type from the list opposite. The Record Keeper may also select any element they desire from the list as their choice of element. If no Thematic Element has been selected by the end of element generation, then roll 1d10 on this table and add the result to the appropriate list. Remember, one Thematic Element must be a part of every Ordeal.



ROLL	CATEGORY	ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	ALIGNMENT
1	Geography	A Prosperous Farming Town	Unlike other Witch Kings, Adeina ensures her holdings are peaceful and prosperous. As a result she has no shortage of mundane resources and ripe souls.	
2	Geography	The Coast	Adeina shows much interest in using the sea as a way to transport men and riches up and down the coast and strike at her enemies	
3	Faction	Telegron the Emissary	Telegron is Adeina's opener. A master of diplomacy and intellegence, Telegron is frequently sent throughout Abalahn to arrange alliances. Sometimes this involves negotiation. Mostly it involves dicatating terms and outlining the punishment to be expected for noncompliance.	Aligned
4	Faction	Drussix the Assassin	Drussix is Adeina's closer. A master of stealth and proud inventor of a thousand ways to die, Drussix is a Tormentor and a master killer who ensures negotiations never get stalled for long. Gain 1 Tormentor Rune for free.	Aligned
5	Faction	Terabitha the Handmaiden	Terabitha is Adeina's most trusted vassal. Acting as her personal assistant, chancellor, and bodyguard, Terabitha is a capable sorceress in her own right. Gain 1 Soul Reaper Aspect for free.	Aligned
6	Faction	A Spurned Suitor	Adeina has no use for men who think to use her with flattery or manipulation. Those that try mostly wind up dead, the rest wish they were. This Suitor has so far escaped her attention, or perhaps she has other plans for them.	Opposed
7	Objective	Obtain an Alliance	Get any of the Neutral Factions to ally with you in a Clash against the Opposed Faction.	Aligned
8	Objective	Punish an Offender	Identify Target Faction. Destroy the Main Character of that Faction.	Aligned
9	Objective	Sow Confusion	Succeed at this Objective if the Opposed Faction Succeeds at theirs.	Aligned
0	Extra	An Enormous War Barge	Automatically includes "The Coast" as the Geography (or combined with other rolled Geography as appropriate). Required Component: The War Barge is so huge that in any scene set at sea or near the shore the Faction can bring 3 Components in to start a Clash. All such Components must be reasonably transportable on a giant ship.	Aligned



## LOCATION

The Final Ordeal featuring Adeina takes place in her city, the **City of Salt**.

## **LEGENDARY TRAITS**

Traits in **bold** are Legendary.

## WITCH KING PLAYER

## WITCH KING (10 dice)

Adeina: Eater of Magic			
There is no magic I haven't tasted	My Lands Prosper		
1d10 Eater of Magic	1d8 Fortitude		
Self serving compassion	None would Dare		
1d6 Finesse	1d6 Finesse		
Time ends all enemies	Consort of the Mad God himself		
1d8 Fortitude	1d8 Soul Reaper Sorcery		
Hell Hath no Fury	Imperious Demeanor		
<b>1d4 Force</b>	1d10 Force		
Wisdom of Eons	Calculating Mind		
1d10 Fortitude	1d6 Finesse		



## **EXTRAS**

Required Trait: Eater of Magic (unique)

This Trait is tagged with a unique Sorcery Aspect. When this Trait is Advanced in a Clash all opposing dice with Sorcery Aspects (including Blessed) lose their Aspects. Aspects are regained if this die is Devastated.

## **DICE HORDE**

The Usual 4 Sets of Dice <del>d10 d10 d10 d10 d8 d8 d8 d8 d6 d6 d6 d6 d4 d4 d4</del> d4

The Witch King & Most Devastated Bonus Sets  $\frac{d10}{d8}\frac{d6}{d4}\frac{d4}{d10}\frac{d8}{d6}\frac{d4}{d4}$ 

FEATURE 1 (2-4 dice)	FEATURE 2 (2-4 dice)	FEATURE 3 (2-4 dice)	FEATURE 4 (2-4 dice)
Sceptre of Rulership	Silent Guards		
Nigh Indestructable 1d8 Soul Forged	Circle of Steel 1d10 Soul Forged		
Flaming Sphere 1d4 Force	Perfect of Form 1d6 Finesse		
Read their thoughts, fears, & hopes 1d10 Soul Fused	Inhuman Strength 1d8 Force		
Kneel before me 1d6 Force	Bodies of Fire Burnt Clay 1d4 Fortitude		

## **EDGE**

Accumulated from Ordeals

## VICTORY POINTS DICE DISCARDED

4



## DOOM

first Vow.

	1	
	1	
	1	
Check when		<u> </u>
	Hero's Doom	Ma
Hero makes		



## LEGENDARY TRAITS



Set Legendary Traits to max value instead of rolling.



## THE HANDMAIDEN

## Don't use this faction in a 4-player game.

Terabitha came into Adeina's service when she was but a girl. She had seen much horror and depravity in her young life and her one wish was to find a place where she'd be safe and free from suffering. In exchange for her service, Adeina offered her such a place and she rose to become Adeina's most trusted apprentice and advisor.

Throughout her long service she has never asked for wealth or power or gifts or luxuries valuing the security and saftey of service more highly than any such trappings. The only thing known to rise her to anger is fear that she might lose her home. She has been known to tear threats to that to pieces with her own bare hands. For her part Adeina has ensured that neither want, nor fear, nor threat of pain has ever crossed Terabitha's path again and as a result has never had cause to doubt her, and never will.

Starting Dice Horde: zero dice

## **FACTION RECORD SHEET**

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

Terabitha the Handmaiden

**EXTRA** 

Reaper Sorcerv

#### EDGE

Rating

Edge Tokens

## **FACTION OBJECTIVE**

3

 If the Hero dies or makes the Third Vow, Terabitha acheives her goal.
 A

 +10 VPs for achieving (or x3 for Survive)
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# Tally one mark per die



This Ordeal

## MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)

Required Component: A Well of Souls (sphere)

change the Aspect of the die you reroll to Soul

When you use an Edge Token you can temporarily

	Terabitha					
-	Adeina's own Apprentice 1d6 Soul Reaper					
	Robes of Protection 1d10 Fortitude					
	l know the secret places 1d6 Fortitude					
	Furious Desperation 1d10 Force					
	Disarming Sweetness 1d4 Finesse					
_	DICE DISCARDED					



REQUIRED COMPONENT			COMPONE (2-4 dice		<b>COMPONENT 4</b> (2-4 dice)	
The Sphere of Omesh	Silent Guards					
An Enormous Crystal Ball 1d8 Soul Forged	Circle of Steel 1d8 Soul Forged					
Listen, you can still hear his screams 1d4 Force	Perfect of Form 1d4 Finesse					
The soul of a Witch King is trapped within 1d10 Soul Fused	Inhuman Strength 1d6 Force					
	Bodies of Fire Burnt Cl 1d4 Fortitude	ау				
OTHER FACTIONS	PLAYER	FACTI	ON OBJECTIVES	EX	TRA	A/O
Drussix, Master of the Black Shroud Assassins			/itch King, Hero, or any 1ain Character	is Advanced m advanced die	eption: When die ay swap out an with another Avail- seeing Defense.	N/A
The Fleet of Telegron the Emissary			istation (score more any other Faction)		Barge: Can ponents at the h on or near the	N/A
Adeina Eater of Magic		Kill Hero		Eater of Magic Advanced, all lose their Sorc	opposing dice	N/A



## THE BLACK SHROUD

Drussix is the master of a cult of assassing so ancient and secretive their very name was taboo. For generations warlords, leaders, generals, and sorcerers alike lived in fear of finding the black shroud in their most secure locations, signifying their death was eminent. Even the Witch Kings found cause to worry.

Then one day, they vanished. It has been centuries since the last black shroud was placed unseen in some tyrant's bed. But they aren't gone. Rather they entered into the formal service of Adeina the Witch King who promised their members eternal life if they put their blades, poisons, and skills to work for her alone.

Recently the cult has been getting restless. Great kills are how a member advances or a leader proves they're still strong. It has been too long since Drussix has been granted a worthy target. At this point, any will do.

#### Starting Dice Horde: 1d6

# FACTION RECORD SHEET

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

The Black Shroud Assassins

**EXTRA** 

## **EDGE**

Edge Tokens		Required Trait: Ma
Zago Tonono		When this die is ad swap out either Ad Available Die after
Rating	2	defense. If the Def enough, they must

#### **FACTION OBJECTIVE**

Kill the Witch King, Hero, or any Faction Main Character by inflicting the last die of damage or being the Leader of the side when they're slain.

(or x3 for Survive)

#### ster of Deception lvanced to attack, you may vanced die with another seeing your opponent's ense Score is no longer high Advance additional dice. MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice) Drussix Preternatural Senses 1d10 Soul Fused Strike when you least expect it +10 VPs for achieving 1d4 Force Master of Deception 1d4 Special No Sign of My Passing 1d10 Fortitude Friend of Shadows 1d8 Finesse A Hunter's Cunning 1d6 Finesse **DICE DISCARDED**

VICTORY POINTS This Ordeal



Tally one mark per die

COMPONENT 1 (2-4 dice)	COMPONENT 2 CC (2-4 dice)		COMPONE (2-4 dice		COMPONENT 4 (2-4 dice)	
Blood Drinker Blade	Assassin Cel					
Intercepts Harm 1d10 Force	Strike when you least expect it 1d6 Force					
Slice Through Armor as Flesh 1d8 Soul Forged	Venomous Blad 1d4 Force	le				
These wounds never close 1d8 Finesse	Vanish before your 1d6 Fortitude					
Strikes True 1d4 Force						
OTHER FACTIONS	PLAYER	FACT		EXT	RA	A/O
Terabitha the Handmaiden		The Herr Vow	o dies or takes the Third	Sphere of Omesh: for rerolls can als Aspect of die to S that roll.	o change	N/A
The Fleet of Telegron the Emissary			vastation (score more n any other Faction)	Enormous War Ba commit 3 Compor start of a Clash o shore.	nents at the	N/A
Adeina Eater of Magic		Kill Hero	0	Eater of Magic (tr Advanced, all opp lose their Sorcery	oosing dice	N/A



## THE EMISSARY

Telegron has long served as ambassador to Adeina and admiral of her fleet of War Barges, During his tenure he has made contacts and secured agreements with warlords, tribal leaders, free holders, and roving bands of nomads throughout Abalahn. He is ready to stake his claim to a piece of land to call his own. He has secretly established a base of operations on an island no one else has discovered. From there he will use his fleet as mercenaries and pirates striking where he pleases and hiding where none can find him.

At least that's the plan. First he must find a way to depart Adeina's service, with his fleet, and without losing his life or his soul. This fool hero might prove just the distraction. If Telegron can cause enough chaos he'll be able to get away before anyone can stop him.

#### Starting Dice Horde: 1d6, 1d4

# **FACTION RECORD SHEET**

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

The	Fleet
EDGE	EXTRA
Edge Tokens       Rating	Required Component: Enormous War Barge The War Barge is so huge that in any scene set at sea or near the shore the Faction can bring 3 Components in to start a Clash. All such Components must be reasonably transportable on a giant ship.
FACTION OBJECTIVE	MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)
Sow Devastation (score more VPs than any other Faction, no sorcery bonus counts) +10 VPs for achieving (or x3 for Survive) +5 Victory Points for no Sorcery	Telegron         Leader of Men         1d10 Finesse         I will be my own man         1d10 Force         Silver Tongued         1d8 Finesse         Inspires Loyalty         1d6 Finesse         Master Tactician         1d6 Finesse         Opportunity in Strifes         1d4 Fortitude
VICTORY POINTS This Ordeal	Tally one mark per die



REQUIRED COMPONENT	COMPONEN (2-4 dice)	Т 2	COMPONI (2-4 dice		<b>COMPO</b> (2-4 c	
Sea Titan	Cohort of Marine	es				
Unimaginably Huge 1d10 Fortitude	Handle any Conditio 1d10 Fortitude	ns				
Bristling with War Engines 1d8 Force	Grenades 1d4 Force					
Triple Hull of Stout Timber 1d8 Fortitude	Armed to the Teeth 1d8 Force	1				
Enchanted for Bouancy and Maneuvering 1d4 Finesse	Never Surrender 1d6 Fortitude					
OTHER FACTIONS	PLAYER	FACT	ION OBJECTIVES	EX	TRA	A/O
Drussix, Master of the Black Shroud Assassins			Witch King, Hero, or any action Main Character	Master of Deceptis Advanced ma advanced die w able die after so	iy swap out an ith another Avail-	N/A
Terabitha the Handmaiden		The Her Vow	o dies or takes the Third	Sphere of Omes for rerolls can a Aspect of die to that roll.		N/A
Adeina Eater of Magic		Kill Her	D	Eater of Magic Advanced, all o lose their Sorce	pposing dice	N/A



## A THEMATIC TWIST

A Monster Rampage: This Twist is identical to the standard Monster Rampage Twist except that being a Thematic Twist known in advance the players are all aware that a monster is stalking the area and could strike at any moment.

When the Twist is triggered by the d10 roll, a new Clash is immediately started. The leader of the winning side of the just completed Clash becomes the leader of the side opposing the monster in this Clash. A randomly chosen player who was not involved in the previous Clash plays the monster. If all players were involved, then the player who yielded first plays the monster. All other players who participated in the previous Clash (on either side) are automatically Assisting the Faction side as all factions fight for their lives against the beast.

> Battered Dice from the previous Clash remain Battered. No player may voluntarily yield for at least a number of rounds equal to the roll of the d10 that triggered the Twist.

The monster player obtains all dice and Edge Tokens from the Boneyard to build the monster Component (these are returned to the Boneyard after the fight). The Monster never yields but otherwise fights like any Faction. The Monster gets one super Refresh like a hero's Vow. Refresh all dice at will and recover all Battered Dice to Available status. Afterwards the monster leaves.

## SHANDAZAR THE DESTROYER

Shandazar is a master of the hunt. A Tormentor of some skill, he chose to take his runes from tortured animals and beasts he had captured rather than men, giving him a predatory feral demeanor. Even as he rose through the ranks of sorcerers he never lost his taste for the wild places and thrill of slaughtering the most fearsome beasts he could find. When his penchant for tackling impossible prey led him to hunt and kill Tzeentchil the last of the true dragons and personal steed of Dwarlok the Dragonlord, one of the original Witch Kings, Shandazar became the target of the Witch King's ire. In response, Shandazar hunted down and killed Dwarlok, seized his tower and proclaimed himself a Witch King. He mounted Dwarlok's head opposite Tzeentchil's in his hall. Since then he believes himself too vulnerable to venture beyond his tower and hunts vicariously through his favorite creation, the fearsome Huntsmen. The Huntsmen range far and wide looking for fearsome beasts for trophies or to bring back alive for Shandazar's menagerie.

## THEMATIC ELEMENTS

When a Thematic Element is called for on the standard Element Lists the Record Keeper selects one of the appropriate type from the list opposite. The Record Keeper may also select any element they desire from the list as their choice of element. If no Thematic Element has been selected by the end of element generation, then roll 1d10 on this table and add the result to the appropriate list. Remember, one Thematic Element must be a part of every Ordeal.



ROLL	CATEGORY	ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	ALIGNMENT
1	Geography	The Southern Haradras	The home of several totem taking tribes and and many monsters, both worthy of being hunted.	
2	Geography	The High Steppes	Cold plains high above the Cliffs of Caves inhabited by creatures and fiends found nowhere else.	
3	Faction	A Pack of Huntsmen	Shandazar's beloved followers, on the hunt. All men quake when they are on your trail. Recommend using optional Factional Rule: Discard 1 die of any size to make a Band of Huntsmen Component (see below).	Aligned
4	Faction	Druzdhal	An inhuman fiend in the service of Shandazar. Required Component: Fiend. Has 2 Sorcery Aspects except Blessed for free, plus this component must be the Main Character of the Faction.	Aligned
5	Faction	A Troop of Night Hunters	Shandazar's hunters have no honor and no respect for their prey. They are unholy, and when they hunt amongst the tribes they must be punished. Gain 1 Totem Aspect for free or 2 if using optional rule.	Opposed
6	Objective	Sow Devastation	Aligned Faction: Neither Shandazar nor his followers need an excuse for rampant destruction No +10 bonus for achieving objective is awarded. Instead all VPs won during play are doubled.	Aligned
7	Objective	Hunt a Monster	Shandazar's hunters are always on the lookout for exotic game to bring back to his menagerie. Monster is an automatic Extra. Aligned Faction: Kill or capture it.	Aligned
8	Extra	A Band of Huntsmen	Required Component: Whenever one of this Component's dice are damaged in a Clash, immediately select any other Available die from this Component and set it to its maximum value.	Aligned
9	Extra	A Pack of Bestials	While too wild to ever serve him properly, Shandazar loves the Bestials as prey or just for the devastation they bring. Required Component: When this Component is rolled in a Clash, immediately select any one of its dice tagged with a Force Aspect and set it to its highest value.	
0	Extra	A Trained Reaver Beast	Required Trait: A Trained Reaver Beast. The die for that Trait is triple Aspected. It has the effects of Finesse, Fortitude, and Force when Advanced all from the same die.	



## LOCATION

The Final Ordeal featuring Shandazar takes place in a vast park and game reserve in his city, the **City of Pain**.

## LEGENDARY TRAITS

Traits in **bold** are Legendary.

## WITCH KING PLAYER

## WITCH KING (10 dice)

Shandazar the Destroyer		
More Beast than Man	A Predator's Cunning	
1d10 Soul Fused Sorcery	1d10 Finesse	
Savage Brutality	Flesh of Hide and Bone	
<b>1d6 Force</b>	1d10 Fortitude	
The Thrill of the Kill	Stolen Sorceries	
1d4 Force	1d8 Soul Reaper Sorcery	
No Patience for your Mewling	Pain let's you know you're alive	
1d4 Force	1d6 Fortitude	
The Dance of Death	A Cat's Grace	
1d6 Finesse	1d8 Finesse	



## **EXTRAS**

Required Component: Band of Huntsmen

Whenever one of this Component's dice are damaged in a Clash, immediately select any other Available die from this Component and set it to its maximum value.

## **DICE HORDE**

The Usual 4 Sets of Dice <del>d10 d10 d10 d10 d8 d8 d8 d8 d6 d6 d6 d6 d4 d4 d4 d4</del>

The Witch King & Most Devastated Bonus Sets d10 d8  $\frac{d6}{d4}$  d4  $\,$  d10 d8 d6 d4  $\,$ 

REQUIRED COMPONENT	FEATURE 2 (2-4 dice)	FEATURE 3 (2-4 dice)	FEATURE 4 (2-4 dice)
The Wolf Pack (Huntsmen)	The Hunter's Blade		
Soul of the Wolf 1d10 Soul Fused	Dragon Tooth Blade 1d8 Soul Fused		
Incapable of Fear 1d8 Fortitude	It's a part of me 1d6 Finesse		
Relentless Pursuit 1d6 Finesse	Drinker of Heart's Blood 1d4 Force		
Terrible Fury 1d4 Force			

## **EDGE**

Accumulated from Ordeals	3
Accumulated from Ordeals	

## VICTORY POINTS DICE DISCARDED



## DOOM

Hero makes

first Vow.

	1		
	1		
	1		
		.	
Check when	Hero's Doom		Ν
	TICLUS DOULL		11



Mark Off When Spent

## LEGENDARY TRAITS





Set Legendary Traits to max value instead of rolling.



## THE MONSTER

Druzdhal is a hideous fiend with a man's torso sporting a demonic visage rising from the body of a 50' centipede; all chitinous armor and clicking legs. Birthed by one of the largest Soul Storms to sweep the Howling Wastes, Druzdhal hunted the lands with impunity, dominating all who came against him. Shandazar spent years hunting this creature and when he finally mastered it deemed it too magnificent a prey to slay. He now keeps it chained, on his hunting reserve to test himself again at his leisure. When the final ordeal begins, Druzdhal is free of his chains and on the hunt.

Special: All components of the Druzdhal faction relate to Druzdhal himself. He is a single entity of enormous power. He is crippled if parts of his great bulk are destroyed, but only killed by the Devastation of the Main Component.

Starting Dice Horde: 1d8, 2d4

# FACTION RECORD SHEET

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

Druzdhal **EDGE** Edge Tokens of the Faction. 3 Rating

#### FACTION OBJECTIVE

Kill either the hero, the Witch King, or any Faction Main Character by inflicting the last die of damage or being the Leader of the side when they're slain.

> +10 VPs for achieving (or x3 for Survive)



Required Component: Fiend
Has 2 Sorcery Aspects except Blessed for free, plus this component must be the Main Character

## MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)

n	Druzdhal the Fiend
_	Born of a Soul Storm 1d10 Soul Fused Tormentor
	Heaving Bulk 1d10 Fortitude
	l Destroy 1d10 Soul Forged
	Demonic Cunning 1d6 Finesse

## **DICE DISCARDED**

This Ordeal



VICTORY POINTS

Tally one mark per die

COMPONENT 1 (2-4 dice)	COMPONEN (2-4 dice)	T 2	COMPONE (2-4 dice		<b>COMPO</b> (2-4	
Druzdhal's Axe	Druzdhal's Middle f	Druzdhal's Middle Body		Druzdhal's Hind Body		al's Tail
Dripping with Souls and Gore 1d8 Soul Forged	A Dozen Clawed Leg 1d6 Finesse	gs	A Dozen Clawed 1d4 Finess	- 1	Scorpior 1d8 Fi	-
Massive Double Bite Blade 1d10 Force	Chitinous Armor 1d6 Fortitude		A Dozen Clawed 1d4 Finess	-	Acid V 1d6 F	
OTHER FACTIONS	PLAYER	FACTI	ON OBJECTIVES	E	(TRA	A/O
The Hunting Lodge of Dwarlok and Tzeentchil			r every destroyed Com- rom any Faction		: 1 die becomes theirs becomes	N/A
Jaguar Warriors		Kill Druz	dhal (Main Character)	Aspects inste	buy 2 Soul Fused ad of 1 when you to buy a Sorcery	N/A
Shandazar the Destroyer		Kill Hero			sman: May set 1 to maximum for aged.	N/A



## **POWERFUL TOTEMS**

#### Don't use this Faction in a 4 player game.

At the heart of Shandazar's great game reserve is his palatial hunting lodge, an oversized den of wood beams, roaring fire pits and trophies of favored weapons and fierce prey. Shandazar thinks the lodge is his home, but it is not. Dwarlok and Tzeentchil were far too powerful to simply die, and heads are powerful totems. Their spirits have infused the lodge, possessing its servants and animating its trophies. Dwarlok's power is such that his spirit can inhabit the very game animals that fill the park, and Tzeentchil's ghost has been seen casting dragon sized shadows as it flies silently overhead.

But long years as disembodied spirits is not easy. Both are now quite mad and motivated primarily by their anger at being dead.

Starting Dice Horde: 1d8, 4d4

# FACTION RECORD SHEET

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

The Hunting Lodge

**EXTRA** 

## **EDGE**

	Conoral Effect Energy Draining Auro
Edge Tokens	General Effect: Energy Draining Aura
	If your side suffers 2 or more dice devastated in a single Exchange, your opponent must move one Available die to Used (their choice)
Rating 2	

#### **FACTION OBJECTIVE**

This Faction has no set objective. Earn 5 VPs (make checks below) for every Component of any Faction fully Devastated by you as Clash Leader or for which you Devastated the Final die.



## **VICTORY POI**

NTS	DICE DISCA

## RDED

This Ordeal



Tally one mark per die

MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)

Spirit of Dwarlok

I was once a Witch King

1d10 Soul Reaper

You Feel Weak

1d8 Finesse

Insane with Rage

1d8 Force





## **TOTEM TAKERS**

The band of Jaguar Hunters are totem takers from the southern jungles. Shandazar's huntsmen occasionally penetrate the jungles looking for prey, but only a few make it home with their trophies. **Chimalli**, one of the pariah caste of Night Hunters heard of a great fiend in the service of Shandazar and decided to take the hunt to him. Gathering a band of the bravest hunters from across the jungle clans willing to follow an outcast after such prey she led them north; north to Abalahn, north to hunt Druzdhal.

Starting Dice Horde: 1d6, 4d4

# **FACTION RECORD SHEET**

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

Jaguar Hunters	
DGE	EXTRA
Edge Tokens	General Effect: Totem Takers You may buy 2 Totem Taker Soul Fused Aspects instead of 1 when you discard a die to buy a Sorcery Aspect
Rating 1	
FACTION OBJECTIVE	MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice
Hunt and Kill Druzdhal. All dice of the Druzdhal Faction main character must be Devastated by	Chimalli
Ordeal end.	Belt of Shrunken Heads 1d10 Soul Fused
+10 VPs for achieving	Necklace of Fingers 1d8 Soul Fused
(or x3 for Survive)	Patience of the Hunter 1d10 Finesse
	Unflinching 1d6 Fortitude
<b>ICTORY POINTS</b>	DICE DISCARDED
This Ordeal	Tally one mark per die







## A THEMATIC TWIST

#### Astongetorix is Displeased: Gorbu the

Glutton's penchant for collecting treasures and valuables often results in his obtaining items that Astongetorix would prefer belong to him. As such, the eldest of the Witch Kings will periodically signal his displeasure with Gorbu by devastating Gorbu's agents. Typically the item in dispute winds up delivered to the City of Rule in short order.

The player with of the Aligned Faction must roll all of their Trait Dice one at a time starting with the largest die sizes. On an Odd result the die is Devastated and discarded to the Boneyard (tallying a mark for a Devastated Die). Continue rolling until all dice have been rolled or until 4 dice have been Devastated. The player currently with the most VPs in this ordeal (may be the same player) then narrates the form that Astongetorix's ire takes in punishing Gorbu's agents.

If the Aligned Faction goes on to obtain its Goal this Ordeal, the Witch King (Gorbu) earns no Edge for the Final Ordeal for the success.

> If the Aligned Faction fails to obtain its Goal this Ordeal, the Witch King (Gorbu) loses one Edge during the Final Ordeal.

## **GORBU THE GLUTTON**

Of all of the Witch King's Gorbu is the least interested in power and politics. One of the original sorcerers who felled the Gods he is nearly as old as Astongetorix. But he sought power only so that he could spend the rest of his days at ease in the pursuit of pleasure and luxury. His palace has every amenity that labor and enchantment can provide. His table routinely serves the most extravagent meals served on the most delicate china. The walls and galleries of his palace are lined with every variety of art imaginable, most dating back to before the rise of the Witch Kings when the world was civilized and at peace. The most beautiful slaves in all of Abalahn await to dote on every guests slightest whim. These all maintain their full faculties for the Unliving have been banished from the palace as aesthetically displeasing.

Gorbu himself is immensely corpulent. Far too heavy to stand on his own, let alone walk, he floats about the palace on an enchanted chaise wearing acres of the finest silks and velvets. His tastes are delicate and refined, he doesn't engage in torture or blood sport, but his single minded focus on his own pleasure and disdain for all beneath him is its own cruelty.

Not satisfied to take his pleasure alone, Gorbu has recreated a slice of old world high society in the City of Chains. He's elevated hundreds of persons to the aristocracy based not on power or sorcery, but their sense of style and refinement. These courtiers exist to fawn over his treasures and compete with each other for his approval of their fashion sense and taste.

## THEMATIC ELEMENTS

When a Thematic Element is called for on the standard Element Lists the Record Keeper selects one of the appropriate type from the list opposite. The Record Keeper may also select any element they desire from the list as their choice of element. If no Thematic Element has been selected by the end of element generation, then roll 1d10 on this table and add the result to the appropriate list. Remember, one Thematic Element must be a part of every Ordeal.



ROLL	CATEGORY	ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	ALIGNMENT
1	Geography	The City of Chains	Gorbu's city where all citizens wear shackles: the poor, chains of iron dragging heavy weights, the rich, delicate chains of gold dangling from nose or ear.	
2	Geography	The Blood Flume	The largest waterway in Abalahn. Trade goods are shipped upriver from the coast in long narrow barges, bound for the vast trading center of the City of Chains.	
3	Faction	Trading Expedition from the City of Pain	Many treasures travel to the City of Pain by river or caravan. This faction may be seeking treasure, returning home with it, or entangled in local distractions.	Aligned
4	Faction	Slavers	Human lives are one of the most valuable of commodities. This faction may be seeking such slave, on their way to market, or entangled in local distractions.	Aligned
5	Faction	Escaped Slaves	This faction is a band (large or small) of former slaves attempting to make their way in the world.	Opposed
6	Objective	Capture Slaves	This Faction seeks to enslave members of the target Faction. The Target Faction must have members capable of being enslaved.	Aligned
7	Objective	Acquire a Valuable Treasure	In addition to this Objective, add A Horde of Treasure below as an Extra if a suitable target isn't otherwise present. This Faction must obtain by any means that Extra/Component from another Faction. Each die of Treasure is worth 2 VPs, with a bonus of 2 (10 total) for obtaining the whole treasure. If a Treasure die is spent and given to another Faction, stealing a die of the same size from that faction (that fictionally can be said to represent the treasure) also counts.	
8	Extra	Owed a Debt	General Effect: At the beginning of the Ordeal identify 1 Faction or hero who owes you. Once per Ordeal when that player is present in a scene you can require them to join your side in a Clash. They cannot Yield until the Leader does. May also be used as a Weakness.	
9	Extra	A Bridge or Ferry	Required Component, Immobile: Draw river on map. Owner may require other players give them 1 die from their Dice Horde to cross the river to get to and from scenes on the other side. "Crossing the River" is added to the list of possible Pain and Spoils for this Ordeal. Destroying the Component merely eliminates control of the Bridge/Ferry, it can now be used to cross for free.	
0	Extra	A Horde of Treasure	Required Component: Each die and Trait must represent some valuable treasure. In addition to using the Component normally, at any time you may give one of the dice to another player to require that player to: join a Clash they are eligible to join on the side of your choice (and not yield until their Leader does), not join a Clash they are eligible to join, attack the target of your choice in a Clash, or Yield during a Clash (but not if they are the Leader). They add the die to their Dice Horde.	



## LOCATION

The Final Ordeal featuring Gorbu takes place in his city, the **City of Chains**.

## **LEGENDARY TRAITS**

Traits in **bold** are Legendary.

## WITCH KING PLAYER

## WITCH KING (10 dice)

Gorbu the Glutton				
Quivering Folds of Flesh	Floating Palanquin			
<b>1d8 Fortitude</b>	<b>1d6 Soul Fused</b>			
My Power is Ancient	l Wear Souls Like Jewelry			
1d10 Soul Reaper	1d10 Fortitude			
l Find you Most Unpleasant	My Wrath Burns Slowly			
1d8 Finesse	1d6 Force			
You are Tedious and Boring	l Have Tasted of Every Vice			
1d10 Finesse	1d10 Fortitude			



## **EXTRAS**

Corpulent Bulk: in a Clash may use 1 Edge to reduce damage to any die by 1 step. May discard 1 Edge to the Boneyard to return any damaged die to Available (reroll it).

## **DICE HORDE**

The Usual 4 Sets of Dice <del>d10 d10 d10 d10 d8 d8 d8 d8 d6 d6 d6</del> d6 <del>d4</del> d4 d4 d4

The Witch King & Most Devastated Bonus Sets  $\frac{d10}{d10}\,d8\,\,d6\,\,d4$ 

FEATURE 1 (2-4 dice)	FEATURE 2 (2-4 dice)	FEATURE 3 (2-4 dice)	FEATURE 4 (2-4 dice)
The Palace	The Regalia		
Awe Inspiring Grandeur 1d8 Finesse	Scepter 1d10 Force		
The Palace Guard 1d10 Fortitude	Crown 1d6 Finesse		
	Orb 1d8 Fortitude		
	Censer 1d4 Soul Reaper		

## **EDGE**

Accumulated from Ordeals



## VICTORY POINTS DICE DISCARDED



## DOOM

	1
	1
	1
Check when	



Mark Off When Spent

## LEGENDARY TRAITS





Set Legendary Traits to max value instead of rolling.



## THE SHAPESHIFTER

#### Don't use this Faction in a 4 player game.

Ssithis is a shapechanger. Which of the powerful courtiers at Gorbu's palace know this about her is uncertain. Her natural form is that of a large, thick emerald green snake, but most frequently she appears as an astounding beauty draped in sleek silk and dripping in emeralds. After years of wandering she has found a home in Gorbu's court among the glitterati.

She plies her powers of seduction with great regularity, disappearing for a time after each liaison to give birth to a brood of thousands of small venomous green vipers. While not strictly shapechangers, the broods inhabit the skins of servants and well placed spies around the castle, wearing them like a suit and passing as human until it is time to spill forth to overwhelm a victim.

Starting Dice Horde: 1d10, 1d6, 3d4

# FACTION RECORD SHEET

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

Ssithis Demon Enchantress

**EXTRA** 

## **EDGE**

Edge Tokens		Ch die ma sp
Rating	3	sid

## **FACTION OBJECTIVE**



## VICTORY POIN





#### armed: Whenever you Devastate an Opponent's , instead of discarding it to the Boneyard you ay direct your opponent to keep it and add the ecial "Charmed" Aspect to it. Whenever that die Advanced in a Clash you are part of (on either le) you may direct that die to be rerolled.

## MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)

Special: At the end of the Ordeal each Component in play that has an undevastated Charmed Aspect	Ssithis		
on one or more of its Traits is worth 1 VP.	Exultant Beauty 1d10 Finesse		
VPs for achieving Objective: Special	Mesmerizing Eyes 1d6 Finesse		
	Born of Demon 1d10 Soul Fused		
	Flesh Hard as Scales 1d6 Fortitude		
	Learned in the Art 1d8 Soul Reaper		
VICTORY POINTS	DICE DISCARDED		

Tally one mark per die





## THE LORD OF VICE

If you want it, Salazar can get it for you, but you'll owe him. If you don't want it, Salazar will get it for you anyway, convince you you do want it, and you'll still owe him. In the end, everyone owes.

Salazar spent years roaming Abalahn creating a vast network of contacts and deep knowledge of what people need, or think they do. This has made him a very valuable addition to Gorbu's court where the Witch King is ever desirous of the new and novel. Salazar has settled into his life of luxury at the palace, but he can never rest easy, for his masters taste's are fickle and his disappointment is not to be taken lightly.

Starting Dice Horde: 1d6, 2d4

# FACTION RECORD SHEET

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

Salazar the Vice Lord

**EXTRA** 

## **EDGE**

## **FACTION OBJECTIVE**

Special: Each player you allied with in a Clash = +1 VP. Each player who led the opposing side to you in a Clash = +1 VP. Each player who ends the Ordeal with an unused Addict Weakness = +1 VP.



## VICTORY POINTS





#### give you a die of larger size. Only 1 per player at a time. Only one offer per Chapter.

## MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)

Salazar	
l Know Your Heart's Desire 1d10 Finesse	-
Underestimated to my Advantage 1d8 Finesse	-
Knives and More Knives 1d4 Force	
Pleasant Company 1d6 Fortitude	-
Seen it All, Heard it All 1d6 Fortitude	-
	_

## **DICE DISCARDED**

Tally one mark per die

COMPONENT 1 (2-4 dice)	COMPONENT 2 (2-4 dice)		COMPONENT 3 (2-4 dice)		<b>COMPONENT 4</b> (2-4 dice)	
Slave Master Chemrick	The Black Guard					
Breaker of Wills 1d6 Force	Brutally Loyal 1d8 Fortitude					
Serve me well or become my Rune. 1d10 Soul Fused	Slaves from Birth 1d8 Fortitude					
Master of the Lash 1d8 Force	Oversized Tulwars 1d10 Force					
	Raised to Fight 1d4 Force					
OTHER FACTIONS	PLAYER	FACTIO	ON OBJECTIVES	EX	TRA	A/O
Sithiss the Demon Enchantress		+1 VP for a Charme	each Component with ed Aspect		o opponent's die. ou reroll that die	N/A
Tiki the Fool, Master of Servants			every die in Tiki's end of Ordeal	In a Clash stea ally's Boneyard		N/A
Gorbu the Glutton		Kill Hero		Use 1 Edge to r by 1 step. Disca return die to Av	ard 1 Edge to	N/A



## THE FOOL

No one knows when **Tiki** first came to the palace. As far as any can tell he's always been there. No one knows for sure if Tiki reflects the mood of his master, scathingly mocking that which Gorbu dislikes and clapping with glee at that which he enjoys; or if it's Gorbu who responds to Tiki's display.

Either way, no one gets away with more at the Palace than Tiki. If he likes someone he can can shield them from the worst of the excesses, but his friendship is fickle and his dark side is sinister indeed.

> With no official position beyond court fool, none of the staff dare cross him.

Starting Dice Horde: 2d10, 2d8, 4d6

# FACTION RECORD SHEET

## **FACTION PLAYER**

## **FACTION NAME**

**EDGE** 

Rating

Edge Tokens

The Servants			
	EXTRA		
	Thief: In a Clash, whenever an ally earns a Boneyard draw from Battering an opponent's dice, you may take one of the drawn dice of your		

choice and add it to your Horde instead.

MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)

## FACTION OBJECTIVE

1

Special: Gain 1 VP for every die in your Horde at Ordeal end. Tiki must survive.	Tiki the Fool
	Infectious Joy 1d10 Finesse
+10 VPs for achieving	Savage Humor 1d8 Force
(or x3 for Survive)	Caustic Wit 1d8 Force
+5 Victory Points for no Sorcery	Survivor 1d10 Fortitude
VICTORY POINTS	DICE DISCARDED
This Ordeal	Tally one mark per die
14: "	






#### A THEMATIC TWIST

#### The Sum of All Knowledge: Ezekhael

spends most of his time poring over the manuscripts, tablets, and archives housed in the Infinite library. Within its stacks he finds information on weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and ancient spells that break his opponents, or turn them to his own purpose.

The Opposed Faction in this Ordeal is no longer Opposed. They have been subverted by promise, threat, or sorcerous incantation and now, overtly or covertly, their actions serve the will of the Witch King.

The Faction who has scored the most VP so far this Ordeal decides exactly what form the transition takes. There is no longer an Opposed Faction in this Ordeal. Instead there are two Aligned Factions and Edge at the end of the Ordeal is awarded accordingly.

If both Aligned Factions achieve their goals then the Witch King gains 3 Edge instead of 1 Edge apiece and both of the Aligned Factions gain +5 VPs in addition to their normal reward. If the transformed Aligned Faction (originally the Opposed Faction) fails its goal, the Hero gains no Edge for it. That goal was not originally part of the Witch King's plan.

# EZEKHAEL THE LEARNED

Ezekhael is the newest and youngest of the Witch Kings. Until recently he was just one of many White Princes striving for power and hoping to obtain it beforee being quashed by the Kings. Where other sorcerers try to claim a power Life Nexus or collect a store house of souls as their road to power, Ezekhael sought knowledge. The original Witch Kings learned their sorcery directly from the Mad God himself, but that knowledge has been highly diluted over subsequent generations. By seeking out lost secrets and hidden lore rather than more overt roads to power, Ezekhael passed largely unnoticed. Unnoticed until he stumbled into a library filled with more knowledge than he had ever dreamed existed. Disappearing for years at a time into its depths he emerged with the power to lay claim to the City of Keys, after a power struggle amongst the Witch Kings left its previous ruler dead. His sudden rise and unexpected depth of knowledge have so far kept the other Witch Kings from launching reprisals for his hubris, but his city is riddled with spies each seeking to uncover the secret to his abilities.

#### THEMATIC ELEMENTS

When a Thematic Element is called for on the standard Element Lists the Record Keeper selects one of the appropriate type from the list opposite. The Record Keeper may also select any element they desire from the list as their choice of element. If no Thematic Element has been selected by the end of element generation, then roll 1d10 on this table and add the result to the appropriate list. Remember, one Thematic Element must be a part of every Ordeal.



ROLL	CATEGORY	ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	ALIGNMENT
1	Geography	City of Keys	The day to day running of the city belongs to the Key Masters of the City Council. Power here is measured by keys worn and displayed as symbols of status.	
2	Geography	The Infinite Library	This location is link to the a maze of stacks upon stacks of tomes, books, scrolls, and all recorded knowledge that connects all of the worlds of the omniverse.	
3	Faction	Order of St. Albert	Monks of the Infinite Library who were exiled when it was seized by Ezekhael. They formed a militant order of wandering mendicants and have adopted a new mission: ending the suffering of the soulless abominations known as the Unliving.	Opposed
4	Faction	Seekers of St. Albert	Not all of the brothers of St. Albert were exiled from the library. Some remain in service to the Librarian, others are sent out into the world to gather more knowledge and expand the library's collections.	Aligned
5	Faction	Supplicant Sorcerer	Ezekhael has gained a reputation for welcoming sorcerers into his city, a practice which has attracted many supplicants and made the other Witch Kings nervous.	Aligned
6	Objective	Obtain Critical Knowledge	Select a target Faction and determine what information that Faction possesses that Ezekhael wants. The Faction's Extra might be good inspiration for this.	Aligned
7	Objective	Destroy the Tome of Dark Magics	The Tome of Dark Magics is an automatic Extra that is a Required Component and provides 2 free Soul Reaper Sorcery Traits (for that Component). The Faction possessing this Extra is the Target for this objective. All 4 Traits of the Required Component must be Devastated and Discarded to succeed at this Objective.	Opposed
8	Extra	A Despair Stone	A Despair Stone is what is left when all of a Starlight Stone's life force is drained. Build the Despair Stone as a normal Component, then take 4 one-use Doom Tokens to use during the Ordeal.	
9	Extra	Required Component: An Old Wise Man	Gain 1 Edge.	
0	Extra	Required Trait: A Grimoire of Lost Sorcery	You may buy 2 Soul Reaper or Tormentor Aspects instead of 1 when you discard a die to buy a Sorcery Aspect	



## LOCATION

The Final Ordeal featuring Ezekhael takes place in his city, the **City of Keys**.

#### **LEGENDARY TRAITS**

Traits in **bold** are Legendary.

## WITCH KING PLAYER

#### WITCH KING (10 dice)

Ezekhael the Learned				
Knowledge is Power	Underestimated			
1d10 Finesse	1d6 Fortitude			
Driven	Lost Sorceries			
1d8 Force	1d8 Soul Reaper			
Spirits of Air & Dust	Soul Charmed Robes			
1d10 Soul Fused	1d10 Fortitude			
Plans for every Contingency	Never Ending Journal			
1d10 Finesse	1d6 Finesse			



#### **EXTRAS**

Required Component: The Infinite Library.

At any time discard one die from the library and replace it with a die of lesser size from the Bone Yard to research an opponent and discover their weakness. Then narrate your "discovery" and create an appropriate Weakness. Limit: once per player per chapter, and one per player at a time.

#### REQUIRED COMPONENT

#### The Infinite Library Dendric, Key Master of Silver Vice-Head of the Locksmith Guild A Twisting Maze 1d10 Fortitude 1d8 Finesse Private Guards Riddles wrapped in Mystery 1d6 Force 1d8 Finesse Answers to any question Commands extensive resources 1d8 Finesse 1d6 Fortitude



The Usual 4 Sets of Dice <del>d10 d10 d10 d10 d8 d8 d8 d8 d6 d6 d6 d6</del> d4 d4 d4 d4

The Witch King & Most Devastated Bonus Sets d10 d8 d6 d4 d10 d8 d6 d4



#### **EDGE**



#### **DICE DISCARDED** VICTORY POINTS



#### DOOM

Hero makes

first Vow.

	1	
	1	
	1	
	1	
	1	
	1	
	1	
		_
Check when	Hero's Doom	
	TICLUS DOOM	



Hero's Doom

Mark Off When Spent

## **LEGENDARY TRAITS**





Set Legendary Traits to max value instead of rolling.



#### THE LIBRARIAN

# Don't use this Faction in a 4 player game.

The Librarian is not from this place. He was assigned to this annex of the Infinite Library many cycles ago when it first manifested. He has been the keeper of its ever-growing archives since that time. When the Witch King, Ezekhael, discovered the library, he was served as a patron, as are all who find their way to the library. But he used his powerful sorceries to usurp the Brotherhood and sieze control of the annex thinking to use its knowledge to establish himself as a power to be reckoned with on Abalahn. The Librarian is determined to prevent Ezekhael from ever discovering the true secret of the library, that it spans all dimensions, all times, all worlds. While most of his fellow brothers have been exiled out into Abalahn, the Librarian has been allowed to remain to aid Ezekhael in his research. His true intention is to shut down this annex of the library, permanently.

Starting Dice Horde: 1d10, 1d8, 2d4

# **FACTION RECORD SHEET**

#### **FACTION PLAYER**

#### **FACTION NAME**

The Librarian

**EXTRA** 

#### EDGE

Edge Tokens Rating 3	Required Component: The Infinite Library. The library is truly infinite and thus can never be completely destroyed. At any time before a Clash begins you may freely swap dice from your Horde with any Trait of the Library, including Devastated Traits (an exception to the rule).
----------------------	--

#### **FACTION OBJECTIVE**

Destroy the Local Annex of the Infinite Library. All Traits of the Witch King's Library Component must be Devastated by Ordeal end. +10 VPs for achieving (or x3 for Survive)

#### VICTORY POINTS







MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)

The Librarian

Ageless Wisdom

1d10 Finesse

Not of this world

1d10 Blessed

Inscrutable 1d6 Finesse

Tougher than he looks 1d8 Fortitude



REQUIRED COMPONENT	COMPONENT 2 (2-4 dice)		COMPONENT 3 (2-4 dice)		COMPONENT 4 (2-4 dice)	
Infinite Library	Seekers of St. Albert					
An infinite unmappable labyrinth 1d6 Fortitude	Powers from Beyon 1d8 Blessed	nd				
Security Automatons 1d4 Force	Far from helpless 1d6 Force	5				
Connections across dimensions 1d4 Finesse	Silent and unseen 1d6 Finesse	n				
OTHER FACTIONS	PLAYER	FACT	ION OBJECTIVES	EX	TRA	A/O
Rhondar, White Prince of Keys			dric and Tantrig or Dath of loyalty from both.		lice, can combine ther sorcery types.	N/A
Dhyson Friese, Grand- master of the Locksmith Guild		Oppose	Rhondar		an: Declare one unavailable for	N/A
Ezekhael the Learned		Kill Her	0	Infinite Library and replace wi die to create W opponent	th a smaller	N/A



## THE ROOTED SORCERER

Rhondar was a rooted sorcerer, a powerful wielder of arcane magic with his own tower rooted deep to draw upon the life of the very world. Astongetorix sent him after a book of lost lore of the Blessed Daughter kept safe by a tribe of wandering shepherds who were more than they'd seemed. In the end he lost his tower and nearly his life, but escaped with the book.

Later, near the Palace of the Gods he was tracked down by an order of the White who were hunting down sorcerers. In the ensuing struggle he lost the book, an arm, and converted to the brethren of the blessed order, changing his name to Armon the White. But, in the end, old habits were too hard to over come and he returned to his sorcerous ways seeking asylum in Keys where he became one of the White Princes of the city.

Starting Dice Horde: 1d10, 2d4

# FACTION RECORD SHEET FACTION PLAYER

#### **FACTION NAME**

Rhondar

**EXTRA** 

other sorceries.

Rhondar is the only known Sorcerer to combine

receives 2 Sorcery Dice for free and can freely ignore all restrictions on combining Blessed and

MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice)

Rhondar, White Prince of Keys

Master of the Green and Purple

1d10 Soul Reaper

My soul is stronger than they know

1d8 Blessed

Slv and Patient

1d6 Finesse

Once touched by the White

1d10 Blessed

Soul Puppets 1d6 Soul Reaper

Stubborn and Fearless 1d8 Fortitude

**DICE DISCARDED** 

Blessed Sorcery with the Darker Arts. He

#### EDGE

Edge Tokens		
Rating	2	

#### **FACTION OBJECTIVE**

Consolidate Power in the City: At the end of the Ordeal Key Masters Dendric and Tantrig must be dead (all Traits Devastated) or have given you an Oath of loyalty which you haven't yet called upon. Foote must be alive



## VICTORY POINTS

This Ordeal



Tally one mark per die





## GRANDMASTER OF KEYS

With Ezekhael busy in his library, his city has largely been left to its own devices. In the City of Keys, status comes from property and property is protected by locks. The Locksmith guild thus holds the key to power, quite literally. Grandmaster Dhyson Friese sits atop the power structure of the city with the largest ring of oversized gold and silver keys of any of the masters hanging from his belt. Not all of his fellows support his leadership. He knows that several masters of the guild have sold out to the Witch King or the city's many White Princes.

Starting Dice Horde: 1d10, 1d6, 2d4

# FACTION RECORD SHEET FACTION PLAYER

#### **FACTION NAME**

The Locks	mith Guild
DGE	EXTRA
Edge Tokens Rating 1	Required Trait: Master Tactician. Once per Clash when you attack, you may declare one of your opponent's dice unavailable to defend with
Rating 1 FACTION OBJECTIVE	MAIN CHARACTER (3-6 dice
Oppose Rhondar: Dhyson achieves his objective if Rhondar fails.	Dhyson Friese, Grandmaster of Keys
	Master Tactician 1d10 Finesse
+10 VPs for achieving	Always three steps ahead 1d6 Finesse
(or x3 for Survive)	Mantle of Authority 1d8 Finesse
+5 Victory Points for no Sorcery	Patient and Thorough 1d8 Fortitude
ICTORY POINTS	DICE DISCARDED
This Ordeal	Tally one mark per die



COMPONENT 1 (2-4 dice)	COMPONENT 2 (2-4 dice)		COMPONENT 3 (2-4 dice)		COMPONENT 4 (2-4 dice)	
Tantrig, Key Master of Steel	Steel Guard	Steel Guard				
Loyal to a Fault 1d6 Fortitude	Heavy Infantry Dril 1d8 Finesse	1				
Commander of the Steel Guard 1d8 Finesse	Shining Plate 1d10 Fortitude					
Despises the sell outs 1d10 Force	Wicked Halberds 1d6 Force					
OTHER FACTIONS	PLAYER	FACT		EX		A/O
The Librarian		Destroy Library	Ezekhael's Infinite	Swap dice fror any Library Tra Devastated Tra	it die, including	N/A
Rhondar, White Prince of Keys			dric and Tantrig or Dath of loyalty from both.	2 free Sorcery combine Bless sorcery types.		N/A
Ezekhael the Learned		Kill Her	0	Infinite Library and replace wi die to create W opponent.		N/A







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