

LEGACY RHAPSODY OF BLOOD



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Legacy: Rhapsody of Blood v0.21

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Inspired by the Apocalypse World system by Vincent and Meguey Baker.

Changes from previous version:

- Added a game setup procedure including a prologue.
- Rewrote Exploration and Confrontation moves.
- Added The Half-Damned, The Holy Church, The Hidden Hand, The Mystic, The Bonded, The Reckoner.
- Added GM guidance on NPC harm ratings.
- Added a brief overview of PbtA mechanics (p. 7).



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CHAPTER 1: UNDER A BLOOD MOON



There's a wound in the world, and it's bleeding.

Most of the time, you can't put your finger on what's wrong. Yes, pain and suffering abounds. Yes, plagues and wars regularly carry the young to their graves and tear apart communities. Yes, those in power do nothing but enrich themselves as the poor beg for food. But isn't that just the way of the world?

A select few have a different idea. They've come into contact with a corrupting, corrosive force from outside reality, and even as it's tainted their bloodline it's given them the insight to spot its effects. From across the world - from the forests of Wallachia to the slums of London, from the plains of the Lakota to the savannah of the Serengeti - brave souls have faced down the corruption and tracked it back to its source.

That source is **the castle**: a sprawling, chaotic and ever-shifting gothic nightmare. Everything it touches is twisted into a nightmare or empowered with occult magic, all at the whims of **the castle's** regent. From the moment it tears a hole into our reality the blood shed by that wound collects in **the castle's** corridors and keeps, eventually pooling in an Unholy Grail in the regent's sanctum. When it's full, they'll work some grand ritual to blight the land - unless those brave souls can stop them first.

And if they manage to defeat the regent, what then? The Grail remains, ready to work great changes on the world. A victorious explorer can seize that power, bringing fortune to their bloodline and peace to the world, but there's a cost: **the castle** needs a regent, and whoever claims the Grail must go with it as it retreats from the mortal world. When it returns it'll be their hands guiding the beasts, their hands working blasphemies, their will forming a new Grail. Are you willing to pay the price?

WHAT IS THIS?

Rhapsody of Blood is a gothic action RPG where you wage war on an evil castle from outside the world. The players will control a **bloodline** able to recognise **the castle's** corruption and fight against it, and an **explorer** sent by that bloodline into **the castle** to defeat the regent, protect humanity and win glory and power. Each time the regent blights the world or is defeated, **the castle** retreats from the world; you cover in broad strokes how your bloodline fares until the blood moon rises again a generation later, and new heroes are chosen.

One of you will be the Game Master (GM), controlling the forces of **the castle** and working to make the game an enjoyable experience. Like other Powered by the Apocalypse games (*Apocalypse World*, *Monsterhearts*, *Dungeon World*) the GM has an agenda they're working towards and a list of actions they can take to keep the game focused on that agenda, but never rolls dice.

Rhapsody of Blood asks the GM to do some prep work between sessions: they'll design a regent for **the castle** and their acolytes, and plot out a basic map of **the castle** ready for the players to explore. During the session their role is more reactive: they call for particular rules to be used when their triggers are hit, steer the results of the mechanics back into the fiction, and build the story's tension and maintain its tone with their GM reactions.



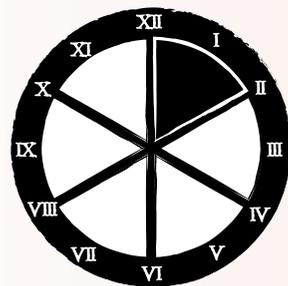
Players have a narrower focus: it's their responsibility to portray their bloodline and explorer honestly, seek out danger and tell thrilling tales of action and adventure. You should be willing to see your explorer die, fall to corruption or be lost to **the castle** - the looming tragedy will make your victories all the sweeter.

For the most part, you'll play by taking it in turns to describe what your characters do and say while the GM describes the world around you. Occasionally the things you say will trigger **moves**: discrete chunks of rules that narrow down that conversation into a particular set of stakes and potential outcomes, sometimes mediated by dice. When a move needs a dice roll it'll describe it as 'roll **+stat**' - you roll two six-sided dice, add the relevant stat, and that's your result. Generally a 10+ is great, a 7-9 is alright and a 6- is the GM's cue to make a **reaction** that makes life harder for you.

Sometimes you'll roll with **advantage**: you roll 3 dice instead of two and take the highest two. If the advantage is **fleeting**, it only lasts for one roll; otherwise, it takes effect any time its criteria is met. **Disadvantage** works the same, but you take the lowest two dice.

HOW IT WORKS

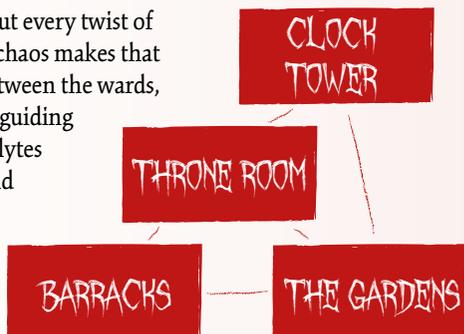
The regent is working a grand ritual, marshalling the power and resources given to them by **the castle** to inflict their blight on the land. The form this ritual takes varies from regent to regent: a disgraced opera singer may be tuning and refining a libretto that will drive the world mad, while a ferocious werewolf might be abducting local dignitaries to inflict lycanthropy on them. Whatever they're planning, it's reflected in the regent's clock. As the players explore **the castle** actions that take time tick the clock down towards midnight, bringing the regent's victory closer.



A regent's clock with one segment filled in.

How do you stop them? By killing them, or breaking their hold on the grail. But that won't be easy: they're incredibly potent, and unless you really fancy your chances you'll need to chip away at their power base first. Thankfully a ritual this grand cannot be performed by a single participant, however potent. To that end, the regent is assisted by several **acolytes**, instilled with a fragment of the regent's power. In their own **ward of the castle**, each acolyte works on their fragment of the ritual. By defeating each acolyte the explorers set back the clock and steal that power for themselves.

Rhapsody of Blood doesn't want you to map out every twist of **the castle**'s corridors - its shifting dreamlike chaos makes that futile. Instead, you track the relationships between the wards, with the **Travel the Labyrinth** explorer move guiding movements within a ward. As you defeat acolytes you'll create safe camps you can use to rest and resupply without leaving **the castle**, and close in on the regent's lair.



The four wards that make up a version of **the castle**.



BLOODLINES

Standing between the waking world and the nightmare castle are your bloodlines. The taint of **the castle** cannot be scrubbed from your family, but you've found yourself able to resist the lure of madness and use its siren call to guide you to your ancient enemy. Each time **the castle** breaches reality and begins spreading its poison you'll be there to fight it back, save the lands it's stolen from its influence, and claim its power for your own.

Rhapsody of Blood presents five bloodlines for you to use:

The Legendary Heroes are a bloodline in the truest sense of the word: a lineage where the virtues of heroism recur again and again. Whether they've been trained from birth to match the deeds of their forbears or brought to **the castle** by the winds of fate ignorant of their destiny, they're tenacious and audacious foes of the regent.

The Magi use secretive and arcane rituals to draw power from the blood. Where other bloodlines may draw on its power recklessly and spiral down into corruption, the Magi precisely measure out each portion of their soul as they trade it for power.

The Holy Church draw power from their faith. Whatever the truth of their particular creed they're defenders of humanity able to purge corruption, build protections against evil and provide respite to the afflicted.

The Half-Damned show clearer than most the marks of corruption. Lurking on the fringes of society, they fight a constant struggle against the dark blood within. In **the castle** they have the unique advantage of blending in with its inhabitants, giving them unmatched powers to infiltrate and gain information on the regent's plans.

The Hidden Hand focus on temporal power, using the treasures of the blood to shape mortal society. When **the castle** returns they call on legions of allies and cutting-edge technology to push it back and get rich in the process.

BLOODLINES ARE DEFINED BY FOUR STATS:



Chalices: Their ability to provide aid to the characters and let them rest and heal.



Swords: Their ability to project force into **the castle** and claim forward bases.



Wands: Their ability to push back against the occult predations of the regent.



Coins: Their ability to influence mortal institutions and draw resources from them.



They also collect **Relics** - objects imbued with **the castle's** power that can fetch a high price in the mortal world or be used in grand rituals.



Finally, they have **Pacts** with the other bloodlines - ancient agreements binding the bloodlines together. Each bloodline has particular actions they reward with pacts, and things pacts can be cashed in for.



EXPLORERS

In any given generation, each bloodline will produce a handful of heroes with the tenacity to enter **the castle** and fight its denizens. Each explorer has their own set of skills, particularly suited to a certain aspect of the journey into **the castle's** depths.

Rhapsody of Blood has five Explorer types to play as:

The Blooded almost fell to corruption but managed to claw their way back to humanity. Now they have inhuman powers to call on, but also terrible compulsions to keep control of.

The Bonded has forged a link with a powerful spirit - a ghost of an ancestor, an avatar of their god, an elemental force or something stranger. With this spirit standing behind them, they can work strange miracles and walk between worlds.

The Mystic is an expert at extracting occult power from **the castle**. In their hands the blood is coaxed into amulets, weapons and explosive incantations.

The Reckoner is a navigator, able to force order on the shifting chaos of **the castle** and get their allies where they need to be. In combat they're experts at using **the castle** as a weapon, turning traps on their owners and finding escape routes.

The Slayer is a monster hunter, plain and simple. They're fast and lethal, equally at home confronting a horde of beasts and a single towering colossus.

EXPLORERS ARE DEFINED BY FOUR STATS:



Iron: Your stubborn will and ability to fight and kill. When exploring, you use it to fight hordes. When fighting a powerful adversary, use this to take advantage of an opening and strike them down.



Glass: Your ability to stay sane and clear-eyed. When exploring, use it to find your way through and assess your surroundings. When fighting a powerful adversary, use it to spot openings and help your allies exploit them.



Sulphur: The strength of your passions and ability to tap into occult power. When exploring, use it to learn magic from **the castle's** relics. When fighting a powerful adversary, use it to pull allies from danger.



Mercury: Your ability to be stealthy, quick and graceful. When exploring, use it to find safe refuge from **the castle's** inhabitants; when fighting, use it to dodge away from blows and use trickery and guile.

They also deal with two additional resources: blood and covenants.



Blood tracks how corrupted your explorer has been by **the castle's** power. As it increases you unlock advances, gaining improved stats and strange gifts, but risk falling under the permanent sway of the regent.



Covenants are the promises your explorers have sworn to each other. By holding true to them, you can resist **the castle's** corruption and appear beside your fellows when most needed. By forsaking them, you can gain great power.



GETTING STARTED

To get playing, it's recommended you have at least 3 people (one GM and two players). You'll also need some six-sided dice (two per player is best), copies of the playbook handouts, and some pencils or other means of making notes.

To get your game rolling, Rhapsody lets you set up your game by playing through the first emergence of **the castle** and the founding of your bloodlines:

PROLOGUE: A TERRIBLE NIGHT TO HAVE A CURSE

*It's the middle ages, somewhere in Eastern Europe. The first emergence of **the castle** has spread beasts and nightmares across the world, and called heroes from the furthest shores to remove its blight. You have taken up arms against **the castle** and its regent - in time, you will be remembered as the founders of the great bloodlines. But that's all yet to come. Before you stands the gate to the regent's inner sanctum, and the end of your quest.*

Each player picks a family playbook and some details to customise their founder.

FOUNDER OF THE LEGENDARY HEROES: THE PALADIN

You're brave and bold, and where your fellows have faltered you inspired them to press on. Now the regent stands in front of you, and they will answer for the evils they have brought to the land.

One of the other founders risked great danger to save your life. Say what they did and give their bloodline 2-pact on you. They say how you're still wounded.

Your stats: Iron 2 Glass 0 Sulphur 1 Mercury -1.

Your weapon: **fists** (tags: *stun, close*) or a **greatsword** (tags: *cleave, unstable*).

Looks: Gleaming chivalric plate; basic peasant garb; rugged travelling gear.

Name: Joseph, Gerda, Ambrose, Faysal, Fatima, Katerina, Zlatomir.

FOUNDER OF THE HALF-DAMNED: THE TAINTED

*Maybe **the castle** almost claimed you, and it was only thanks to your fellows that you remained human. Maybe the darkness was always inside you, and your struggle to stay in control is even harder now **the castle** has given it physical form. Either way, it's time to put these gifts to use.*

One of the other founders is helping you keep control. Give their bloodline 2-pact on you. You say how they're keeping you sane, they say what will happen if they stop.

Your stats: Iron 1 Glass -1 Sulphur 2 Mercury 0.

Your weapon: **claws** (tags: *tether, close*) or a **rapier** (tags: *piercing, grazing*).

Looks: Half-human, half-beast; undead pallor; grotesque chaos.

Name: Willem, Annah, Petra, Mico, Amelia, Lyko, Tali, Haruto.

FOUNDER OF THE HOLY CHURCH: THE SAINT

You may not be trained in occult lore, or mortal combat. But you know evil, and you know good. And so long as good people stand against evil, you will be there with them to keep them safe.

One of the other founders joined your flock and helped spread your healing truth. Give their bloodline 2-pact on you. You say how you blessed them, they say what doubts remain.

Your stats: Iron 1 Glass 2 Sulphur -1 Mercury 0.

Your weapon: **ceremonial staff** (tags: *holy, brace*) or a **sling** (tags: *ranged, ammo*).

Looks: Ancient and venerable; young and naive; grizzled survivor.

Name: Irene, Timothy, Marija, Dobroslav, Zhang, Costin, Malina.



FOUNDER OF THE HIDDEN HAND: THE MASTERMIND

You're not here out of the goodness of your heart, but raw pragmatism. Frankly, hordes of monsters are liable to ruin your plans for wealth, prestige and power. At least your talent for command has come in useful managing this ragtag band of 'heroes'.

One of the other founders helped you find a wondrous treasure. Give their bloodline 2-pact on you. They say what form the treasure took, you say how it's liable to taint its owner.

Your stats: Iron 0 Glass 1 Sulphur -1 Mercury 2.

Your weapon: **sharp dagger** (tags: *piercing, close*) or **a crossbow** (tags: *ranged, reload*).

Looks: Young and ambitious; portly and arrogant; spindly and scheming.

Name: Sigismund, Mohana, Livonia, Ciannait, Vígi, Kwame, Halim.

INTO THE FIGHT

Once you have chosen and fleshed out your founders, it's time to kick down the door and confront the Regent. For this you'll just need the Confrontation Moves (p. 21).

GM: decide what form the Regent takes by picking three Qualities for them. No matter what you pick, their attacks deal 3 Harm.

BESTIAL

The regent is half-mad and twisted into an animalistic form.

- *Leap across the arena.*
- *Hit with devastating force.*

ELEGANT

The Regent has a noble grace and precision to them.

- *Disarm an explorer.*
- *Stand with poise on impossible surfaces.*

ARCANE

The Regent can shapeshift and use supernatural forces.

- *Lash out with crimson fire.*
- *Summon walls of boiling blood.*

COMMANDING

The Regent has hordes of minions.

- *Mob a character and isolate them from the party.*
- *Place a wall of minions between the regent and the explorers.*

DARK

The regent is insidious and controls shadows.

- *Teleport from one shadow to another.*
- *Disappear in a cloud of choking poison.*



This fight will have one of two outcomes:

They defeat the regent. The castle starts crumbling and sliding out of reality. Trigger the *Spoils of Victory* (p. 25) to work out how each founder escapes - and what they do with the rest of their life. If your founder died, give another bloodline 1 pact on you and say how they carried on your legacy.

They are defeated by the regent. The regent completes their evil ritual over the barely-alive bodies of the founders. Somehow you all survive - good luck or part of **the castle's** diabolical plan? Trigger *Darkness Falls* (p. 24) and explain how the land is now cursed.

THE TURNING OF AGES

In the decades following **the castle's** emergence, your bloodlines grew into potent organisations waiting for its return.

Go through your bloodline playbook, making choices for:

- **Stats:** What are your bloodline's capabilities, and what does that say about them?
- **Traditions:** What's the internal culture of the bloodline like?
- **Pacts:** What sort of things earn your loyalty and respect? What can your allies gain from your loyalty?
- **Shelter:** How does your explorer provide solace to the others when resting in the castle?
- **Specialists:** What assistance can your bloodline provide at their camps?
- **Moves:** What special abilities can your explorers call on?

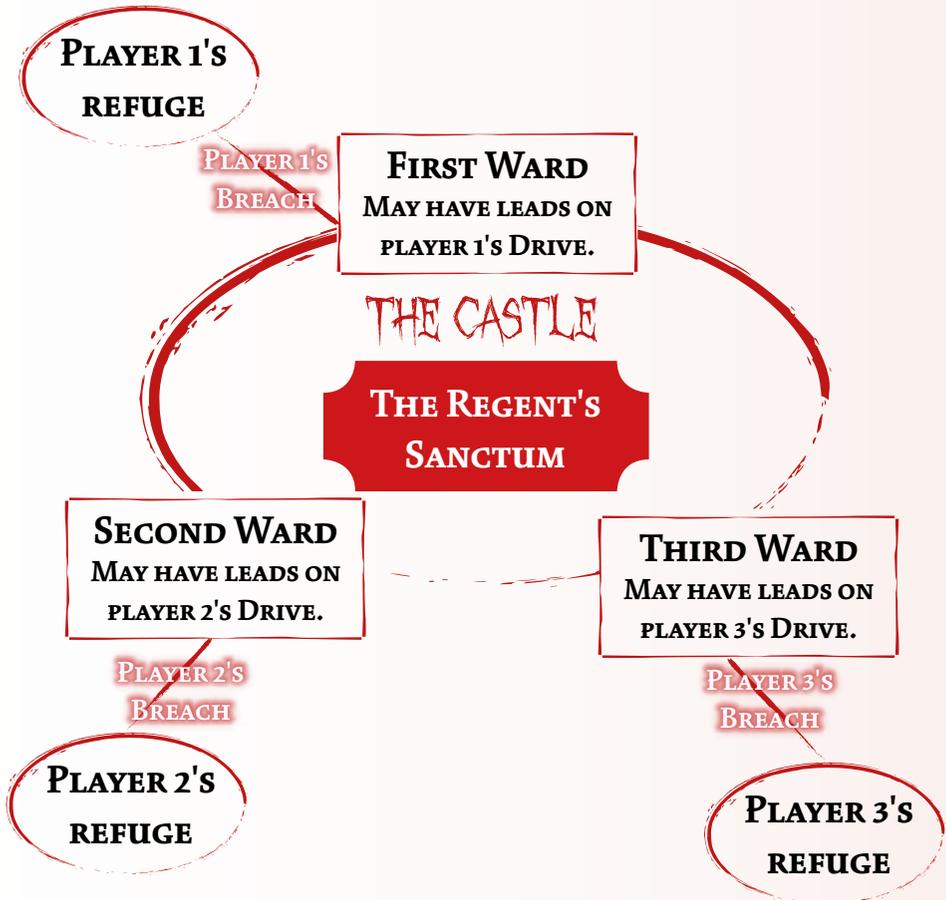
Finally, there's **Context**. Generations after your bloodline's founding, the blood moon has risen and **the castle** has returned. Your *refuge* is your bloodline's first safe camp, on the outskirts of **the castle**. Your *breach* is the ward your refuge borders on, and your plan to break in. Finally, your *drive* gives your explorer a particular reason to break into that ward and fight back the evil of the regent. Take it in turns to pick options from the list, sketching a castle map that looks something like the facing page.

BUILD YOUR CHARACTERS

Each player should pick an explorer playbook. Try to avoid doubling up. To make your explorer, follow these steps:

- **Stats:** You have a basic statline, customised by adding 1 to a stat of your choice.
- **Looks:** Options for your appearance, gender presentation, racial background and so on. These lists are not intended to be exhaustive - use your own ideas if you like!
- **Motivation:** What pulled you into the life of a castle delver. Use this to add an extra dimension to your bloodline's current drive, or give yourself a personal quest.
- **Covenants:** The bonds you've formed with other explorers. Each covenant option describes how it was formed, how it can be strengthened, and how it can be broken.
- **Gear:** Build a weapon (using one perk and one flaw from the weapon table on p. 20) and pick options for backup and utility gear.
- **Moves:** Pick two moves to give your explorer particular tricks to use in their journey.

With those choices made, you have everything needed to start your assault! Start at one of the player's refuge, with the characters discussing which breach plan to go with, and play the attack on **the castle** out from there...



CHAPTER 2: NEW MECHANICS



While *Rhapsody of Blood* builds on the basic framework of *Legacy: Life Among the Ruins* (and *Apocalypse World* before it), it's aiming for a different genre of stories and a different pace in play. To help you hit that tone, its basic moves have been rewritten from the ground up to support castle exploration, gothic action and bloodlines waging a shadow war against **the castle**'s regents.

THE FLOW OF PLAY

Once you've built this generation's castle, gameplay starts with a party of explorers invading **the castle** through one of the breach points identified in castle creation. As a party delves deep into **the castle**, they'll use the *exploration moves* to chart out its twisting layout, deal with the traps and minions that haunt its halls, and learn to not just survive but turn **the castle**'s strengths against its regent.

As you master a ward of **the castle** you'll eventually enter combat with its ruling acolyte. These fights are tense and dramatic, using their own set of *confrontation moves*. As the foe does their best to kill you, your party will find opportunities to strike, use those strikes to slice away their powers and finally go in for the kill.

And when the acolyte's dead, what then? That's where your *bloodline moves* come in. With their resources you can claim the ward as your own, using it as a place to rest up and stage further expeditions into **the castle** or work rituals to push back the regent's plan.

Ward by ward you'll take down the regent's acolytes, carefully walking the tightrope between death and corruption. Maybe you'll fail, and the regent's ritual will blight the world. Maybe you'll face them down in their sanctum, defeat them and banish **the castle** from reality. Depending on the circumstances, each player will have choices to make - choices that might change the abilities of their bloodline, reshape **the castle**, and make strides towards an eventual permanent victory against the forces of darkness.

Those choices made, the clock moves forward a generation as **the castle** blights the land once more. Each player creates a new explorer from their bloodline, and fleshes out **the castle** with options from their bloodline playbook. The GM tweaks the horrors inside **the castle** based on the events of the last generation, and the expedition begins anew.



CASTLE EXPLORATION

These are the moves your explorers use as they travel through **the castle**. They're not intended to guide you through every moment of the journey; instead, you jump from point of interest to point of interest, guided by the player's rolls.

FACE THE HORDE

When you assault a group of castle denizens, roll **+Iron**. On a hit, you tear through them - describe how. On a 7-9 pick 2, on a 10+ pick 1:

- You suffer harm appropriate to the enemy.
- You get some on you - mark corruption.
- You end up in a risky position.
- More are coming.

LURK

When you attempt to avoid notice, roll **+Mercury**. On a 10+, the danger you are hiding from passes. On a 7-9, choose one:

- You are separated from something important.
- You have to hide in a perilous place.
- You raise suspicion.

DRINK DEEP

When you draw on the power in a potent item or ritual site, roll **+Sulphur**. On a hit, **mark contamination** and learn a spell - the GM will say what it does. When you cast it, pick 1:

- Mark **contamination**.
- Forget the spell.
- Take 1 Harm.

On a 10+, you don't need to pick an option on your first cast.

SAMPLE SPELLS

Purify poisons, disease and toxins out of something you're touching.

Coat your weapons in ice (add perk: *stun*).

Grow momentary wings to slow your fall or give your jumps an extra boost.

Throw a fireball (*ranged, painful*).

Breathe underwater.

Cast lots to divine a yes/no question.

Return to where you were 6 seconds ago.

Summon a rat-like familiar.

Whisper into another's mind across vast distances.

SEE CLEAR

When you try to read a dangerous situation, roll **+Glass**. On a hit, you can ask the GM questions. Get fleeting advantage when you act on each answer.

On a 7-9 ask 1, on a 10+ ask 3:

- Which exit will take me to my goal?
- What here is valuable?
- What can enemies here do to surprise me?
- What should I be on the lookout for?
- How can I avoid notice?

On a miss, ask 1 anyway, but be prepared for the worst.



TRAVEL THE LABYRINTH

When you attempt to navigate the labyrinthine twists of **the castle**, roll **+Blood**. On a hit, hold 1 and describe your insight into the ward's purpose or layout.

- On a 7-9, the area you arrive at contains castle denizens or traps.
- On a 10+, the area you arrive at contains something valuable or useful.
- On a 6-, this ward's Acolyte ambushes you.

When you leave the area, spend 1 hold to retreat to a safe camp, 2 to find an exit to another ward, and 3 to find the Acolyte's sanctuary. One person rolls each time you navigate, and the group's hold from multiple rolls is pooled together.

Thanks to Jason Cordova of Discern Realities for the basic structure of this move!

SHELTER

When you look for a safe space to recover, roll **+Mercury**. On a hit, each explorer picks 1:

- Tend to another explorer: they heal 2 Harm, or step down their worst Wound.
- Encourage another explorer - they get fleeting advantage.
- Use your bloodline's Shelter move.

On a 7-9, advance the Regent's clock.

Whenever you rest outside a safe camp, **mark contamination**.

BLOOD

As the Castle's corrupting blood begins to flow through your veins, you gain a measure of the regent's power. But the power always comes at a cost. When you get corrupted by the power, you'll be told to **mark contamination**.

When you've marked contamination 3 times, raise your Blood stat and take a blood advance to show how **the castle** empowers you. Then clear out your contamination track.

BLOOD ADVANCES

- Get +1 to a stat (max 3).
- Get +1 to a stat (max 3).
- Get a Blood Gift.
- Get a Blood Gift.

Each may only be taken once.

You can take 4 blood advances before finally succumbing. When Blood hits 5, **the castle** has full control of you. At the end of your current fight, you twist into an acolyte of the regent, occupying an empty ward or forming a new one to rule over.

HARM AND WOUNDS

Your explorer suffers damage on two tracks. Glancing blows, exhaustion, stress and curses can all deal you **Harm**. If you have Armour, subtract its value from each instance of harm taken: if you have Armour 1 and would take 4 harm, you instead only take 3. If you hit 10 harm, you collapse and wake up back in the safe camp you last visited.

When the regent or an acolyte strikes you, you'll take harm but you'll also risk taking a **wound** - the more harm you have, the greater the risk. When you take a wound, you write it down and suffer its effects until you're healed. Wounds come in three varieties:



Minor wounds slow you down. You're confused, bleeding, sprained, bruised. When a minor wound impacts your ability to deal with an attack, you take 2 more harm.

Major wounds are significant impediments. Your leg is broken, your eye is blinded, you're absolutely terrified. When it impedes your actions, you take Disadvantage on the roll.

Deadly wounds kill you, or come very close. If you're still functioning after taking one, you can't take action unless someone **Assists** you first.

COVENANTS

Within the twisted reality of **the castle**, your explorer's relationship with the others takes on tangible force. Stay true to them and they'll be able to help you, even crossing the vastness of **the castle** to stand by your side. Break your promises with them, and **the castle** will reward you with a taste of its power.

Covenants have three stages:

Contacts are the default. They're fellow travellers on your quest to stop the Regent, but they've given you little reason to trust them.

When you form a bond with another explorer, that becomes a **minor covenant**. Each explorer playbook has three suggested sources of these bonds. Once you've formed the covenant, you gain access to these moves:

ASSIST

If you have a covenant with another explorer, you can assist their efforts. Roll plus an appropriate stat. On a hit, you give their roll Advantage - or allow them to take action, if they have a deadly wound. On a 7-9, you're exposed to harm, danger or an unexpected cost.

SUMMON AID

When you call on your covenants for help, distant characters can answer. If they do, they step from the shadows near you as a wraith. They function as normal, but don't roll **Endure**. The first harm they take weakens them and the second harm banishes them, weakening their covenant with you by a step.

Each bond listed on your playbook has a way to upgrade it to a **major covenant**. At this stage they would risk their life for you, and you for them. At this stage you get Advantage on rolls to **Assist** them. In addition, if either of you is about to take a Deadly Wound (and then either be taken out of the fight or trigger their Death Move), the other can jump in the way and take it instead.

Finally, you can **break** your covenant - why let your sentiments hold you back when **the castle** will give you power in return for betrayal? Each covenant sets out how each party can break it, but don't let these limit you: if both players agree that the covenant is broken, that's that. Breaking the covenant has these effects:

- **Minor covenant:** The betrayer marks 1 contamination and gains a relic.
- **Major covenant:** The betrayer marks 3 contamination and gains a relic.

Note: Covenants work in both directions. If you have a covenant with someone, they have a covenant with you. If you have a major covenant with someone, they have a major covenant with you. If one of you breaks the covenant, it's broken for both.



WEAPONS

Your armaments in *Rhapsody of Blood* are simple: each weapon has perk tags and flaw tags. Your starting gear has one perk and one flaw, but more advanced weapons can have multiple perks, or no flaws.

Weapon tags govern the situations where your weapon is effective, and the effects attacks with it have on your target and you.

PERKS		FLAWS	
Cleave	Can slice through many foes in a single swing.	Ammo or Fragile	If any dice on an attack come up 1, the weapon's useless until you <i>Shelter</i> or get <i>R&R</i> .
Flexible	It wraps around defences and can be redirected mid-swing.	Brace	You need to stand on steady ground to use it.
Hefty	Knocks an enemy back on a hit.	Close	You need the enemy to be within arm's reach to use it.
Holy	Causes intense pain against a particular foe. <i>This tag is only accessible via moves.</i>	Grazing	It only deals surface harm, not deep wounds.
Lingering	It causes ongoing pain: if you hit someone with it they'll try to stay away from you.	Heirloom	If you lose it, get Disadvantage on bloodline moves until you get it back.
Piercing	Can penetrate armour and thick hide.	Painful	Each time you attack, take 1 Harm.
Ranged	Can attack any foe in eyesight.	Reload	You need to take action to attack again after using it.
Stun	Makes enemies slow and sluggish on a hit.	Thrown	Once you attack with it, you need to recover it.
Tether	After you hit, you can easily hold onto/keep pace with the foe.	Unstable	You're vulnerable and unable to move after using it.

EXAMPLE WEAPONS

Warhammer: hefty/brace.

Rapier: piercing/superficial.

Harpoon: tether/thrown.

Flintlock: ranged/ammo.

Greatsword: cleave/unstable.

Blood whip: flexible/painful.

Bareknuckle boxing: stun/close.



CONFRONTATIONS

As you explore **the castle** you'll encounter the rank and file of the regent's minions: skeletons and ghouls, wraiths and beasts, crazed cultists and eldritch demons. They need very little prep - just a description and a few **reactions** they can use to hurt the explorers:

EXAMPLE: BURNING SKELETONS

A skeleton walking in defiance of the natural order, surrounded by viridian flames.

- *Hurl a burning skull at the explorers.*
- *Set something important on fire.*
- *Travel between fires.*

As skilled explorers you're able to make your way past them with no significant effort (see **Face the Horde**), but some foes demand more effort. One of those foes is the regent squatting at the centre of **the castle** or walking through its halls performing strange rites. But the regent is also supported by **acolytes**: mortals, beasts or eldritch creatures invested with their power and playing some role in their schemes.

Each significant adversary has:

- A description to guide their actions in the fiction.
- A rating for how much Harm their attacks deal to explorers.
- Three or more **qualities**: packages of **reactions** tied to a particular strength of the adversary. As the explorers fight the adversary, they'll strip away its qualities and deprive it of those abilities. When all qualities are destroyed, the adversary's defeated.

Here's an example - for more, check out Chapter XX:

THE SURGEON

A maniacal medic called to the regent's service by the blood's siren song. Here she has worked great miracles of medicine that prolong life far beyond any natural limits, and her ambition only grows with each victim she converts into an orderly.

DEALS: 1 Harm (stabbing needles), 3 Harm (embedded poison needles).

ATTENDANT ORDERLIES.

- *Mob a character and isolate them from the party.*
- *Stab a character in the back.*

PARALYTIC VENOM.

- *Numb a limb.*
- *Embed a poison-tipped needle in their flesh.*

OVERDRIVE SERUM.

- *Leap to the room's rafters.*
- *Hit with devastating force.*



CONFRONTATION MOVES

Significant foes benefit from more involved combat mechanics. When your explorers face down an acolyte or the regent, use these moves:

DODGE

When you try to avoid incoming harm, roll +Mercury. On a hit pick 1, on a 10+ pick 2:

- You avoid the danger.
- The foe's heedless in pursuit of you: create an Opening.

LINE IT UP

When you...

- *Try to sneak past an enemy's defences*, roll +Mercury.
- *Use physical force to knock the foe off-balance*, roll +Iron.
- *Size up the enemy to locate a weak spot*, roll +Glass.
- *Passionately implore or taunt the foe*, roll +Sulphur.

On a hit you do it, and find an Opening. On a 7-9, pick 1:

- The foe notices you and will make you its highest priority.
- You lost or used up a piece of gear - GM says which.
- The foe's wise to you - get fleeting Disadvantage on your next *Strike*.

STRIKE

When you take advantage of an Opening to attack a foe with your weapon or the environment, roll +Iron. On a hit, you damage one of the foe's qualities - if you destroy its final quality, it's dead. The Opening's now gone.

On a 7-9, the GM picks 1:

- The foe lashes out at you: take Harm appropriate to the enemy.
- The foe separates you from the others or puts you in a spot.
- The foe brings in reinforcements or triggers hazards in the environment.

RESCUE

When you pull an ally out of danger, roll +Sulphur. On a 10+, both of you escape and heal 1 harm. On a 7-9, one of you escapes and heals, the other faces the brunt of the danger.

WITHSTAND

When you take harm, roll -Total Harm. On a 7+ you're alright.

On a 4-6, take a minor wound but choose one:

- Stand firm, creating an Opening against the foe.
- Play possum, making them focus on another target.

On a 1-3, take a major wound but choose one:

- Get infected by their power and mark contamination.
- Frenzy and get fleeting advantage attacking them.

On a 0 or less, take a deadly wound but choose one:

- Fall unconscious, waking up at the end of the fight.
- Die and trigger your Death Move.

FLEE

When you use an Opening to retreat, any and all characters can flee the battle. Advance the regent's clock by one.



VICTORY

When the foe is slaughtered, everyone still living may take a Blood advance, and may increase their Covenant with each other by a step. The foe's sanctum becomes a place of power, usable for Forward Base.

BLOODLINE MOVES

Bloodline moves govern the efforts of your bloodline's support structures. If explorer moves are the vanguard pushing into the regent's domain, these are the logistics keeping them in fighting condition and cementing their victories.

REST AND RELAXATION

When you provide aid to characters in a safe camp, roll +Chalices.

On a 7-9, pick 1; on a 10+ pick 2.

- Each explorer may heal all harm.
- Each explorer may heal all wounds.
- Each explorer can repair and resupply their weaponry.
- Each explorer may form a new covenant, or raise an existing covenant by one.
- The regent's clock doesn't tick down.

FORWARD BASE

When you claim a place of power as a forward base in the castle, roll +Swords. On a 7-9 pick 2 things that still needs to be done to make it safe; on a 10+ pick 1.

- Supplies must be escorted in from another base.
- An evil aura must be exorcised.
- Defences need to be set up.

Once those are done, it counts as a safe camp for the purposes of *Rest and Relaxation* and *Travel the Labyrinth*.

RESIST DOOM

When you work a grand ritual, spend 1-3 Relics on occult resources and ceremonial paraphernalia and roll +Wands. On a hit, choose one for each Relic spent:

- Reduce the Regent's clock by 1.
- Bless a weapon to strike true against one Acolyte, giving it the Holy tag.
- Reduce a character's Blood track by one.

On a 7-9, the Regent weaves a counter-spell; you'll need to defeat an Acolyte before anyone can work further rituals.

REINFORCEMENTS

When your family calls on outside allies for assistance, roll +Coins. On a hit, pick 1:

- Authorities will ignore your actions in the mortal world.
- They send you resources worth 1 Relic.
- They send forces to protect a region of the mortal world.
- They highlight a weakness of the Regent or one of their Acolytes, useful as an Opening.

On a 10+ they send you a special gift - a piece of utility gear, a weapon with two perk tags, or an enchanted item (as per *Drink Deep*).



THE PASSING OF GENERATIONS

The castle is an eternal foe. It cannot be defeated, only pushed back. It's your bloodline's calling, then, to wage a shadow war keeping the mortal world safe. When **the castle** breaches reality, you muster and push it back; while it's banished, you deal with the curses the regent may have laid down on the world and gather resources for the next breach. Each generation - between 15 and 30 years - the blood moon rises and **the castle** returns, and new heroes rise to meet it.

Each expedition into **the castle** has three outcomes:

- The regent's clock fills, and they enact their dark ritual.
- The explorers defeat the regent, and the castle retreats from the world.
- The explorers defeat the regent, and one claims their power to work a miracle in the world - but they're claimed by the castle as its new regent.

Here's how those outcomes work.

DARKNESS FALLS

When *the regent's clock fills*, they blight the mortal world. The GM marks one:

- A section of the region's population is cursed and made monstrous.
- Day is short and nights are starless.
- Monsters walk the world every full moon.
- Weather becomes unnatural and devastating.
- Plagues strike a section of the population.

If all are marked, **the castle** claims the mortal world and all is lost.

Each player picks how their bloodline responds to the blight, and adjusts their stats:

- **You stayed safe, at the cost of withdrawing from the world.** Say which of your connections suffered in your absence. +1 Chalice, -1 Coins.
- **You fought to push it back, but your best mystics lost their lives.** Say what their sacrifice achieved. +1 Swords, -1 Wands.
- **You took some of the taint into your family.** Say what lingering malady the blight has left you with. +1 Wands, -1 Chalice.
- **You waged a shadow war keeping society safe at great cost to your warriors.** Say which settlement still stands thanks to you. +1 Coins, -1 Swords.

GNOSIS

When *the Regent is slain*, the explorer with the highest Blood can choose to inherit the Grail. If they do, they increase a bloodline stat by 1 but reduce their Pacts with the other bloodlines by 1. They get one wish from the Grail:

- **Life Everlasting:** Your character can return in each subsequent generation, and they will never truly die.
- **The Resurrection of the Dead:** One person of your choice is returned to life.
- **Insight From Beyond:** Gain a new bloodline move.
- **Wealth of Kings:** Your bloodline gains 5 Relics.
- **Peace on Earth:** Each bloodline gains 1 Relic; you gain 1-Treaty on the others.
- **Purification:** Remove a Blight infected by a previous Regent.

The castle then takes you with it as it leaves reality behind. You will return as its next regent unless you chose Life Everlasting - in which case the next regent is Death Itself.



SPOILS OF VICTORY

If you leave **the castle** without claiming the grail, pick one of the choices unlocked by your Explorer's Blood.

BLOOD 0+

- *Your explorer loots the castle for valuable trinkets.* Say what they spend the rest of their life doing with their fortune, and start the next generation with 1 more Relic.
- *Your explorer devotes their life to preparing the next generation.* Choose one other bloodline - say how you helped train their next explorer, and increase your Pact with them by 1.
- *Your bloodline works to heal the wounds left in this community* when the castle leaves. Gain advantage on all Coins moves if the castle returns here.

BLOOD 2+

- *Your explorer instils their skills into a piece of gear.* Describe how they pass it down to the next generation: when they use it, they can access one of your current explorer's moves, but it gains the *heirloom* tag.
- *Your explorer forces permanent order on the castle.* One ward will remain in its current form for the rest of time, and your bloodline gets Advantage *Travelling the Labyrinth* there.
- *You invest in improving your bloodline's resources.* Sacrifice 3 Relics to raise a bloodline stat by 1.

BLOOD 4+

- *You let the corruption sink deep into your bloodline,* controlled but ever-present. Your future characters start at Blood 1, with a Blood Advance to match.
- *You form a bond with the castle.* Your explorer can always mark *contamination* to get a vision of what the regent is doing at the moment, and ask one follow-up question the GM must answer truthfully.

THE NEW GENERATION

Once the group has resolved these moves, you skip forward to the next time the blood moon rises. Follow these steps:

1) WHERE DOES THE CASTLE EMERGE?

Is it somewhere it's haunted before, or a new location? Each bloodline picks a *refuge* option from their playbook to flesh out the surrounding area.

2) HOW HAS THE EVIL MANIFESTED?

Blood calls out to blood, and each bloodline is drawn to **the castle** by misfortune or curse. Each bloodline picks a *drive* that brought them here, and says what they suspect the drive says about the regent's plans.

3) HOW DO YOU BREAK IN?

You're ready to break into a ward of **the castle**. Each bloodline picks a *breach* option and says what they've seen of the ward they're preparing to assault.

4) MAKE EXPLORERS

Each player picks an explorer playbook and builds them up, picking stats, looks, motivation, covenants, moves and gear. Start with the first explorer breaking in, with the other explorers assisting them as wraiths or in the flesh.

CHAPTER 3: PLAYBOOKS



LEGENDARY HEROES

STATS

Pick one:

Chalices 1 Swords 1 Coins 0 Wands -1 if fate and coincidence keep bringing your bloodline to **the castle** despite their ignorance of mystical matters.

Chalices 0 Swords 1 Coins -1 Wands 1 if your bloodline is tested from childhood for martial aptitude and trained to face **the castle**.

Chalices 0 Swords 1 Coins 1 Wands -1 if your bloodline are world travellers with a fortune built on castle raids.

TRADITIONS

Pick one from each or write one of your own:

Style: Stylish contemporary fashion; family crests and heirlooms; rustic or utilitarian clothing.

Lore: Picking it up as they go along; ancestor's crumbling journals; oral history passed from parent to child.

Name: A noble title; an inherited naming convention; bearers of the _____.

PACT: THE WAY OF GOLD

One bloodline's legends taught you how to be heroes. Set your pact with them to 1. You say what legend you've heard, they say what secret failure the legend left out.

You prize heroism and valour. At the end of each play session, pick the explorer whose heroism most impressed you and raise their pact with your bloodline by 1.

While at one of your camps, members of other bloodlines can spend 1-pact to gain a weapon from your stores. Give it two perks and a flaw, and describe its history.

SHELTER MOVE

When your explorer finds **Shelter** in **the castle**, they can inspire the others with tales of selfless heroism. The next time their allies would **mark contamination** while trying to aid or protect another explorer, they ignore it.

SPECIALISTS

Pick one to have at each safe camp your bloodline controls:

- A Chronicler:** Anyone can tell them a story of their expedition: write it down. Later generations can strike off a story to get fleeting Advantage on a related roll.
- A Civilian:** They'll have up-to-date information on the state of the world outside.
- A Weaponsmith:** Anyone can spend 2 Relics to add another perk to a weapon, or 4 Relics to remove a flaw.

BLOODLINE MOVES

Pick two:

AUDACIOUS

When your explorer confronts the Regent, roll +Swords. On a 7-9 pick 1, on a 10+ pick 2:

- They'll talk for a time before attacking or leaving.
- They let slip a weakness of their plans.
- They focus on your explorer and ignore the others.



DEFEAT MEANS FRIENDSHIP

When your explorer would inflict the killing blow on an Acolyte, they may stay their hand. If you do, roll +Chalices. On a 7-9 pick 1 they get enough control to tell you:

- How the Regent's ritual can be set back.
- How the Acolyte can be saved.
- A secret weakness of another Acolyte.

Then they retreat into the maze-like corridors of **the castle**.

On a 10+ they gain enough control to change sides and work alongside you, though they cannot act directly against the Regent.

OUR TOWN

When you call on your reputation in a community that knows your legend, roll +Chalices on Reinforcements instead of +Coins.

SECRET TECHNIQUE

There's a particular fighting style passed down your bloodline through training, genetics, or mystical empowerment. Pick one:

- **Cheating Death:** The first time your explorer triggers their Death Move, they survive hanging onto the barest thread of life.
- **Consecrated Blood:** Any monster that consumes your blood is feels agonising pain. Your explorer can take 1 Harm to give their weapon the Holy tag for one strike.
- **Accelerate Perceptions:** Can take 1 Harm to move incredibly fast for a few seconds, at the cost of being exhausted and unable to move for a few seconds after.

THE WILL TO FIGHT

Your bloodline has a tenacity that lets them cheat death so long as they have something to fight for. **When they take Harm while defending an ally or offering themselves up as a distraction**, take Advantage on Endure.

CONTEXT

Each generation, pick one from each or make your own:

REFUGE

A inn or cafe where your sister plays music.

A general shop run by your grandfather.

A club, park or back alley where friendly gangs hang out.

DRIVE

Your love, kidnapped by the Regent.

Your parent, cursed to waste away

A neighbourhood, devastated by monsters.

BREACH

A grand door and a sturdy boot.

A great stained glass window and a hefted brick.

A high wall and a knotted rope.



THE HALF-DAMNED

STATS

Pick one:

Chalices 0 Swords 1 Coins -1 Wands 1 if your bloodline is cursed with obvious signs of damnation and must live on the fringes of society.

Chalices -1 Swords 1 Coins 1 Wands 0 if your bloodline is cursed with terrible hungers or a lingering blight, even as they appear completely human.

Chalices 1 Swords 0 Coins -1 Wands 1 if one bloodline member in each generation shows the physical gifts of the curse, while the rest suffer the frailties imposed.

TRADITIONS

Pick one from each or write one of your own:

Style: ragged fabrics and animal skins; fastidiously clean and modern clothing; anonymous peasant or low class clothing.

Lore: Ancient immortals with flawed memories; a voice whispering in your nightmares; religious texts that damn you but offer advice.

Name: A shared mark or feature; after your progenitor; what zealots and bigots call you.

PACT: THE WAY OF RED

One bloodline hunted you as monsters before you forged a treaty. Set your pact each other to 1. You say how you proved your humanity, they say how they made amends.

You prize integrity and sacrifice. At the end of each play session, pick the explorer whose mercy most impressed you and raise their bloodline's pact with you by 1.

While at one of your camps, other bloodlines can spend 1-pact to transfer a point of contamination to a member of your bloodline. Say how the recipient is further twisted.

SHELTER MOVE

When your explorer finds *Shelter* in **the castle**, they can use the power of the blood to push back death. Anyone in the party can **mark contamination** to heal 1d6 Harm.

SPECIALISTS

Pick one to have at each safe camp your bloodline controls:

- An Apothecary:** Sacrifice a relic to create a healing salve - 1 use, heals 4 Harm.
- A Scout:** They'll have information on the monsters seen in neighbouring areas.
- A Lure:** Can take them with you when you leave. They can make enough noise to attract all monsters in an area, letting you sneak by or set up an ambush.

BLOODLINE MOVES

Pick two:

DARK LEGACY

All your explorers bear the curse of **the castle**, but have learned to resist its corruption. Each explorer starts with a Blood Move; when using it, you may choose to take 1 harm instead of marking contamination.



MORE THAN HUMAN

When you make an explorer, choose one:

- They have natural weapons: claws, spines, etc. Give them a perk and a flaw.
- They have resistance to harm: fur, chitin, thick skin etc. Get 1 Armour.
- They have unnatural agility. They can climb walls, run on water or leap dozens of metres, and get advantage on Dodge.

IN THE SHADOWS OF HUMANITY

Human society may recoil from you, but that doesn't mean you're powerless. If you intimidate people into helping you or appeal to their baser urges, roll **+Swords** on Reinforcements instead of **+Coins**.

ONE OF THE HORDE

When you send your family members to blend in with **the castle**'s denizens, roll **+Wands**.

On a 7-9 hold one, on a 10+ hold three. Spend the hold 1-for-1 to get them to:

- Strike from within a group of castle denizens, sending them into disarray.
- Help you navigate, giving you 1 *Travel the Labyrinth* hold.
- Smuggle you a useful item.

VOICE OF THE REGENT

Add the following option to Resist Doom:

- Give your explorer a one-time ability to command the castle's denizens.

When they use this, the denizens become their loyal servants. When they fight alongside you, your attacks gain the cleave tag. When you send them to act independently of you, the GM will decide how well they do. When you take Harm, you can choose to have the denizens be destroyed instead.

CONTEXT

Each generation, pick one from each or make your own:

REFUGE

A graveyard where your peers shelter.

An aerie overlooking the land.

Underground tunnels forgotten by man.

DRIVE

The beast that turned you, working for the Regent.

*Your sibling, called to **the castle** by an irresistible compulsion.*

A mob whipped into a frenzy by fear of the Regent.

BREACH

The regent's menagerie, using yourself as bait for the game wardens.

The servant's quarters, and a stolen uniform.

The barracks, and notes on the patrol schedule.



THE HOLY CHURCH

STATS

Pick one:

Chalices 1 Swords 0 Coins -1 Wands 1 if you act as a mystery cult, revealing deeper truths only to those who have shown the ability to handle it.

Chalices 1 Swords 0 Coins 1 Wands -1 if you are an offshoot of a grander church, giving you temporal influence but limited ability to dabble in the occult.

Chalices 1 Swords 1 Coins -1 Wands 0 if you're a scattered group of devotees resisting persecution in pursuit of righteousness.

TRADITIONS

Pick one from each or write one of your own:

Style: A simple symbol of your faith, fastidious clerical robes, joyous flowing colours.

Lore: The whispers of martyrs in your dreams, a holy book filled with ecstatic visions, accumulated folklore from your congregations.

Name: The virtue you follow, the mark you wear, your hope for the future.

PACT: THE WAY OF WHITE

You saved another bloodline from falling to darkness. Set your pact with them to 1. They say what dark temptation was twisting them into servants of **the castle**; you say what you did to redeem them.

You prize self-sacrifice. At the end of each play session, pick the explorer who risked the most to help others and raise their bloodline's pact with you by 1.

While at one of your camps, other bloodlines can spend 1-pact on you to take a Relic from your stores. Describe it, and suggest how it came to be owned by your order.

SHELTER MOVE

When your explorer finds **Shelter** in **the castle**, they may lead the group in prayer. They each hold 1: spend the hold to miraculously avoid a curse, spell or mystical attack.

SPECIALISTS

Pick one to have at each safe camp your bloodline controls:

- Oracle:** Sacrifice a Relic to see what the Regent or an Acolyte is currently up to.
- Purifier:** Spend a Relic to get a bag of salt that keeps away evil, letting you succeed on Shelter as if you'd rolled a 10+.
- Medics:** Each time you visit the camp, one Explorer can heal their least severe wound.



BLOODLINE MOVES

Pick two:

STOKE THE FLAME

When an explorer on the verge of death is brought back to one of your camps, roll +Chalices. On a 7-9 the deadly wound is stepped down to a major wound; on a 10+ it's gone entirely. On a 6- their soul gutters out entirely, replaced by something dark: they'll die and become an undead Acolyte, unless 1 Relic is sacrificed to stop it.

SHIELD OF FAITH

So long as your camps maintain a constant vigil of prayer, they will not come under attack.

When your explorer attempts to manifest this shield, roll +Sulphur. On a hit, radiant light prevents creatures of the castle from coming within a few metres of you. On a 7-9 pick two, on a 10+ pick one:

- You cannot move without breaking the shield.
- You cannot attack without breaking the shield.
- No-one else can shelter under the shield.

MARTYRDOM

When you Resist Doom, your character can sacrifice some of their lifespan to channel greater power. You may substitute a minor wound for 1 relic, a major wound for 2 relics, or a deadly wound for 3 relics.

THE FLESH IS WEAK

With prayers and unguents you can concentrate the castle's corruption in one part of an explorer's body. Actions using the corrupted body part have Advantage, but so long as this ritual continues the explorer marks an additional point every time they mark corruption.

Amputating the node of corruption deals the explorer a major wound, and they lose a point of Blood and a Blood Gift. The removed body part counts as 1 relic.

SANCTUARY

When you offer your bloodline's aid to a group of civilians, roll +Chalices when you bring in Reinforcements to protect them.

CONTEXT

Each generation, pick one from each or make your own:

REFUGE

An old church still warded against malign influences.

A memorial remembering the dead of the last great war.

The home of a believer, where the faithful are waiting out the horrors.

DRIVE

A saint's relics stolen from a desecrated grave.

A great demon only vulnerable to the righteous.

A sin that can only be washed clean through great heroism.

BREACH

The tainted chapel, and the supply wagons that bring in sacraments.

The burial catacombs, and a crevasse that's opened them to the world.

A marble-floored museum, and its ornate skylights.



THE HIDDEN HAND

STATS

Pick one:

Chalices 1 Swords 0 Coins 1 Wands -1 if you live lives of luxury and try not to think too hard about the source of your wealth.

Chalices -1 Swords 1 Coins 1 Wands 0 if you act as a mercenary group, guiding the world's conflicts in a direction that benefits you.

Chalices 0 Swords -1 Coins 1 Wands 1 if you've suborned the world's elite into a secret society bound by occult rituals and mutual blackmail.

TRADITIONS

Pick one from each or write one of your own:

Style: Formal wear and subtle marks of membership, opulent clothes and impractical accessories, state-of-the-art arms and armour.

Lore: Reports from agents scattered around the world, an iron grip on the rare book market, a private institution of scholars probing the boundaries of knowledge.

Name: a mythical creature, an alchemical process, a feudal role.

PACT: THE WAY OF SILVER

You split the fabulous wealth you found with another bloodline. Gain 1 pact on them. They say what they used the wealth for; you say how entropy and betrayal robbed them of it.

You prize entrepreneurship. At the end of each play session, pick the explorer who most increased their wealth or power and raise their bloodline's pact with you by 1.

While at one of your camps other bloodlines can spend 1-pact on you to get access to more luxurious supplies, giving them advantage on *Shelter* until they return to a safe camp.

SHELTER MOVE

When your explorer finds *Shelter* in **the castle**, they may upgrade and reinforce their party's gear. They each hold 1: spend the hold to get fleeting advantage on *Strike* or *Endure*.

SPECIALISTS

Pick one to have at each safe camp your bloodline controls:

- Soldiers:** You may take them with you when you leave. Send them against a mob of the regent's minions to take them out.
- Engineer:** You may take them with you when you leave. They have enough gear to collapse a corridor, bridge a narrow gap or create a route between different floors.
- Armourer:** Performs repairs, giving each explorer fleeting Advantage on Withstand.



BLOODLINE MOVES

Pick two:

AVARICE

The strange byproducts of **the castle's** intrusion into our reality retain their power, if you let them feed from you. *When you would spend a relic*, you may **mark contamination** to keep it in your bloodline's stocks.

EXPERIMENTAL WEAPONRY

Your family's resources are devoted to the creation of new weapons to be used against darkness. Once a generation, you can gain one of these weapons for your struggle.

When your scholars bring their most recent creation to your camp, roll +Coins.

On a 7-9 pick one, on a 10+ pick two:

- You can sacrifice it to **Strike** without needing an Opening.
- If you sacrifice a relic to it, it gains the holy tag for the rest of the fight.
- It has three perks and a flaw, or two perks and no flaw.

BODYGUARD

Your explorer has a skilled companion to back them up in **the castle**. Pick one when you make your explorer:

- Your companion fights beside you, giving your attacks the *cleave* tag.
- Your companion protects you, giving you advantage on **Withstand**.
- Your companion heals you: whenever you Shelter, heal 4 Harm.

OPULENCE

When you shower luxury on party of explorers, you may roll +Coins to give them **Rest & Relaxation**.

A WEB OF INFLUENCE

Your contacts stand ready to support your war against evil. *When you roll a 7+ on Reinforcements*, you may pick one extra option.

CONTEXT

Each generation, pick one from each or make your own:

REFUGE

A mansion filled with helpful servants.

A watch station, barricaded up against the darkness.

A scholar's laboratory, fizzing with strange chemicals.

DRIVE

A rumoured treasure that might bring eternal life.

Your political rival, empowered by the regent's corruption.

Rare reagents created by abhorrent rites.

BREACH

The deeper vaults, and a brace of explosives.

A grand soiree, and a forged invitation.

The clock tower, and a zip line anchored to a nearby belfry.



THE SLAYER

STATS

You start with this array; add 1 to a stat of your choice.

Iron +1 Glass ±0 Sulphur ±0 Mercury -1

LOOKS

Ambiguous, Concealed, Feminine, Masculine

Maimed body, lithe body, muscular body, stout body.

Fur-collared greatcoat, austere robes, heavy armour, loose and simple fabrics.

Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

MOTIVATION

Pursuit of excellence, death wish, righteous justice, fierce loyalty, avenging a grudge.

COVENANTS

Go around the table, introducing your explorer to the group. Ask for volunteers for each one:

Who nursed me back to life after the damned almost killed me? Get a minor covenant on them. ***If you prevent their death,*** upgrade to a major covenant. ***If you intentionally abandon them to danger,*** break the covenant.

Who suffered a tragedy because I wasn't strong or fast enough? Get a minor covenant on them. ***If you help them find healing or revenge,*** upgrade to a major covenant. ***If you put your own safety over their revenge or healing,*** break the covenant.

Who am I teaching to fight? Get a minor covenant on them. ***If they get the killing blow on an acolyte you're fighting,*** upgrade to a major covenant. ***If you refuse their assistance,*** break the covenant.

GEAR

Start with a weapon (1 benefit, 1 drawback). In addition, pick one:

- A backup pistol (ranged, reload).
- Breastplate or mail shirt (armour 1 vs physical attacks).
- A shield (Advantage on Withstand, Disadvantage on Dodge).

You always have enough supplies to maintain and repair your weapons and gear.

In addition, pick two:

- Torches and fire lighting kit.
- Bandages and healing salves.
- Anti-venoms and stimulants.
- As many rations as you need.



MOVES

Pick two:

LIGHTNING SWIFT

Your attacks always have the cleave tag, and you have Advantage on *Dodge*.

REGAIN MOMENTUM

When you land a successful *Strike*, heal the last Harm you took.

TRICK WEAPON

Pick two tag sets for your weapon. You can switch between the two at a moment's notice.

BLOOD TRAIL

Once you've landed a *Strike* on a target, get Advantage on future *Strikes*.

TROPHY

When you draw on the power of a trophy carved from an Acolyte, roll **+Iron** on *Drink Deep* instead of **+Fire**.

BLOOD GIFTS

FRENZY

When you roll a miss on Strike, you can **mark contamination** to immediately make another Strike.

LUPINE

Your teeth and fingernails gain a keen edge. You always have access to them, as a weapon with Piercing/Close.

BURNING BLOOD

Your blood burns as it leaves your body. You may **mark contamination** to create a wall of fire most monsters won't willingly cross.

VOICE OF COMMAND

When an Adversary is bearing down on an ally, you can **mark contamination** to force them to target you instead.

DEATH MOVE

As the final blow comes down you choose not to defend yourself, instead using your attacker's momentum to drive your weapon home. Now it's lodged in them, slowing them down and creating a weakness your allies can use to take revenge. Until they take advantage of the embedded weapon as an Opening, your allies take Advantage on Dodge and Rescue.



THE MYSTIC

STATS

You start with this array; add 1 to a stat of your choice.

Iron -1 Glass ±0 Sulphur ±0 Mercury +1

LOOKS

Ambiguous, Concealed, Feminine, Masculine.

Slim body, athletic body, stout body, frail body.

Scholar's robes, exotic jewellery and accessories, occult tools and a mask, simple and unassuming travel gear.

Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

MOTIVATION

Pursuit of wisdom, removing a curse, searching for eternal life, laying a spirit to rest.

COVENANTS

Go around the table, introducing your explorers. Ask for volunteers for each one:

Whose dreams am I studying for occult insight? Get a minor covenant on them. If they let you watch them sleep in **the castle**, upgrade to a major covenant. If you interfere with their dreams without their consent, break the covenant.

Who has an illness I'm keeping at bay? Get a minor covenant on them. If you use medical supplies to heal an injury of theirs, upgrade to a major covenant. If you let the illness progress to gain mystical insight from their symptoms, break the covenant.

Who has insights I don't quite understand? Get a minor covenant on them. If you find fortune by following their advice, upgrade to a major covenant. If you find doom after ignoring their advice, break the covenant.

GEAR

Start with a weapon (1 benefit, 1 drawback). In addition, pick one:

- A protective amulet (destroy to avoid having to mark corruption).
- Purified salt (1 armour when you stand within a circle of it).
- A last-ditch ice burst (stun, painful).

You always have enough supplies to maintain and repair your weapons and gear.

In addition, pick two:

- Crystals that glow like candles.
- Bandages and healing salves.
- A pouch of alchemical samples.
- As many rations as you need.

MOVES

Pick two:

CAST THE RUNES

When you scry into the future, describe your ritual and ask the GM a question that can be answered with yes or no. Then roll **+Water**. On a hit, they'll answer truthfully; get fleeting advantage acting on the answer. On a 10+ you may ask a follow-up question.



SOUL VESSEL

When you defeat a minion of the Regent, you can catch its spirit. If you do, roll +Sulphur. On a hit, you catch it; on a 7-9, it taints you and you **mark contamination**. So long as a spirit is contained, you can freely use one of its moves. When you **mark contamination** you can shift it onto the vessel, destroying the spirit. You must destroy your currently trapped spirit to catch another.

BINDING

When you land a *Strike on an adversary*, choose one:

- It must not cross a specified boundary.
- A specified explorer gets Advantage to Dodge its attacks.
- You can use the wound as a sympathetic weapon: *ranged, piercing, painful*.

ARCANIST

When you use a *spell learnt via Drink Deep*, pick one:

- The spell's effects linger as long as you like.
- The spell affects more or fewer targets than normal.
- The spell doesn't take effect now, but when a condition you set out is met.

BLOOD REINFORCEMENT

When you perform rites to manipulate the castle's power, roll +Relics sacrificed. On a 7-9 pick one, on a 10+ pick two:

- Add a perk to a weapon.
- Remove a flaw from a weapon.
- Raise the armour value of an outfit.
- Crystallise the power in a fragile gem: consume it to heal all harm but mark enough corruption to raise Blood.

BLOOD GIFTS

EYES ON THE INSIDE

You can **mark contamination** to perceive the intangible and immaterial. When you Assess or See Clear with this sight, you can roll +Mercury instead of +Glass.

GHOST EATER

You can consume the spirits trapped in your Soul Vessel. When you do, **mark contamination** but heal your last wound.

THE UNQUIET FLESH

Your body is shifting to become something ancient. You may **mark contamination** to grow an organ or limb - arms, tentacles, wings, eyes, mouths or similar.

THE BLOOD IS LIFE

Your blood is a medium for spirits. When you intentionally shed it, roll +Harm taken. On a 7-9 pick 1, on a 10+ pick 2 about the spirit that forms a body from it: they follow your commands, they remember useful information, you can banish them at will.

DEATH MOVE

As death takes hold, you perform one final work - an alchemy of the soul. Each explorer with you may transfer one point of Blood to you, losing a Blood Advance of their choice but keeping the stat advance or blood gift. For each, one part of your body becomes a Relic usable in arcane rites.



THE BONDED

STATS

You start with this array; add 1 to a stat of your choice.

Iron ±0 Glass ±0 Sulphur +1 Mercury -1

LOOKS

Ambiguous, Concealed, Feminine, Masculine.

Maimed body, lithe body, muscular body, stout body.

Bound to an ancient human ghost, an angel, a demon, an elemental spirit.

Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

MOTIVATION

Cure your condition, prove your worth, find a challenge, test your powers.

COVENANTS

Go around the table, introducing your explorers. Ask for volunteers for at least one:

Who forged my bond with the spirit? Get a minor covenant with them. If you use the spirit to save them from danger, upgrade to a major covenant. If you use the spirit's powers for evil ends, break the covenant.

Who has helped me understand my abilities? Get a minor covenant with them. If they reveal something that upends your understanding of the spirit, upgrade to a major covenant. If you discover they were making it up, break the covenant.

Who is a true friend of mine? Get a minor covenant with them. When you take time out to bond with each other, upgrade to a major covenant. If either of you ignore the other's request for aid, break the covenant.

GEAR

Start with a weapon (1 benefit, 1 drawback). In addition, pick one:

- Martial arts training (tether, close).
- Reinforced coat (armour 1).
- Spiritual aura (Advantage on attacks against intangible foes).

You always have enough gear to maintain and repair your weapons and armour. In addition, pick two:

- Survivalist gear.
- Old journals of past encounters with the castle.
- A hip flask of spirits, skin of wine or pouch of tobacco.
- As many rations as you need.

MOVES

Pick two:

ASTRAL PROJECTION

With force of will you can send your spirit out to act in **the castle**. As long as you concentrate you can see through its eyes and - with effort - pull switches, open doors, move small object, etc.



BLOODY INSIGHT

When you take harm from an adversary, hold 1. Spend 1 to reveal a weakness in their fighting style and give an ally advantage against them. Spend 3 to create an Opening.

SOUL BLADE

Your spirit has its own weaponry. Pick a perk and a flaw for it. When the spirit fights, roll +Sulphur to *Strike* and *Face the Horde*. If you have *Astral Projection*, the spirit can fight with the weapon when distant from you; otherwise, it must stand beside you as it fights.

SPIRITUAL FUSION

When you fuse with your spirit, roll +Sulphur. On a 7-9 hold 2, on a 10+ hold 3. On a 6- hold 1 but mark **contamination**. Spend a hold to use the spirit's power. Work it out with the GM, but it should be about the level of a spell from *Drink Deep*: rapid healing, temporary invulnerability, a burst of flight, etc. When all hold is gone the spirit's power is spent, and you can't fuse again until you use *Shelter* or *Rest and Recreation*.

SPECTRAL KNOWLEDGE

When you ask your spirit for advice, roll +Glass. On a hit, ask a question and the GM will answer honestly... for the most part. On a 7-9 pick two, on a 10+ pick one:

- The spirit will confuse parts of its past for the present.
- The spirit cannot perceive some significant detail.
- The spirit will ask you to agree to something before it answers.

BLOOD GIFTS

BLINK

When your spirit is away from you thanks to *Astral Projection*, you may mark **contamination** to swap places with it.

APOTHEOSIS

Your spirit reveals its true form, though it taxes your body to host it. Mark **contamination** to channel its full power into an attack, giving it Advantage and a tag of your choice.

HALF-DEAD

The spirit's connection to your body is pushing your mortality away. Gain 1 Armour against physical attacks, but take 1 more harm from magical/spiritual attacks.

MEDIUM

You can mark **contamination** to summon a spirit of place, the unquiet dead, or a lesser imp or seraph. They won't be hostile - at least, at first.

DEATH MOVE

As your life fades, the spirit reveals why it was bound to you and reveals a choice:

- **Transfiguration:** The spirit merges with you. You stand back up, burning with power, and you're immune to harm for the rest of the fight. Then you die.
- **Guardian Angel:** As you die the spirit vows to continue your mission. For the rest of this generation, it'll follow the other players and provide whatever aid it can.
- **Damnation:** The spirit is banished, but **the castle** takes its place. Mark **contamination** for each point of Harm you heal. From then on, any time you would take Harm you mark **corruption** instead.



THE RECKONER

STATS

You start with this array; add 1 to a stat of your choice.

Iron -1 Glass +1 Sulphur 0 Mercury 0

LOOKS

Ambiguous, Concealed, Feminine, Masculine.

Spindly body, stout body, athletic body, out-of-shape body.

A brace of elaborate lenses and telescopes, a slate of sketched equations and a wrist-mounted abacus, camouflage and dull colours, bags full of scrolls and tomes.

Asian or South Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, _____

MOTIVATION

Understand the nature of reality, push back chaos, test your will, guide allies safely home.

COVENANTS

Go around the table, introducing your explorers. Ask for volunteers for at least one:

Who has sworn to protect me? Get a minor covenant with them. If you save them from mortal danger, upgrade to a major covenant. If you leave them behind and get hurt, break the covenant.

Who has experience with twisted reality? Get a minor covenant with them. If their insight helps you realise some truth of **the castle**, upgrade to a major covenant. If either of you reveal you were misleading the other, break the covenant.

Who can hide even from you? Get a minor covenant with them. If they show you their secret techniques, upgrade to a major covenant. If you draw attention and harm to them, break the covenant.

GEAR

Start with a weapon (1 benefit, 1 drawback). In addition, pick one:

- A crossbow (ranged, reload).
- Protective gear (armour 1 vs cold, heat and corrosion).
- An old map (sacrifice to get 2 *Travel the Labyrinth* hold).

You always have enough gear to maintain and repair your weapons and armour. In addition, pick two:

- Long-burning glow sticks.
- Chalk, paints and dyes to mark the corridors.
- A theodelite and a spirit level.
- As many rations as you need.

MOVES

Pick two:

BEND TIME

When you roll 10+ on Dodge, time seems to slow for everyone except you. If you can perform your next action within a few seconds, it'll have Advantage.



RESHAPE CHAOS

The shifting nightmare of **the castle** bends to your will. *You may spend Travel the Labyrinth hold*, 1-for-1, to uncover one of these details in your environment:

- A mechanism that will close off a passage.
- A secret passage or trapdoor to shelter from harm.
- An environmental hazard (caustic vat, rockslide, fuel tank, etc) ready to be set off.

PINNING FIRE

Your shots are precise and lethal. When you attack a foe with a *ranged* weapon, the foe must choose: remain where they are, or be taken out (if they're a minion) or provide an Opening (if they're an adversary).

TRUE SIGHT

You can always recognise an illusion or supernatural deception as what it truly is. In addition, you get Advantage on *See Clear*.

AND NEXT YOU'LL SAY...

When you tell an opponent what they'll do next, roll +Glass. On a hit, they pick one:

- They do exactly what you predicted.
- They stumble, hesitate or flinch.

On a 10+, reveal a trap you set up to take advantage of your prediction. If they go through with the predicted action, the trap creates an immediate Opening or takes out a minion.

BLOOD GIFTS

JUST YOU AND ME

If you're within arm's reach of a foe, you can **mark contamination** to reshape **the castle** and trap you both within an empty room. The previous state is restored when you will it, or when you take a major wound.

WORLDS AWAY

If a foe's within arm's reach of you, you can **mark contamination** to reshape **the castle** such that you are separated by a deep chasm, a barricade or a surging river (of what?).

CHAOS EYES

The shifting chaos of **the castle** bleeds out of your mind and into those that meet your gaze. Your eyes are a weapon with *ranged, piercing, unstable*.

PSYCHOPOMP

Within **the castle**, dreamlands and myths and stranger realms besides find physical form. You can mark corruption and spend 2 Travel the Labyrinth hold to guide your group to or from: an individual's psyche, the land of the dead, where **the castle** comes from.

DEATH MOVE

As you die, you command one final effort of will to enforce order on **the castle**. The current ward locks down - your allies have unlimited Travel the Labyrinth hold there. It's harder to affect more distant areas, but you can lock the regent and their acolytes into their respective wards and rewrite the connections between them.

CHAPTER 4: RUNNING THE GAME



BASE ELEMENTS

AGENDA

Make the world feel real.

Fill the character's lives with action and adventure.

Play to find out what happens.

WHAT TO SAY

What your prep demands.

What the rules demand.

What honesty demands.

PRINCIPLES

Keep momentum up.

Make a move that follows.

Begin and end with the fiction.

Think offscreen too.

Taint everything **the castle** contacts.

Give power alongside corruption.

Twist reality around them.

REACTIONS

THE DARK MENAGERIE

THE ACOLYTE'S MINIONS

ASSIGNING HARM

Minions by default deal 1 Harm. Add 1 for each:

- The minion is towering and powerful.
- The minion empowers its attacks with magical force.
- The attack is close-range and brutal.

BUILDING AN ACOLYTE/REGENT

HARM

To work out how much harm an attack from an adversary does, follow these guidelines:

By default, their attacks deal two harm. Stick with this if you don't have reason to change it.

An adversary may deal one harm if they are particularly weak in a certain circumstance - for example, if a fire demon is attacking you while you're underwater.



An adversary may deal three harm if their attacks are particularly effective in a certain circumstance - for example, if a lightning demon is attacking you while you're underwater.

An attack can deal four harm if the adversary needed to first take some action setting it up - for example, if a flesh demon needs to merge with your flesh before bursting out in shower of gore.

Finally, only use attacks dealing 5 harm if they need time to build up, the players have an opportunity to get away, and the attack destroys one of the adversaries' qualities.

EXAMPLE QUALITIES

GOTHIC ACTION AND BLOOD-SOAKED ADVENTURE

DESCRIBING ACTION

BUILDING MOOD

