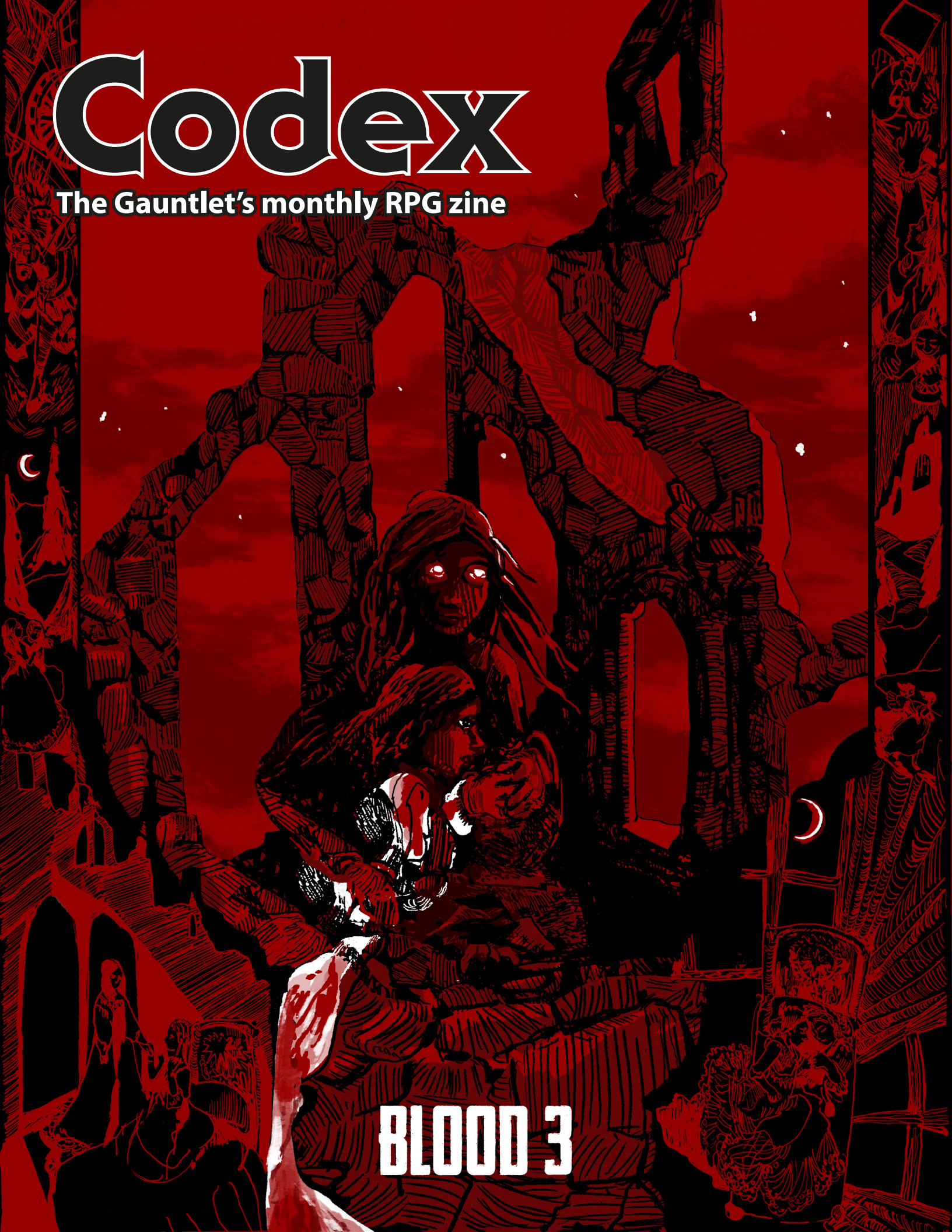


Codex

The Gauntlet's monthly RPG zine

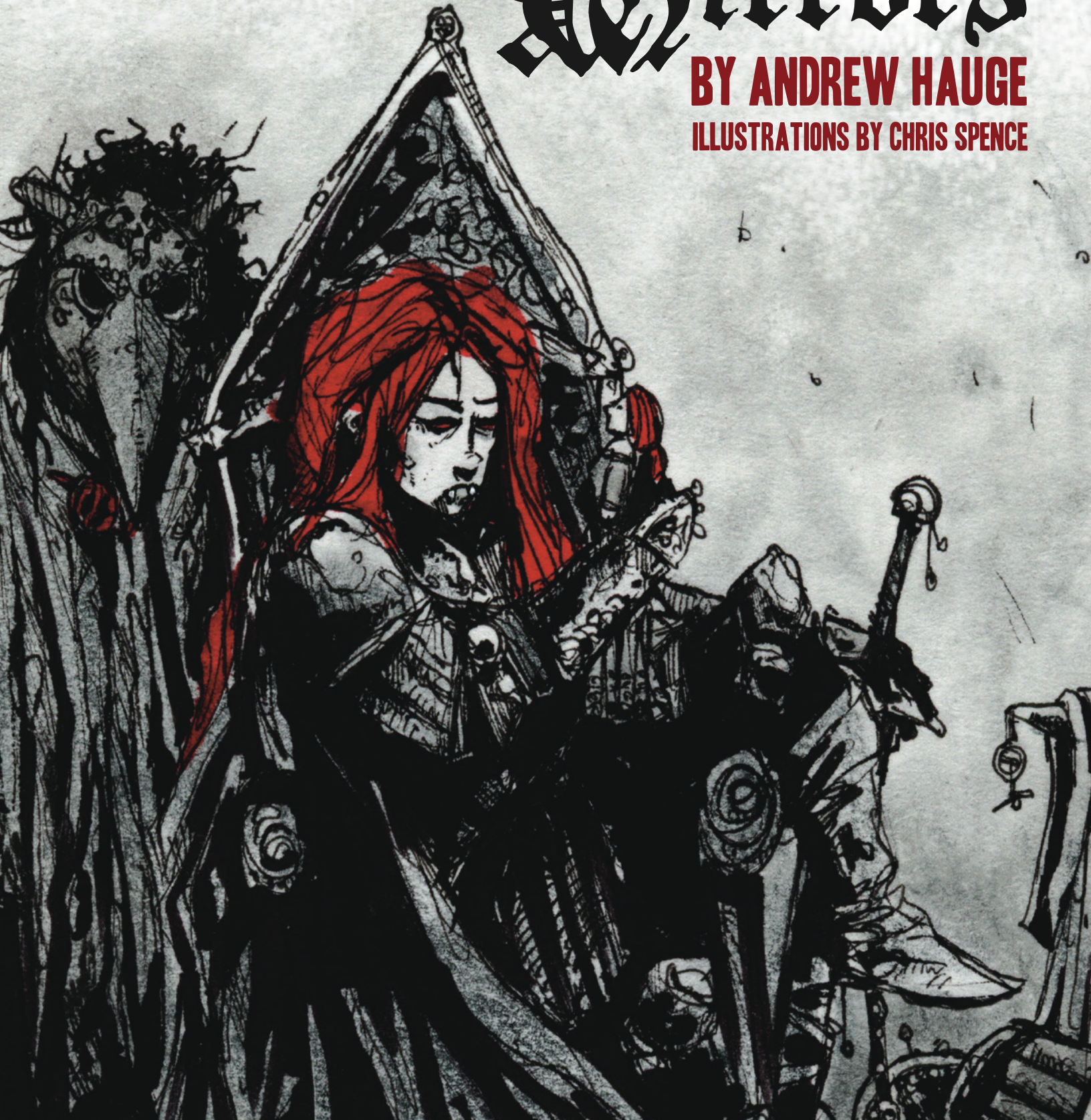


BLOOD 3

Blood and Mirrors

BY ANDREW HAUGE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRIS SPENCE



You are vampires,

fiends of the night who steal sustenance from mortal lives.

You do not understand how to sate the void inside of you, a lack

and a hollowness that yearns to be satisfied by *something*. The Hunger rises within you, raging and trying to drown out the whisper of humanity beneath your lifeless visage.

Blood & Mirrors is an adaptation of Epidiah Ravachol's fantasy game *Swords Without Master*, telling vampire horror from the perspective of the vampires. Through different phases of the game, you watch vampires grapple with their forgotten humanity, which threatens to undo them wholly.

REQUIRED ITEMS

- Two six-sided dice: one vibrant and energetic, like a fresh crimson, and the other gloomy and melancholy, like the deep purple of night
- Photographs and other inspirational materials for stories of vampiric horror
- Printouts of the seven Mask cards included with the game
- Paper for character sheets and to record the Chronicles and Vampire Laws
- Writing implements
- Three or four other players

ATMOSPHERE AND CONTENT

Even within vampire horror, there's many different takes, whether it's the dark comedy of *What We Do in the Shadows*, the brooding romantic contemplation of *Only Lovers Left Alive*, or the bizarre monstrosity of the classic *Dracula*. **Blood & Mirrors** is designed for dark, visceral vampire horror, so take time before play to discuss the tone and what you like in vampire stories.

This game might get uncomfortable, and that's okay. Vampires are predators, pretty skeezy creatures, and there's no pretense here that the characters you'll probably be playing are good people. Vampires being fictional creatures makes many people more comfortable with exploring dark themes through vampire fiction. However, to do that, it's important to make sure you can set hard limits on your play.

There's a number of tools that have been developed to manage difficult content in games, including **Lines and Veils**, John Stavropoulos' **X-Card**, and Beau Sheldon's **Script Change**. Sometimes, stuff crosses lines, and these tools help you flag that and set a hard boundary for someone who needs it.

Before you start playing, look through the Masks deck as a group and make sure that the group is willing to play with them. You can easily remove a few from the deck if you need to.

SETTING THE STAGE

As a group, answer these questions using the options provided.

This story spans (*pick one*) **great lengths** | a small portion of **time**, beginning in the (*pick one*) **ancient** | **classical** | **medieval** | **modern** | [**other**] age.

The setting is (*pick one*) **the world** | a **grand city** | a **sprawling town** | a **small community** | [**other**].

Mortals are overall (*pick one or more*) **superstitious** | **hateful** | **innocent** | **afraid** | **protective** | **enthralled** | [**other**].

Mortals treat the supernatural with (*pick one or more*) **fear** | **disdain** | **hate** | **reverence** | **bewilderment** | [**other**].

The creatures of the night are (*pick one*) **secretive** | **hunted** | **brashly open** | **in charge** | [**other**].

THE TWO TONES

The two dice you roll represent two **TONES**, two swathes of imagery and vivid description, two slices of the evocative tapestry of horrors: the vibrant Sanguine and the gloomy Stygian. Use dice of different colors for this, although you are encouraged to find the most lovingly-crafted and overwrought shades that you can. What's important is that everyone understands which die is which.

When you roll the dice, the die with the higher result tells you which Tone colors your actions. Whether what you do is a "success," a "failure," or neither, is usually at your discretion.

As you play the game, an **OVERTONE** will always be present, describing the tenor of the scene, whether it be a feverish aura of fear amongst mortals, quiet whispers in the dead of night, or the violent press of a mob spilling out into the streets, incensed. Your actions, interweaving in their own Tones, will sometimes contrast and sometimes reinforce this Overtone, but they do not often change it.

The **SANGUINE** tone is exuberant and feral: bloody, vicious, badass, and infused with vitality. A vampire lord pirouettes through the throng, a red dagger flashing as he strikes. The Heir leaps from the shadows with an animal ferocity, inhibitions drowned by her prey's scent. Fire in her eyes, a newborn vampire mocks and rankles her elder without mercy.

The **STYGIAN** tone is brooding and morbid: reflective, regretful, quiet, and overlaid with the night. A vampire looms over the garden, sending a chill across the skin of their servitors who attend to the venue. The lights of the city above are extinguished in inky darkness. The story of a lover's life is whispered as he lays upon a marble slab in the crypts.



VAMPIRE CREATION AND SETUP

All players but one create a Vampire to play during the game; the remaining player is the **OVERPLAYER**, who will facilitate the game. The Overplayer should be fairly familiar with the rules.

To begin the creation of your Vampire, find a **PHANTASM**: an image or other physical thing, often a work of art, that speaks to you of a vampire. Perhaps it is imagery of a city's nightlife, or of Gothic imagery. It could also be something that makes you think of a vampire's mortal past, like a prized possession, a long-dead loved one, or an old poem. The best Phantasms are the ones that shape stories within you, creating an image from the void.

Visualize this creature. Blood is in the air. Perhaps they stand atop the highest tower in the city, or within a crypt of endless night. There is a crack, a flash of light in the shadows. Imagine ways that your Vampire might respond. Take a sheet of paper and record for yourself two **OMENS**, two actions which the Vampire might take, one Sanguine and one Stygian. **Once per game, you may strike out one of your Omens and use it to replace whatever you rolled, ignoring the dice completely.**

Example Omens:

- *(Sanguine) He loosens his jaw, cackling in glee and baring fangs in a display of ferocity.*
- *(Sanguine) She rends her sleeve and then strikes with impossible speed.*
- *(Stygian) She strides past the onlookers, a cloud of night filling the sky in her wake, silencing all.*
- *(Stygian) They incant a litany of the lives they have taken, attaching a memory to each one.*

Once you have written two Omens down, write a list of three to five **CLAIMS** for your Vampire. Claims are pieces of the mortal world which your Vampire holds sway over, even including their very name. Claims may also be beloved thralls or other prized possessions, houses, businesses which your Vampire controls, organizations, nemeses, or even a genuine relationship with a mortal (impossibly rare as it is).

Take as many Claims as you need to define your Vampire. That which you claim is yours; all else is fair game.

After the Vampire characters have been created, shuffle the Mask deck and place one on the table, action side up, for each Vampire player. Set out a sheet of paper and label it "Chronicle," and set aside three portions of the paper, each big enough for a single question. Label those portions "Chapters."

POWERS AND PRIVILEGES

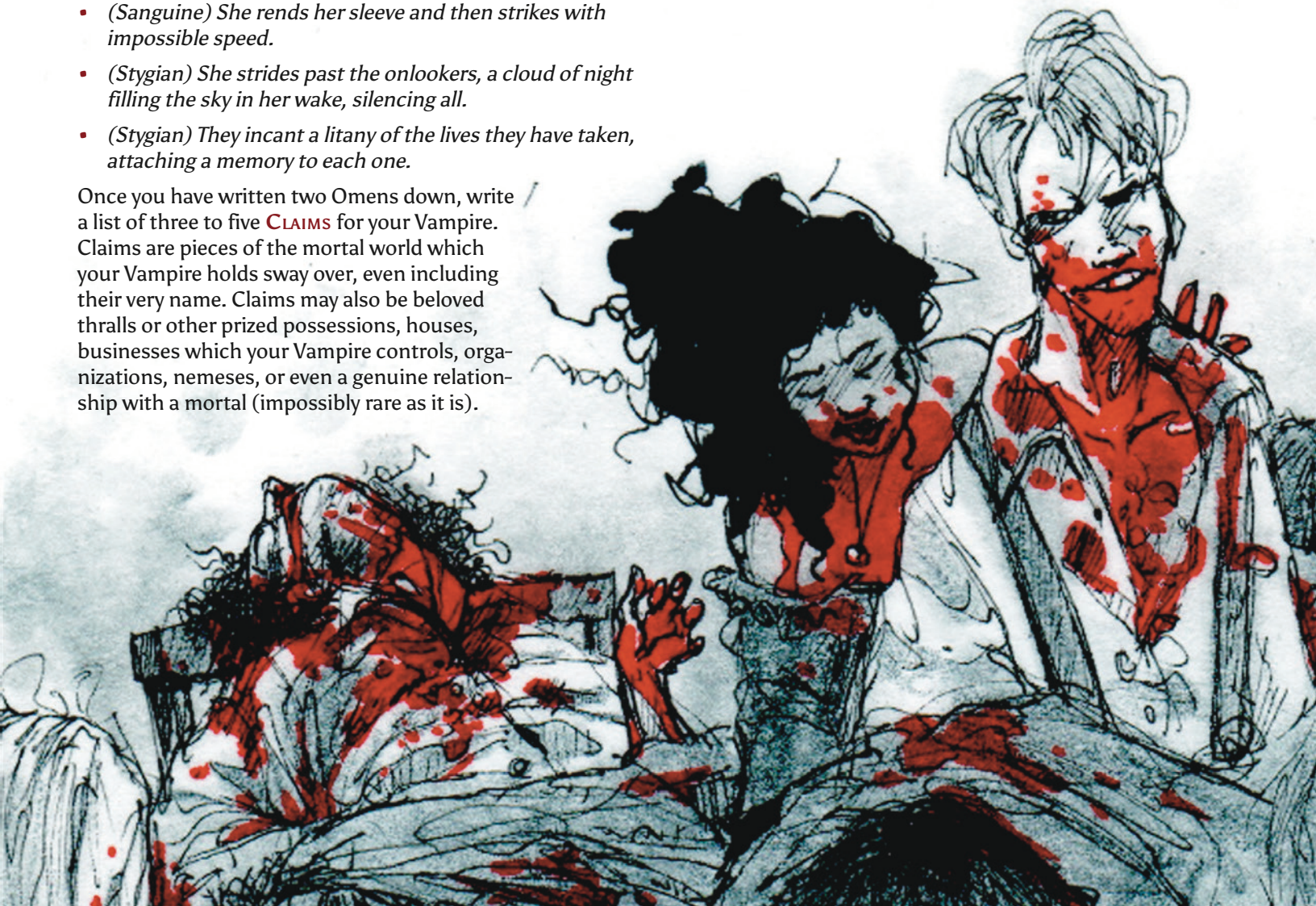
As you play the game, keep in mind the following rules on who has dominion over what. Players may always choose to cede parts of this dominion temporarily, if they desire.

Vampire players always have final say over:

- The actions of their Vampires (and the consequences of these actions)
- The ultimate fates of their Vampires
- The thoughts and feelings of their Vampires
- Any serious permanent doom or ill that may befall their Vampires.

This power also extends to all of a Vampire's Claims.

Everything else is open for interference, including the many denizens of the mortal world. Any player may speak for them or portray them, if needed.



The Flow of Play

After setup is complete, introduce your characters. Then, the Overplayer chooses one of the three phases and begins play. (If you, Overplayer, are truly stumped for a beginning, the Intrigue phase is always a good way to begin stirring the pot.)

The Overplayer then begins by setting the scene, rolling the dice and using the Overtone rolled to provide a glimpse of the mortal world. Action passes from Vampire to Vampire (the exact method varies, depending on the phase; see below); each time, a Vampire rolls the dice and then takes an action, following the Tone of the die that rolled higher.

Sometimes, both dice will be tied. This means that a **VEXATION** occurs: the ambitions and desires of the Vampire have taken over, and they are stymied in their action.

First, the Overtone Wflips to its opposite (from Stygian to Sanguine, or from Sanguine to Stygian). Then, the Vampire player describes how their Vampire is taken by flights of fancy, abandons their action, and escalates the situation, following the new Overtone.

If both dice show a result of 3 or lower, a complication happens: your Vampire has a moment of humanity that bleeds through, with consequences. Carry out your action (or your Vexation), and then describe how your Vampire's lapse made the situation irredeemably messy. Then, write down a **VAMPIRE LAW** that you should have followed instead.

(Remember that you can always use an Omen, once per game, to ignore the dice. This lets you ignore Vexations and moments of humanity!)

Normally, the phase ends when the Overplayer decides to end it, which can be at whichever time they want. Then, they choose a new phase, and continue as before.

However, any Vampire player can end a phase immediately by indulging a Mask. They take a Mask from the table, and violently close the scene by taking the action on the Mask. In this moment of frenzy, that Vampire is even allowed to destroy one of their Claims! Afterwards, they choose which phase happens next, and play continues as normal. **However, any Vampire player with a Mask cannot take or receive the dice.**

When only a single Mask remains unclaimed, flip it over to the question side. Then, the Vampire player without a Mask asks a question based on that prompt, and records it in an empty Chapter space on the **CHRONICLE**. If all three Chapters are filled, continue to the Endgame (see below); otherwise, shuffle all the Masks together and deal one Mask to the table for each Vampire player, action side up.

GAMEPLAY: THE INTRIGUE PHASE

The **INTRIGUE PHASE** explores the connections between vampires as they clash over petty and grand needs, enmeshing one another in schemes and plots to keep themselves busy.

The Overplayer begins the Intrigue phase by rolling for Overtone and providing a glimpse of the city, brimming with threats and promises. Then, they pass the dice to a Vampire player, and give them a need which must be satisfied. This need might be blood, power, secrets, or something else. The Vampire player explains how they plan to sate the need, and then invites any of the other Vampires to join them in this action, offering one of the dice.

The first Vampire player who accepts the invitation takes the offered die, and then both players roll. Their Vampires are bound together to the result, whatever it may be. Hitting the Tone, they work together to describe how the two Vampires satisfy the need (or, in a Vexation, how one or both of the Vampires pursue other interests). After this, the first Vampire takes both dice and passes them to another Vampire player, giving them a new need, and the phase goes on.

If no Vampires answer your invitation, treat the result as a Vexation, then pass the dice, giving the next Vampire a new need.

GAMEPLAY: THE MORTAL PHASE

The **MORTAL PHASE** deepens the relationships the Vampire has with mortals, and it sheds light on their dangerous human vulnerability, reminding them of the mortality that birthed them.

The Overplayer begins the Mortal phase by rolling the dice for an Overtone and setting a glimpse of the city in motion, in a particular season and mood. Then, they make a demand of any Vampire and hand their player the dice. This demand must showcase that Vampire in their human element. For example: "Show us how you befriend Argent the bartender," or "Show us how you attend a concert showcasing the works of your favorite composer."

The Vampire player rolls the dice, hits the appropriate Tone, and fulfills the demand as they interpret it (or fails to meet the demand, if they roll a Vexation). After they do this, they pass the dice to another player (even the Overplayer!) and make a demand of them.

If any player makes a demand of the Overplayer, it should be a demand about the connection of a mortal to your Vampire. "Show us Quentin's obsession over the Red Count," or "Show us how Emi protects Legatus's secret," for instance.

When this phase ends, each Vampire player may, if they desire, add something or someone their Vampire encountered to their Vampire's list of Claims.



GAMEPLAY: THE SHADOW PHASE

The **SHADOW PHASE** gives us the discourse of the Vampires, as they distract themselves by watching and commenting on the inferior humanity.

The Overplayer begins the Shadow Phase by rolling the dice and using the Overtone rolled to showcase a glimpse of human tensions that can blend and mix with the menacing auras of the Vampires. They portray mortals doing a particular activity, and then place the dice in the center of the table.

At this point, any Vampire player may take the dice and roll, keeping the dice in front of them. Following the Tone, they describe a scene where their Vampire watches the mortals, and then may invite any other of the Vampires at the table to join them in free dialogue and interaction. Other players may also request invitation, but cannot enter without being invited.

When the player who holds the dice tires of the conversation, they return them to the center of the table and close the scene. At this point, another Vampire player may pick up the dice and roll, continuing as above.

During this phase, ignore moments of humanity. If you roll a Vexation, the Overtone flips and you use that to begin your scene, but otherwise treat it as a normal roll.

THE ENDGAME

When the third Chapter in the Chronicle contains a question, the Endgame begins. From this point forward, whenever a Vampire player rolls the dice, they have an additional option: reincorporating these elements. You reincorporate one of these elements in two possible ways.

First, you may answer one of the Chapter questions instead of rolling. Observe all normal rules respecting the thoughts and actions of the other Vampires.

Second, you may show how your Vampire has learned to uphold a Vampire Law, or show how they will never truly obey that Law.

Once you have reincorporated, you may no longer receive or roll the dice. Strike out that question or Law; nobody else may reincorporate it. When only a single Vampire has not reincorporated, the game ends. That Vampire may narrate an epilogue, if they wish.

SPECIAL THANKS

Epidiah Ravachol, for creating Swords Without Master

Mark Diaz Truman and Nathan Hicks, for advice, consultation, and encouragement

Playtesters: Lucian Kahn, David Morrison, Adam Poppenheimer



THE MASK OF
Blood

ACTION

Take life from the joyful

THE MASK OF
Mirrors

ACTION

Display ruthless duplicity

THE MASK OF
Threnody

ACTION

Immerse yourself in
destruction

THE MASK OF
Malice

ACTION

Show cruelty to the
undeserving

THE MASK OF
Rebels

ACTION

Excite and indulge
the wicked

THE MASK OF
Reprisal

ACTION

Destroy those who
wronged you

THE MASK OF
Guile

ACTION

Lead the innocent to
evil deeds

**MASK CARDS
(FRONT)**

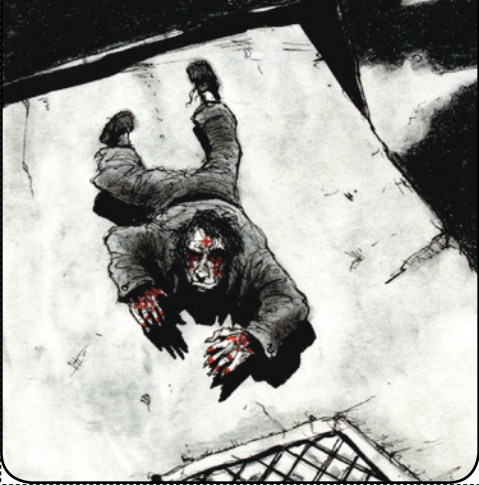
ASK

about that which
you cherish



ASK

about those you
trust



ASK

about those who
love you



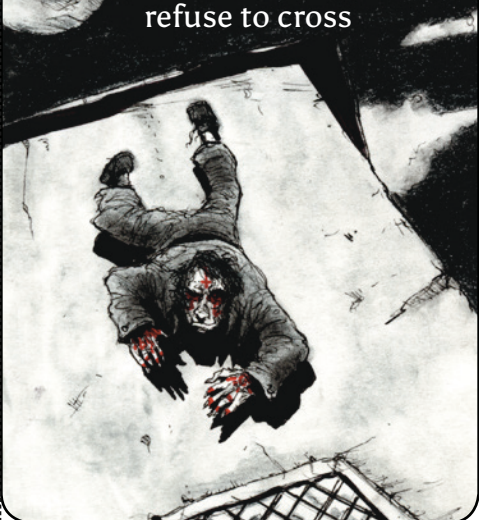
ASK

about your guilt



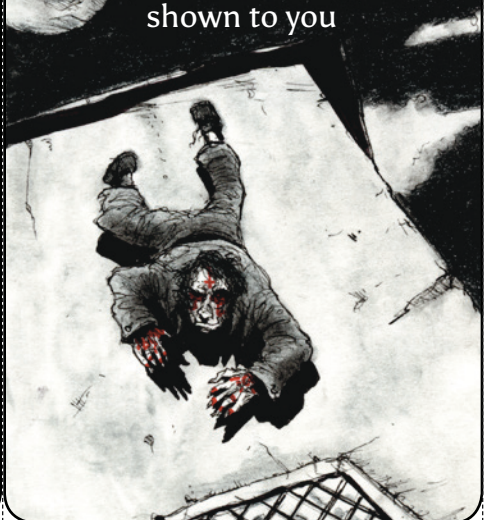
ASK

about the lines you
refuse to cross



ASK

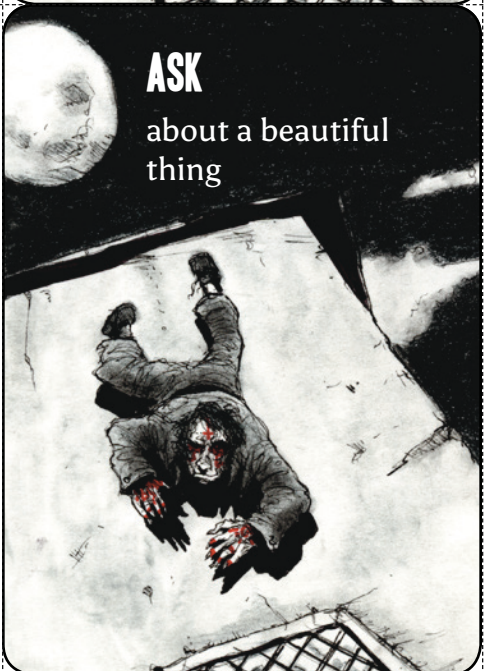
about the kindness
shown to you



MASK CARDS (BACK)

ASK

about a beautiful
thing





THE CALYDONIAN BOAR

a game of Hunter and Preys

by Ludoviko Alves





From the worm's coils to the Golden Throne, all knew of her displeasure.
Careless words of tyrant make a travesty of even the greatest sacrifice.

For King Oeneus's impiety: his people will suffer
No more kingdom, no more Calydon.

To plow the fields of Her new primordial domain, a beast of prodigious might delivered.
A forest from a city.
A boar without lack of prey.





Welcome to Calydon, City of Dionysus. It was once the jewel of Greece, prosperous and beautiful. But that was before King Oeneus offended Artemis. The Lady of the Bow is beyond appeasement: She has made Calydon Her enemy and wants to see the city destroyed. A massive boar, fast of charge and with skin of barbed iron and plated bronze, torments the countryside. This porcine tyrant will make Her will true. You play Hunters, the greatest Heroes of the age, answering King Oeneus's call for someone capable of slaying this boar. The people hide behind walls as the wild reclaims vineyards and crops; you face the toughest quest of your life.



TOUCHSTONES

This game is very much inspired by Greek Myth, in particular stories about epic hunt and divine punishment.

Mythology: Ovid's *Metamorphosis*; Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*; Homer's *Iliad*; *The Red Book of Hergest*; Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*.

Fiction: Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*; China Mieville's *The Scar*.

Non-fiction: *The Amazons* by Adrienne Mayor.

Film: *47 Ronin*, *Princess Mononoke*.

Roleplaying Games: *Trophy*, *The Final Girl*.



You Will Need:

- 3-6 players
- 1 deck of playing cards with aces and jokers removed
- Index cards
- Piles of d6s

The Hunters

Each player creates 3-4 hunters and writes their details on an index card. A hunter has a name and a defining concept: a nickname, a skill, or an impressive feat.

Examples

Nestor, the Youthful Hunter	Echion, the First Spear
Kometes, Who Sailed Beyond Pillars	Hyleus, Thrice-Doomed
Eurytion, Friend to None	Amphiaraus, the Miserable Soldier
Dryas, Child of Ares	Ancaeus, Pig-Bleeder
Meleager, the Love-Struck	Iphicles, Unfortunate Brother of Heracles
Atalanta, the Horse-Racer	Sipriotes, Artemis-Befitting



Merrymaking and Hospitality

Each player takes turns setting up a scene where we learn more about our Hunters.

Nobody can die during those scenes. You can set the scene as the Hunters travel to the country of Calydon, a flashback to previous quests, as they prepare for the Hunt, or as they enjoy the hospitality of the court of King Oeneus — any point before the Hunt is valid.

Each player selects a Hunter (not limited to the ones they created) by taking their index card, and plays out the scene.

If the scene reveals friendships and rivalries between Hunters, each Hunter marks a Relationship.

If players believe a Hunter acted as befitting of an epic Hero—not necessarily Good or Honorable, but larger than life—give them a Heroism mark.

Players can also establish Relationships and perform feats of Heroism during the Hunt proper. At the end of any Scene, each Hunter asks the table if they acted Heroic or developed a Relationship.

Some example scenes:

- The plight of refugees.
- Seeking the favor of Dionysus.
- Merrymaking and hospitality at the welcome banquet.
- Sneaking into King Oeneus's wine-cellar.
- A javelin-throwing contest.
- Spurned lovers in a crowded palace.
- Lost in the encroaching wilderness, Hunted by the Boar.



First Blood

The first scene shows how dangerous the Calydonian Boar is. In it, unprepared Hunters are killed by the divine beast.

Each player selects a Hunter from among those with the least Heroism or Relationships.

Each Hunter narrates how they pursue the Boar and how the awesome beast turns on them. They can be heroic and capable, but they will die before the scene ends.

The Boar

Lay the aces on the table. Each of them represents a Trophy. All Trophies must be claimed: only then can they slay the Boar.

Ace of Spades (♠):

The Cruel Tusks, capable of tearing divine flesh.

Ace of Clubs (♣):

The Invulnerable Pelt that bends any arrow or spear.

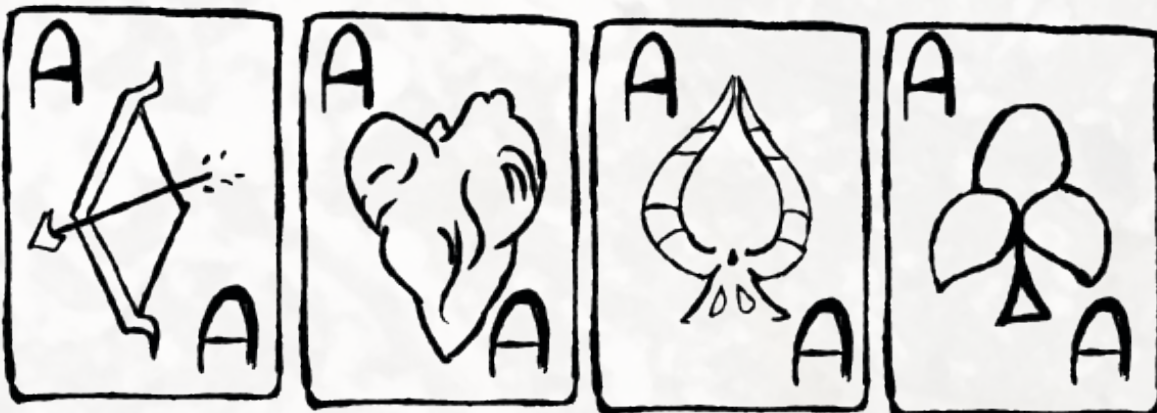
Ace of Hearts (♥):

The Ferocious Heart, that needs no rest or sleep.

Ace of Diamonds (♦):

The Lady of the Bow, arbiter of who hunts and who is prey.

The purpose of each scene is to seize one of these Trophies. The suit of the Trophy becomes the Trump suit for this scene.



The Hunt

You can break down the Hunt into a series of scenes, where hunters encounter the Boar as it rampages through the countryside.

Every scene offers the Hunters the opportunity to claim a Trophy from the Boar - and, ultimately, to kill the beast.

To start a scene, players take turns deciding which Trophy they seek to claim. Every player but one picks a hunter (not limited to those they created). Hand them dice equal to the sum of their Heroism and Relationships, plus one. Players roll their dice and set them in clear view of everyone.

The remaining player acts as the Boar for this scene. They shuffle the deck, draw a card, and sets the initial setup of the scene. The suit of the card sets up the general tone of the scene:

Clubs (♣): Chase

Hearts (♥): Community

Spades (♠): Cruelty

Diamonds (♦): Cunning

The player playing the Boar sets up and resolves scenes. The Boar player draws a card, draws up the scenario based on the suit of the card drawn and the Trophy sought.

After the initial setup, players can manipulate their dice. They can pick one per scene:


- burn a Relation to exchange a die with another player.
- burn Heroism to re-roll a single die.
- tempt fate and embrace hubris. Re-roll all their dice. If they get a pair, they must die this scene.

Each player then assigns one die to the Hunt. Once everyone has done so, the Boar reveals their card.

Trophies

We leave trophies vague on purpose, allowing narrative control over what they are, and the trickery and mettle heroes resort to claim them. Getting a Trophy should always be dangerous and claiming it should raise the stakes and escalate the Hunt.

Do they tear the Ferocious Heart from inside the Boar, opening a wound that leaks corrupting ichor? Do they censor the poetry of the Cruel Tusks, breaking their soul-tearing rhyme and forever ruining song in Calydon? Do they plead for Dionysius' intervention, messing with the Lady of the Bow but drawing the attention of other Gods? Do they boil the Boar until its Invulnerable Pelt of iron and marbles cracks, creating a weakened molten shell of scorching heat?

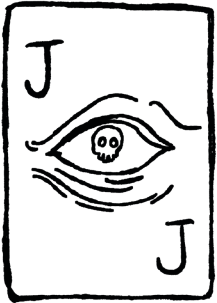


Once all Hunter players have set their dice, you reveal the card and resolve:
Trump (any): kill the Hunter with the lowest die (break ties by rolling against each other). Remove that Hunter and their dice, ignore any other effects of the card, draw a new card, and resolve it.

2-10: If the sum of the Hunter dice beats the value of the Boar card, discard the Trophy. If not, kill the Hunter with the lowest die (break ties by rolling against each other) and the Boar escapes unscathed.

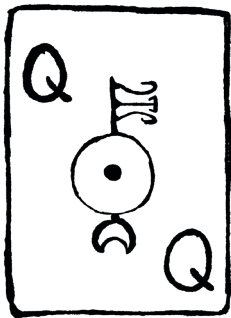
Face Cards: To beat a face card, the Hunters' dice must include a set (a pair or better). If not, kill the Hunter with the lowest die (break ties by rolling against each other) and the Boar escapes unscathed.

Each face card also has additional questions the Boar player can ask the Hunters.



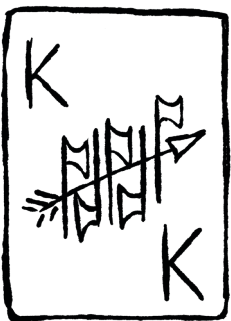
Jack: Your Fates interweave and for a moment it seems like it has always been like this, as if your life has been a prelude to the Hunt.

Ask a Hunter what they see when they look into the eyes of the Boar. Ask any Hunter with a 6 how they know how their Hunter will die.



Queen: The Key to the Divine turns. You get a glimpse at the machinations of Gods. It fades away, as if a dream.

Ask a Hunter how they can feel divine purpose and meddling. Ask any Hunter with a 6 how they became cursed.



King: A family. A kingdom. Decades of war and wanderings. A test of skill that heralds murder. You remember the cost of your Heroics.

Ask a Hunter what they left behind. Ask any Hunter with a 6 who will betray them before the Hunt is over.

Whenever you claim a Trophy, all surviving Heroes gain Heroism. Each Hunter asks the table if they acted Heroic or developed a Relationship.

Pass the role of Boar to another player until one of the following is true:

- There are as many Hunters as players.
- The Hunters have claimed all four Trophies.

Once any of the above happens, proceed to the Final Hunt.

Example of Play #1

Ephesos and Latoreia are claiming the Lady of the Bow. The oracle of Delphos tells them they can earn the love of the Goddess: they must lead the Boar into a trap—and face the danger of divine infatuation.

After re-rolls and exchanges, Ephesos commits a 3 and Latoreia a 6. The Boar reveals his card. Three of Diamonds: the Trump suit for the Lady of the Bow!

Ephesos has the lowest die: she leads the Boar into a quarry, but the might of the beast causes a landslide. Artemis, enamored by her grace and cunning, saves Ephesos from the rocks by turning her into an ever-flowing spring.

The Boar reveals another card: Five of Swords! Since her 6 beats the Boar, Latoreia describes how she maneuvers around the landslide: she lures the Boar with careful shots into the wrong side of the quarry. She departs, as the wind caressing her hair confirms the words of the Oracle.



Example of Play #2

Ephesos and Latoreia are claiming the Ferocious Heart. They need to find the blood-soaked truffles that the Boar loves so much and taint them with paralyzing poison.

After re-rolls and exchanges, Ephesos assigns a 6 and Latoreia a 4. A Jack of Diamonds! The Boar gets the jump on them, ambushing the Hunters as they look for the delicious fungi.

The Boar player asks Latoreia what they see in the eyes of the Boar before they die: Latoreia answers they see her body nurturing the truffles. The Boar asks Ephesos how they find out how they will die. Ephesos answers that just as they sought to poison the Boar, they too will be poisoned.



The Final Hunt

During the Final Hunt, the Hunters make a more or less desperate attempt to kill the Boar.

The Boar will always die at the end of the Final Hunt; however, so will many of the Hunters.

Each player picks a Hunter.

The Hunters are not Claiming any Trophies. If the Boar has any Trophies left, all cards of those suits count as Trumps.

The player that would play the Boar sets up the scene as usual.

The Boar player spreads three cards on the table, facedown.

The Hunters resolve dice as usual; However, if for any reason a Hunter would roll less than three dice, increase that value to three.

The Boar reveals the first card. Each Hunter assigns one die, then resolves the card as you would during any other scene. If there are surviving hunters, repeat with the second card; then repeat with the third.

The Boar dies.

Each player takes turns delivering a short epilogue for their Hunter. Epilogues are one or two short sentences, in which we see them lay claim to one or more Trophies, we witness the fallout of the Hunt, or we learn of further tragedies or adventures.



Example of Play #3

Ephesos and Latoreia meet again for the Final Hunt. They have claimed all the Trophies, so the Boar has no Trump suits. Latoreia has no Heroism or Relationships left, so she would roll less than three dice. She rolls three instead. After re-rolls and exchanges, Ephesos has a 6,5 and 1; Latoreia has a 4,5 and 2.

The Boar reveals their first card: a Two of Diamonds! That will be no problem; Ephesos gives her 1 and Latoreia gives her 2. The Boar reveals their second card: King of Spades. A trickier challenge. Ephesos and Latoreia look at each other; Latoreia commits her 5. Will Ephesos risk facing the third card alone and let Latoreia die by presenting her 6? Or she will make a set with her own 5 and hope together they can beat the third card?



Sequence of Play

Setup

Each player creates 3-4 Hunters.

MerryMaking and Hospitality

Play one Non-Hunt scene per player; create Initial Heroism and Relationships

First Scene

The boar hunts the first party

The Hunt

The role of Boar rotates as players try to claim trophies. Hunters die, Relationships and Heroism are spent and earned.

The Final Hunt

The boar Dies; survivors are decided.



Credits:

Written by Ludovico Alves
Cover illustration by Cecilia Ferri
Layout by Lu Quade

Additional public domain resources: depictions of gods and priests from a drawing of the Regina Vasorum (Queen of Vases) found in Cumae from the Nordisk Familjebok (1907).

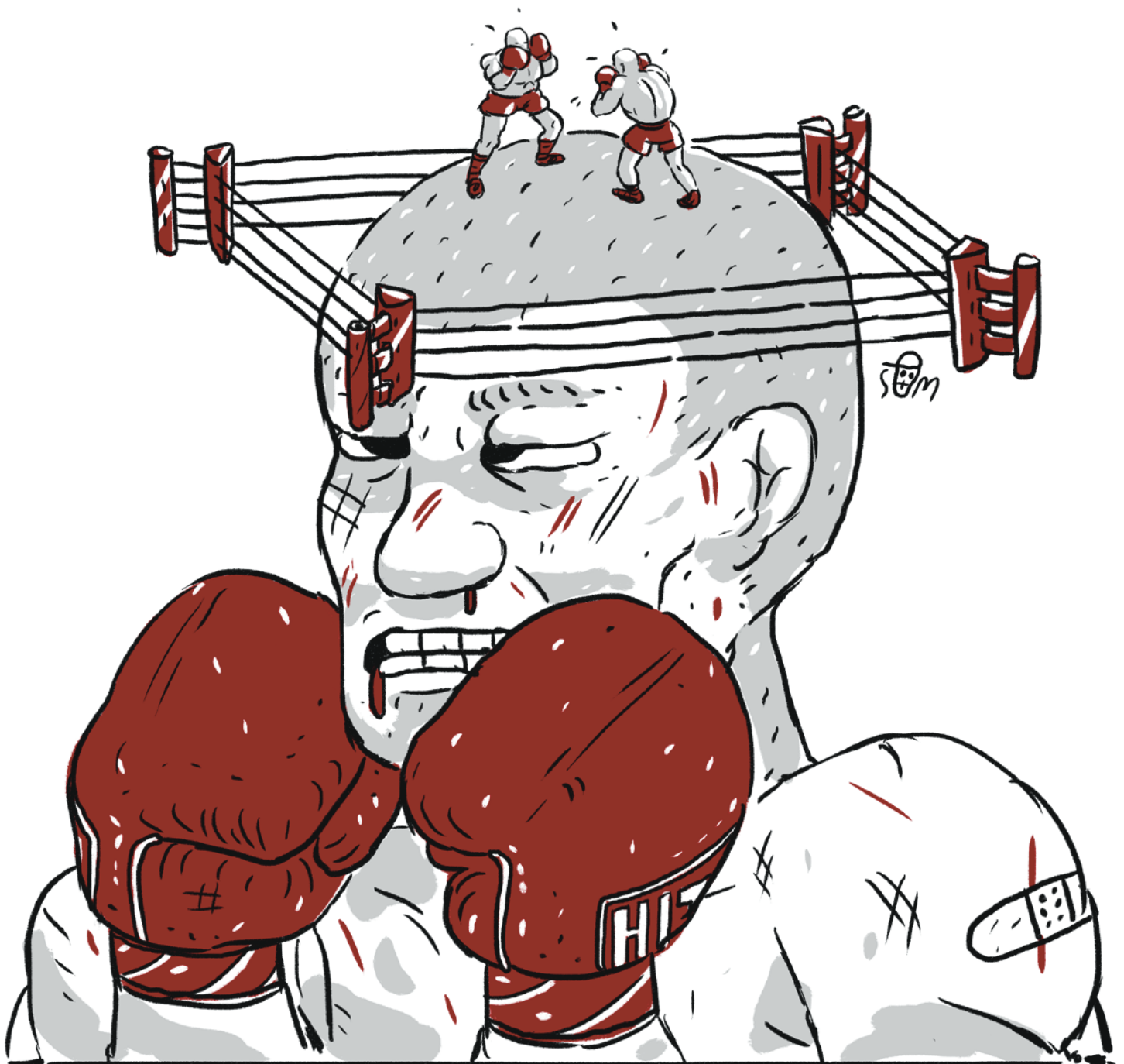
Three rounds of three minutes each.

An opponent in front of you.

An opponent in your head.

Enter the ring. Don't drop your guard.

Confront your demons.



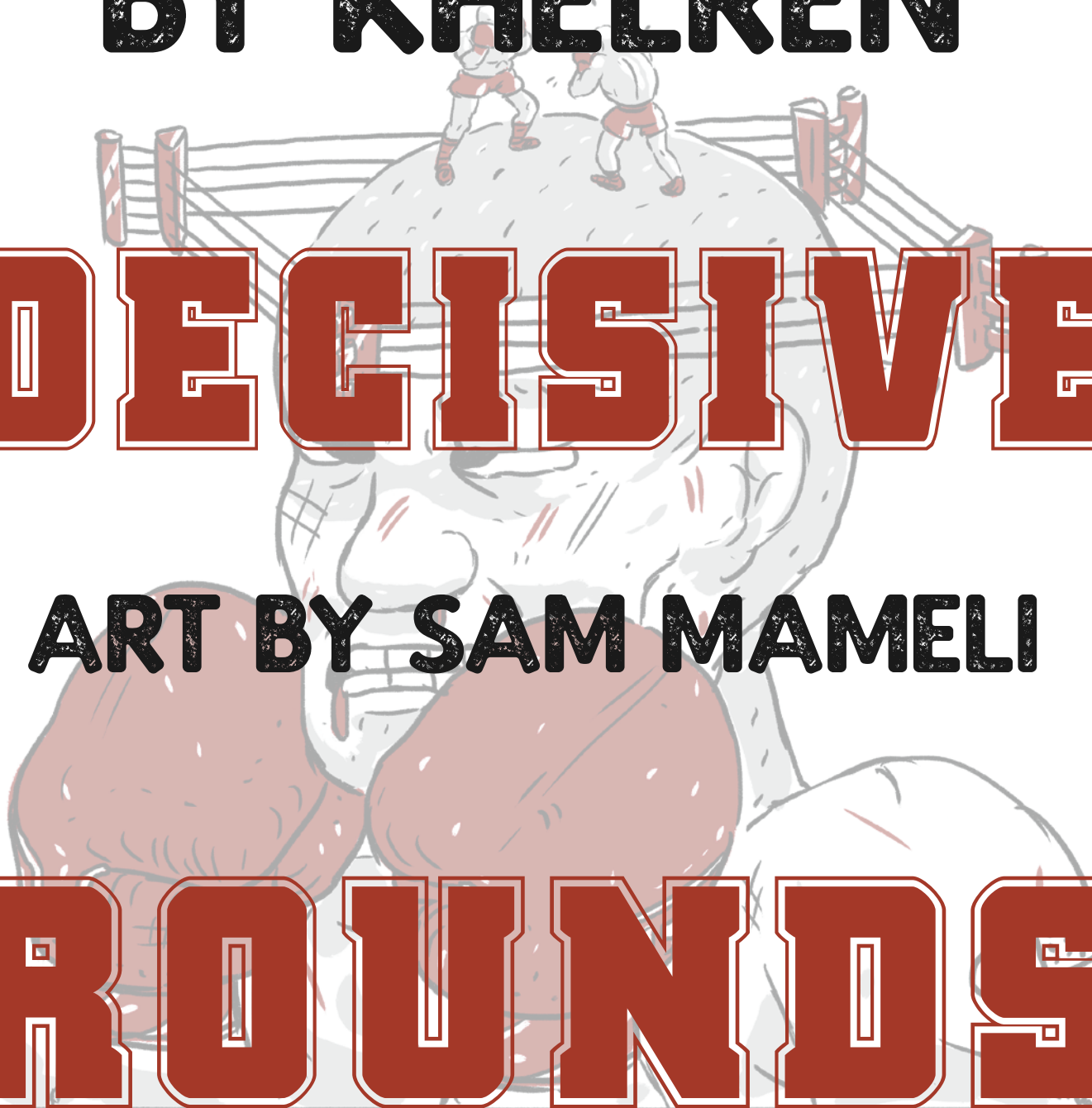
THREE

BY KHELREN

DECISIVE

ART BY SAM MAMELI

ROUNDS



OVERVIEW

Summary

Three Decisive Rounds is a story game depicting a decisive match between two fighters. However, the fight does not take place in the ring only: Great champions must also struggle outside, in their life.

Inspiration

- ★ *Rocky and Creed* (1976-2018)
- ★ *Raging Bull* (1980)
- ★ *Ali* (2001)
- ★ *Million Dollar Baby* (2004)
- ★ “Unfinished Business,” *Battlestar Galactica* (Season 3, 2004-2009)
- ★ *The Wrestler* (2008)

BEFORE THE ARENA

Setup

To play the game, you need:

- ★ Two players
- ★ 5 ten-sided dice (d10)
- ★ 6 tokens
- ★ One to two hours per game

The game provides cards that need to be printed and cut. These cards are then to be shuffled and placed, face down, in the middle of the table, in three stacks according to their number (1, 2 or 3). This number indicates which round they are associated with.

You can read the aforementioned cards before play—there are no secrets on them—or you can choose to be surprised.

For each pile, it is preferable to put the card that says “The bell rings. End of round.” somewhere near the bottom of the pile to ensure players draw a certain number of cards each round, without knowing exactly when the end of the round will be declared.

If you want to avoid a player having to insert the card and being able to guess where it is, you can split each pile in two: one pile will consist of a minimum number of cards (depending on the round, see below), while the other pile will include the end-of-round card and will be shuffled.

I recommend having a minimum of six cards for the first round pile, four cards for the second round, and two cards for the third round.

Then, each player puts a d10 in front of them and sets it to 1. This is the **Fatigue Die**.

Finally, each player begins with three tokens representing their **Grit Points** for the first round.

Context of the Fight

Before beginning the fight, the players should agree whether the fighters are men or women, and choose their weight class. The weight classes are as follows, from lightest to heaviest:

- ★ Flyweight (up to 112 lb / 50 kg)
- ★ Bantamweight (up to 118 lb / 52 kg)
- ★ Featherweight (up to 126 lb / 56 kg)
- ★ Lightweight (up to 135 lb / 60 kg)
- ★ Welterweight (up to 147 lb / 66 kg)
- ★ Middleweight (up to 160 lb / 72 kg)
- ★ Super middleweight (up to 168 lb / 75 kg)
- ★ Light heavyweight (up to 175 lb / 80 kg)
- ★ Cruiserweight (up to 200 lb / 91 kg)
- ★ Heavyweight (over 200 lb / 91 kg)

Character Creation

Each player creates a character. It simply means choosing a name and a nickname for them. Some example lists are provided on the following page.

It is not necessary to define the character more precisely at this stage of the game: The cards the players are going to draw will ask for more details.





CHARACTER NAMES

	First Names	Surnames	Nicknames
1	Ann	Braekhus	Apollo
2	Brahim	Cerdan	Bombardier
3	Chuck	Dixon	Butterfly
4	Claressa	Durán	Champion
5	Giselle	Fury	Cobra
6	Holly	Gatti	Dynamite
7	James	Halmich	Grizzly
8	Joe	Jimenez	Habanero
9	Katie	Juárez	Hitman
10	Laila	Koseki	Invincible
11	László	LaMotta	Kid
12	Manny	Lefèbvre	Knockout
13	Micky	Mathis	Locomotora
14	Mohamed	Monshipour	Marvelous
15	Oleksandr	N'Jikam	Money
16	Rocco	Rijker	Smokin'
17	Ronda	Robinson	Sugar
18	Sonny	Silva	Titan
19	Vitali	Togashi	Tsunami
20	Yuko	Wilder	Undertaker

THE CLASH OF THE TITANS

How to play

The game is divided into three rounds, like a boxing match.

The player who has read the game starts first. Otherwise, the first player to finish their character begins.

Alternatively, flip a coin to see who goes first.

The game proceeds as follows:

1. Each player takes turns drawing a card from the stack corresponding to the current round (stack of cards numbered 1 for the first round, and so on).
2. The player reads the card aloud and follows the instructions written on it.
3. A round ends when a player draws the card that says "The bell rings. End of round."
4. The players proceed to the next round.
5. At the end of the third round, the fight ends.

Scoring and victory

The winner is declared at the end of the fight by the judges, except in the event of a knockout (see below). The fighter with the higher score is ruled the winner.

In the case of a tie, it's a draw.

Sometimes, the real winner of the bout is not necessarily the one who has been declared the winner by the judges. Showing that you're not a loser and that you're able to go the distance against a much greater opponent can be a more important victory than the judges' decision.

KO

If a player doesn't want to let their opponent score a point, they can try to dodge or resist their opponent's hits by rolling a certain number of dice.

In the first round, they roll 1d10.

In the second round, they roll 2d10.

In the third round, they roll 3d10.

If a die shows a number immediately higher than their current Fatigue, they change the side of the Fatigue die to show this new number.

The Fatigue die starts on its 1 side, so if a player rolls a die and it lands on a 2, then the player changes the side displayed by their Fatigue die to 2. If the die result had been a 3 or higher, the side displayed by their Fatigue die would stay at 1.

If they roll several dice and one or more of them land on results immediately above the number shown on their Fatigue die, the player then changes its side to show the highest consecutive number in a chain. Some examples are helpful here:

The player's Fatigue die is set to 2 and the third round has started. They roll 3d10 and get 3, 9, and 4. In this case, they change their Fatigue die directly to 4, since 3 is immediately above 2, and 3 and 4 are consecutive with each other, with 4 being highest in the chain. If the die roll had been 3, 4, and 5, Fatigue would be changed to 5. If the die roll was 3, 6, and 7, Fatigue would be changed to 3. If the die roll had been 4, 5, and 6, Fatigue would remain at 2 since none of the numbers are 3.

Also, when the die is increased, it means the dodge fails or the blow hits too hard to resist. A fresh opponent lands a beautiful blow worth several points. These blows tend to be less precise after a couple of rounds because of the fighters' fatigue. As such, the fighter scores points depending on the current round.

In the first round, they score 3 points for each blow that connects.

In the second round, they score 2 points for each blow that connects.

In the third round, they score 1 point for each blow that connects.

Considering the previous example, the die is set from 2 to 4 in a single hit. The opponent scores 1 point because it's the third round. If it had been the first round, they would have scored 3 points.

If the Fatigue die is set to 10, the fighter is knocked out, unable to get up. The opponent is invited to count out loud and is then ruled the winner of the fight, regardless of the scoring.

1... 2... 3...
4... 5... 6...
7... 8...
9... 10...

Answering the Questions

The questions are there to explore the life and the dramas of the fighters: their personality, goals, and close relationships with other people. There are no right or wrong answers here: players should answer with whatever idea comes naturally or easily—there's no need to have the most original or interesting idea.

ROUND SUMMARY

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Dodge/ Resist	1d10	2d10	3d10
Points Per Blow	3	2	1
Grit Points	3	2	1

Grit Points

When dealing with a card prompt, Grit points are used to veto the answer provided by the opposing player. Spending a Grit point allows a player to formulate their own answer.

In the first round, each player has 3 Grit points.

In the second round, each player has 2 Grit points.

In the third round, each player has 1 Grit point.

Unspent Grit points are lost at the end of a round.

The questions explore the characters further in depth with each successive round. The first round questions help establish elements of the fighter's life, while the third round questions may decide their future, or even implicate them in some kind of shady business!



"I throw several jabs to stop your progress and keep you at a distance."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

"You are the favorite. Everyone expects to see me lose in this fight. What is my weak point?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I work you over to lower your guard, which allows me to throw a solid left hook on your face."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

"I'm a southpaw, a left-handed fighter. I'm talented, it's undeniable, but I still have a lot to learn. Who tries to make me more level-headed?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I take a few threatening forward steps, then I follow with a series of good hits. It's not spectacular but it's clean and it scores points in the judges' minds."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

"I'm a journeyman, a fighter with no greatness, a meatbag for greater fighters to beat on. To get by, I have to settle for a crappy job. What is my day job?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I patiently and constantly apply pressure on you and land a one-two combo that staggers you for a moment."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

"You are a difficult opponent that I have already faced and lost to. What part of your fighting style do I need to figure out if I want to win this time?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I easily deflect your punches. I'm slippery and you can't really land a clean blow, while I take advantage of the slightest of your mistakes, counter-punching you."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

"This fight is my last chance. If I lose, my career is over. Which loved one is in the audience to support me with all their heart?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I maintain the gap, circling away around the whole ring and tiring you. I decide where and when the fight takes place, not you. With a display of such mastery, the audience goes crazy; they are shouting my name."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

"I'm the reigning champion and I'm going to defend my title during this fight. Rumors suggest I stole the title. What are those rumors?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I easily keep you at bay, completely outreaching you with finesse, and it even seems like I'm toying with you."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

"I'm not a popular fighter. The audience doesn't like me. Why do I have a bad reputation, and what have I always refused to do that could have won me public favor?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I slip to avoid punches and then, because I'm faster than you, I land some good jabs and crosses. Just like training practice."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

"Your opponent for this bout got injured and I replaced them, but I lack preparation. Who is my coach and what kind of coach are they?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I duck, diving under your blow, which puts me in an ideal position to hit you hard. Commentators are discussing this masterful move at length. They say the fight should end quickly."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

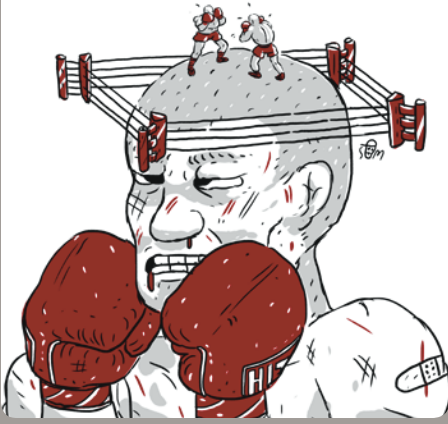
"I'm not fighting for victory. At least not solely for victory. What am I trying to prove or what objective am I trying to achieve here?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

CARDS 1-9 (BACK)

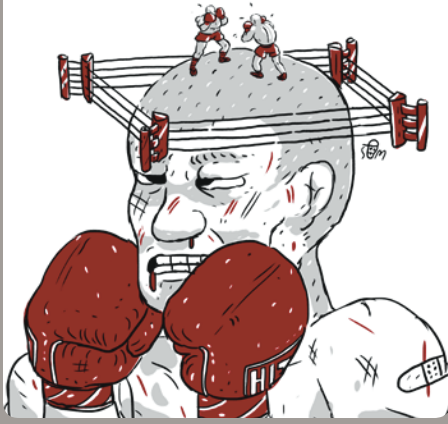
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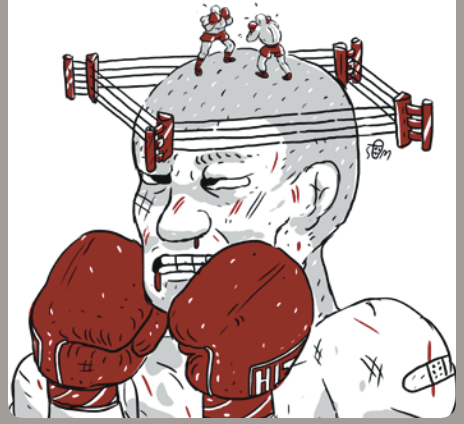
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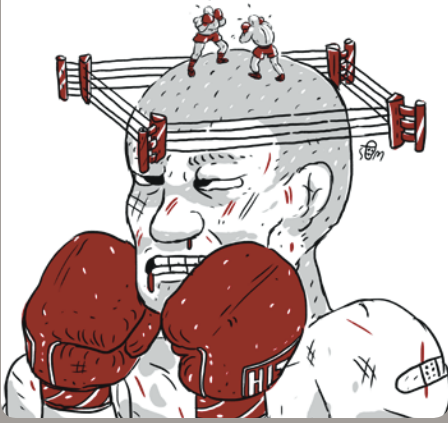
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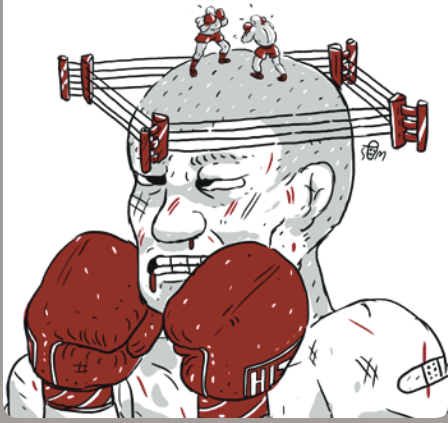
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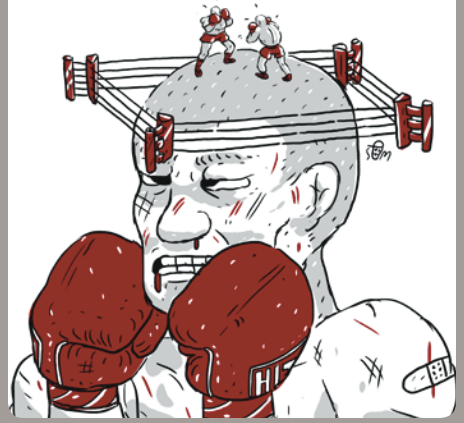
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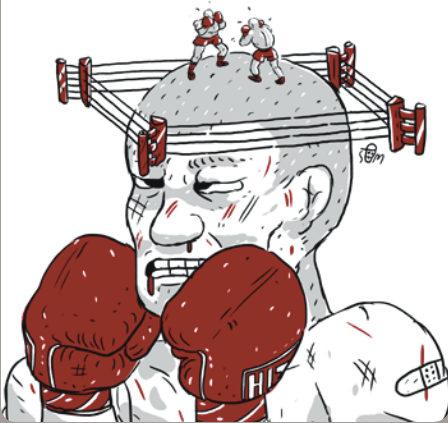
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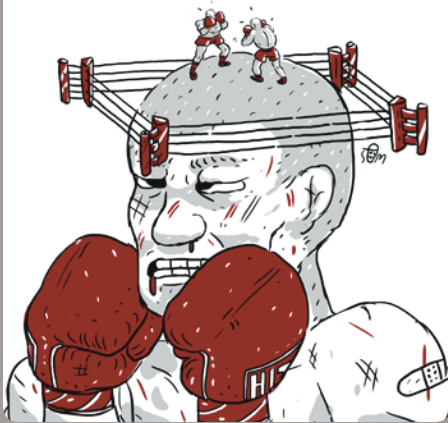
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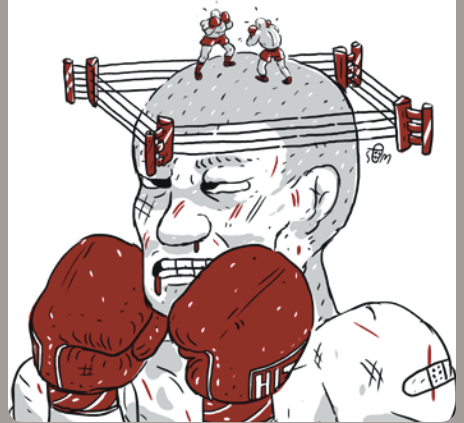
ROUND

1



ROUND

1



"I maintain distance with you, slowly wearing you down. I catch you off guard with a sudden lunge and you take a hit that makes you lose your balance."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

"I think you're no match to me but the truth is I underestimate you. You remind me of someone. Who is it and what feeling, positive or negative, do I have about this?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I fight with my usual style, obviously not disconcerted by my opponent. The fight is like a walk in the park for me. I'm imperial. Yeah! I'm the prettiest thing that ever existed!"

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 3 points.

"The place where I train has a history and is particularly important to me. Where do I usually train and what is my relationship with this place?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

THE BELL RINGS.

END OF ROUND.

"I hit you with a beautiful, perfectly circular hook right into the chin. You're staggered for a few seconds."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

"This fight reminds me of my early days as a second-rate fighter. What friend has been my fellow sufferer for all these years and why have I lost sight of them?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I set a trap and you rise to the bait: I easily block your attack before landing several well-placed shots, hitting your now-swollen face."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

"Life wasn't kind to me. No one in the past would have bet that I would climb to these heights. What handicap have I managed to overcome in my daily life?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I drive you to the ropes. You're in a corner and you suffer a flurry of blows to your flanks that overwhelms you. I force you to stay on the defensive and you have no other choice than to withstand the assault."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

"You hurt my mentor in the past and he never got over it. Who is it and what did you do to them?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"With great footwork, I get inside your guard, taking off your pacing and footing. I press this advantage and land a nasty right hook in your face, opening a cut under your eye. You're half-blinded."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

"I'm gradually gaining confidence. Not an easy feat considering my last bout which ended in a defeat for me. Against whom did I fight?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"The last minute is non-stop aggression on my part. It's brutal. After a combo of jabs and hooks, a tremendous uppercut sends you to the floor momentarily."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

"My name evokes a famous relative in the world of fighting. Who were they and how do I struggle with the burden of their legacy?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I let you exhaust yourself, leaning on the ropes and absorbing punishment in a rope-a-dope defense. This angers you and leaves you open to a counter-punch. And that's exactly what you get."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

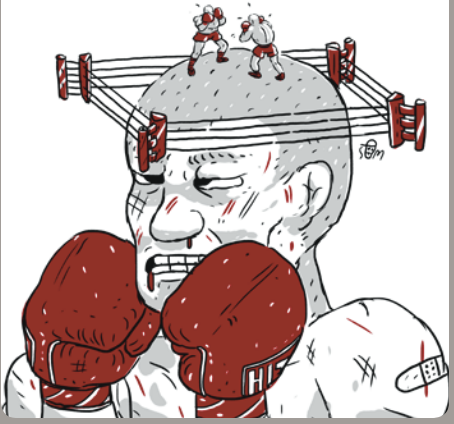
"I am far from fighting at my best level. A personal tragedy has affected me recently; it's distracting me because it is far from being over. What is it about?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

CARDS 10-18 (BACK)

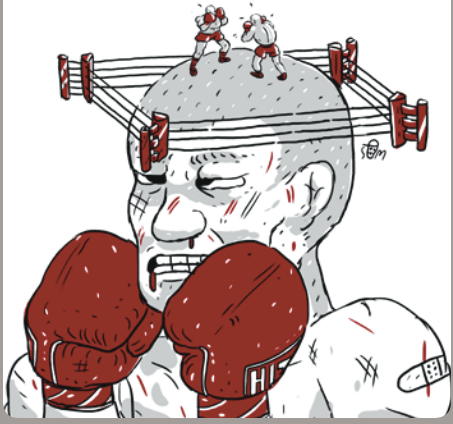
ROUND

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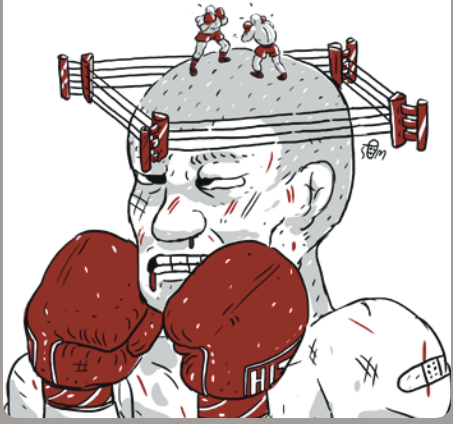
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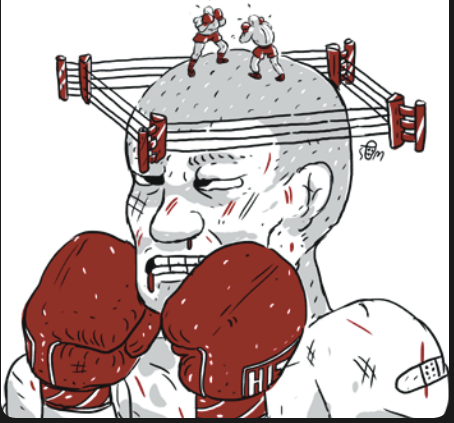
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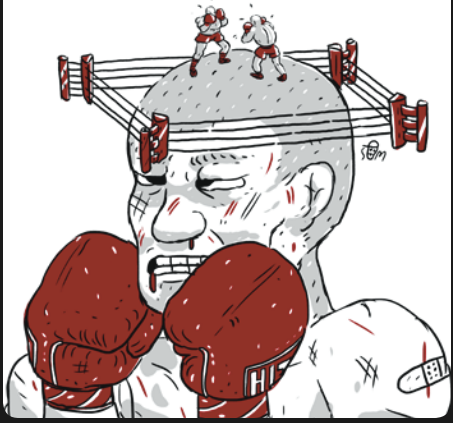
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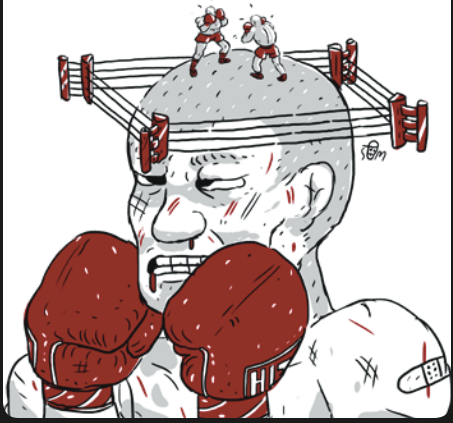
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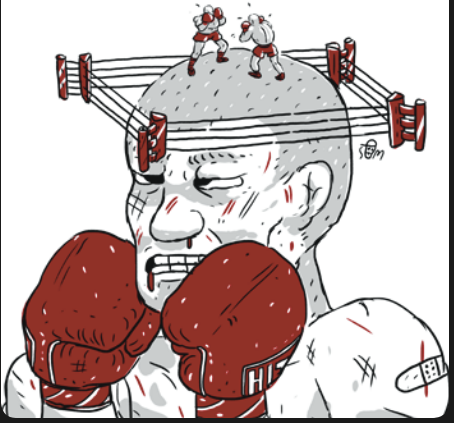
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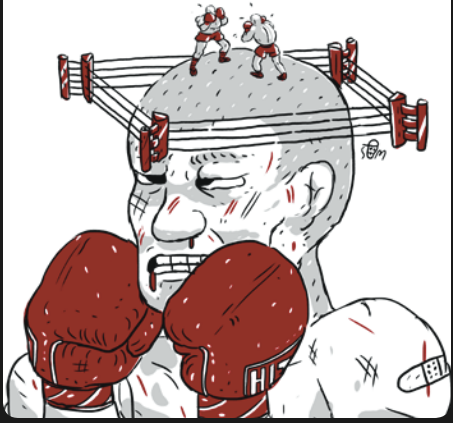
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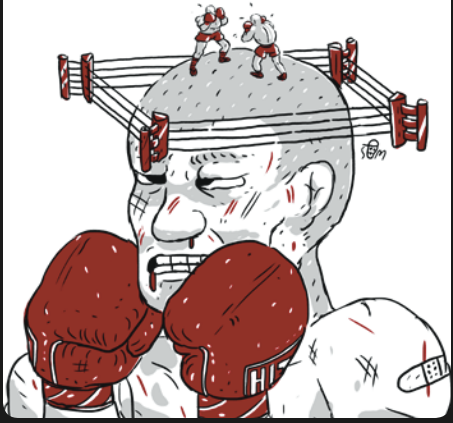
ROUND

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ROUND

2



"I masterfully anticipate your attack and land a bolo punch; I distract you with one arm while I sneak in a blow. Everyone praises my fighting spirit and skill."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

"I was paid huge sums of money for my most recent bouts and have started to become complacent and soft. What do you notice about me that says that I've lost the eye of the tiger?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I perfectly match your style, patiently wearing you down. The commentators predict that you will be knocked out before the end of the round, but you clinch me to buy some time and get back on your feet."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

"I had to quickly find a large amount of money. I agreed to do small favors—shady, maybe even outright illegal stuff. What have I gotten myself into?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I trap you in the corner with no way to escape. A flurry of jabs makes you cover your head. However, by doing that, you block your view with your fists. I take this opportunity to land a devastating uppercut."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"A loved one is growing apart from me and I think a victory will put the pieces back together. What will be the outcome of this relationship after the bout?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"As you retaliate, I surprisingly bob to the outside of your arm and land a vicious swing in your liver, causing you searing pain. Your vision is blinded with sparks."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

"A win in this game would allow me to get back on track financially; otherwise, I'm broke. How did I lose all my money?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"Everyone can see that I have an effective strategy to counter you. The match becomes unilateral: I maintain the distance that I want, I close in when I need to, and I land blow after blow. I have you exactly where I want you."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

"I had among the famous fighters a rival who became a friend. Who was it and how did they end up?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"On a riposte, I furiously pound your flank with several hooks. A little bit tired by the fight, one of them strikes below the belt but the referee does not sanction it."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"I have a kid I truly care about and I teach them that violence doesn't solve all problems. Obviously, the message is not getting through well. How will this kid end up?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I weave with a sideway step and then I hit you directly in the solar plexus. You clench your teeth."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I instead score 2 points.

"Before the fight, you trash-talked me, which—fair enough—is part of the game, but you also involved someone I care about. And this is off-limits. What did you say about them and is it true?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

THE BELL RINGS.

END OF ROUND.

"I skillfully deflect your blows and attack with a nasty punch targeting the epigastric region. The pain shocks you and you struggle to stand."

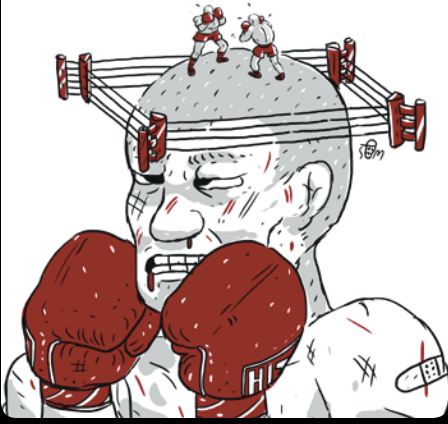
I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"A trauma of the past often reappears in my nightmares and wakes me up with a start. What is it and will I ever be able to cope with it?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

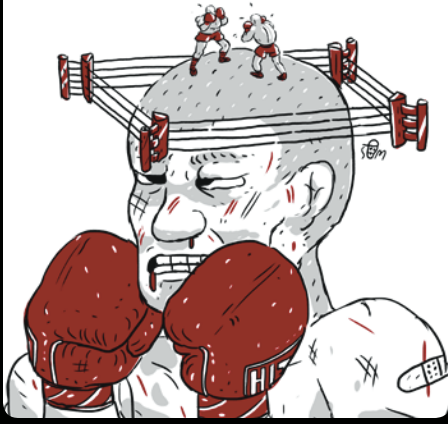
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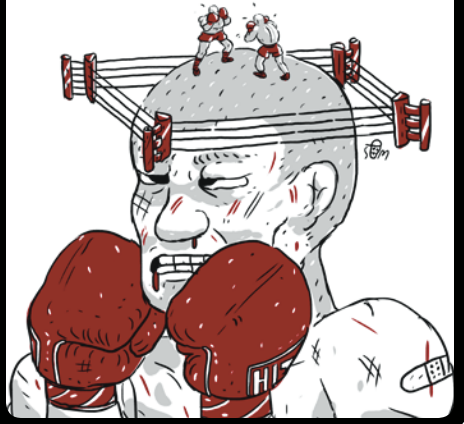
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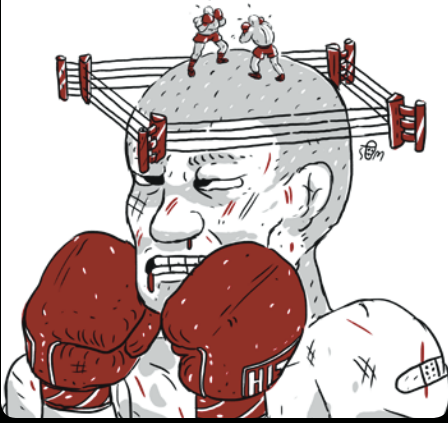
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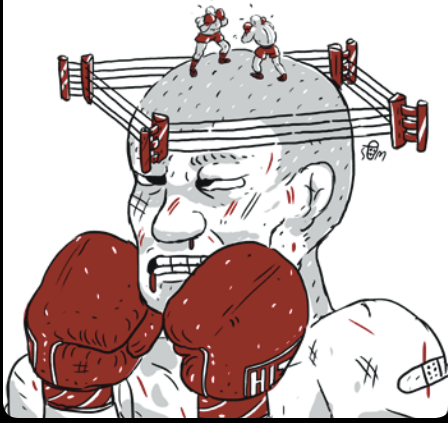
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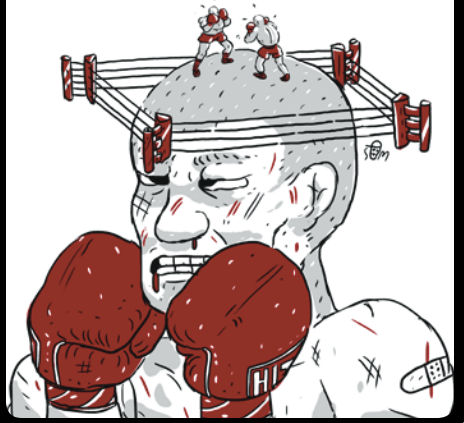
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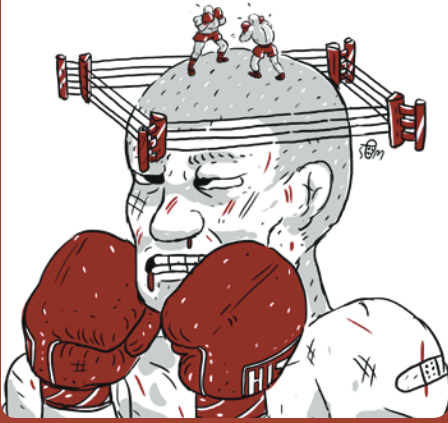
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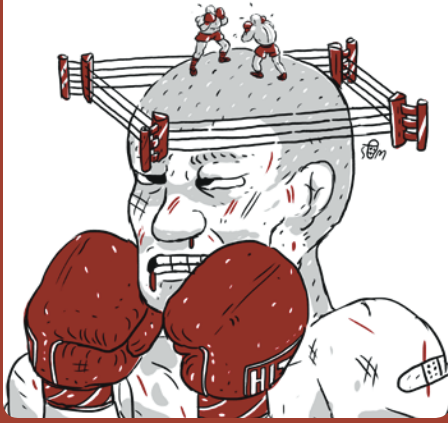
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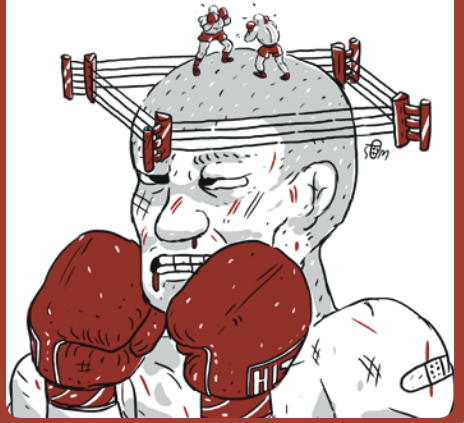
ROUND

3



ROUND

3



"I hit you several times and outmaneuver you. I manage to hit you with a spectacular explosive blow, which provokes the ovation of the crowd. The arena becomes electrified."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"I have a serious illness. When and how will I die?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I get the upper hand on you, controlling the pace of the fight. A devastating blow knocks you down for a few seconds but you get up before the count is over. You should stay down. Seriously. Or else it will be a slaughter."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"A loved one is dying. I am fighting for them. Will they die before they see the end of the fight? Do they think I'm going to win?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I fight hard. I never give up. I constantly pressure you and it pays off: a combination of blows leaves you groggy for a moment. The referee examines you to see if you're fit to continue: the technical KO is close."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"There are rumors that I participated in a rigged fight. Who did I fight in that bout and why did I take a dive?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I switch back and forth from right-handed to left-handed stance, confusing you. I easily feint and take advantage of ample flaws in your defense. I land several hard-hitting punches."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"I once took part in a street fight. Why did I provoke it and how did it end?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I telegraph an uppercut and you sway away, but it was a feint; when you take back your stance, an overhand—a punch from the rear hand you didn't see coming—lands right on your temple."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"There are rumors that I took drugs to get to this level. What's the worst violation I've ever committed?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I telegraph a hook and you lunge in. But I swiftly pivot and dodge you like a matador dodges a bull. That's for the show, baby. You are ridiculed and the crowd goes crazy."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"I spent time in jail or in a juvenile detention center. What crime did I commit?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"I'm faster than you, pulling away easily from your punches. I hit you right in your face and your nose is bleeding, probably broken. Well, you've never been the prettiest thing, you know. Now, it's official."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"I have taken my fair share of blows to the head. What precious memory have I lost as a result?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

"We're both exhausted and we clinch, but the referee separates us. When I get back, I give all I have and I land a devastating uppercut. The commentators are not sure you're going to survive the round."

I score 1 point. If you try to dodge the blow and prevent me from scoring, you must roll 1d10, which can advance your Fatigue die and, if so, I score 1 point.

"I killed someone with my bare hands in the past. Who was it, under what circumstances did this event take place, and will it ever be discovered?"

You answer this question. If I want to change your answer, I have to spend one Grit point and then I answer it instead.

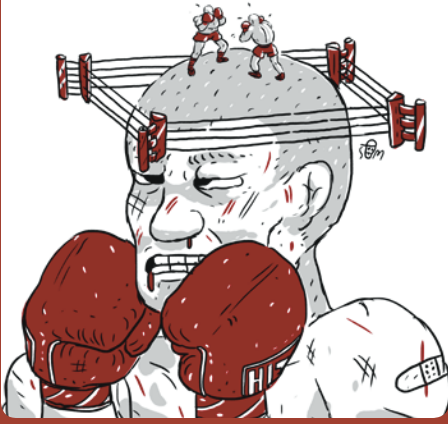
THE BELL RINGS.

END OF ROUND.

CARDS 28-36 (BACK)

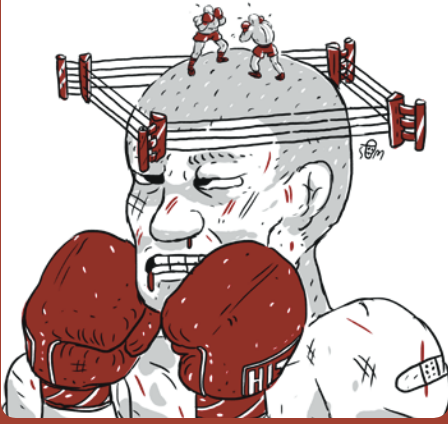
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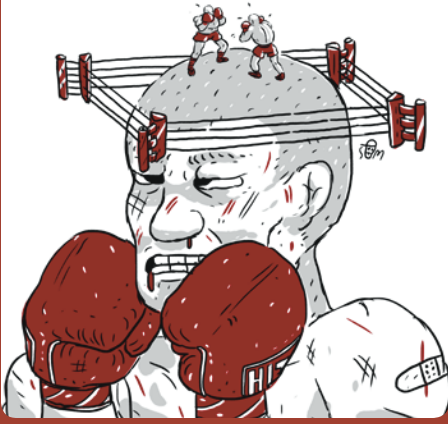
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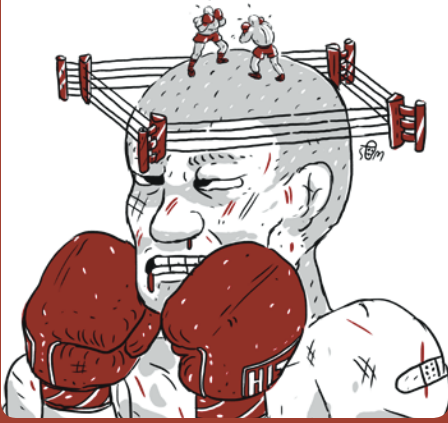
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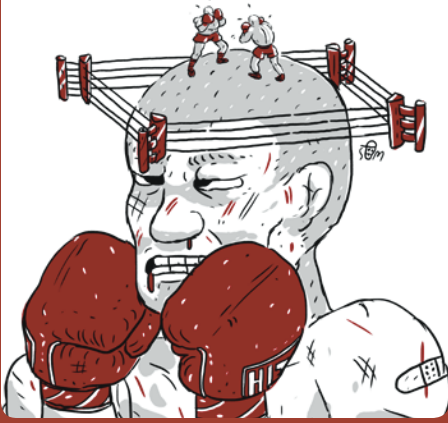
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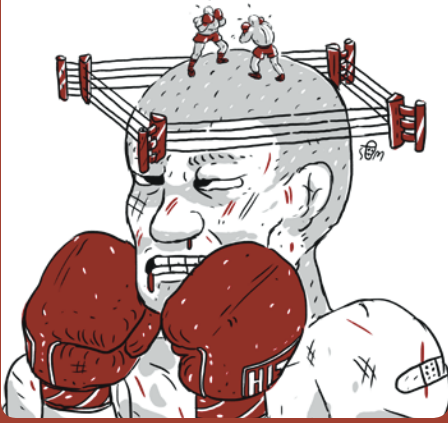
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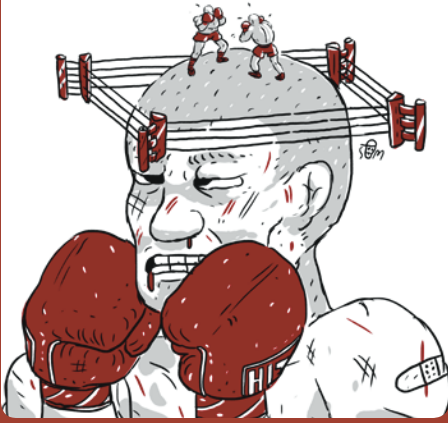
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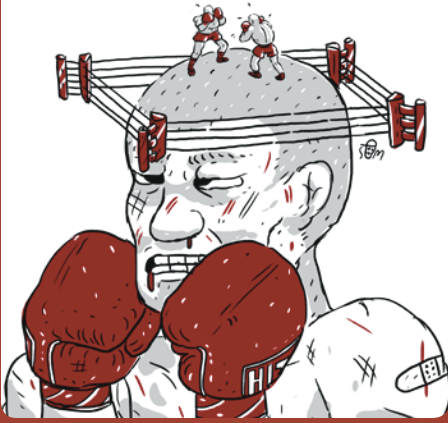
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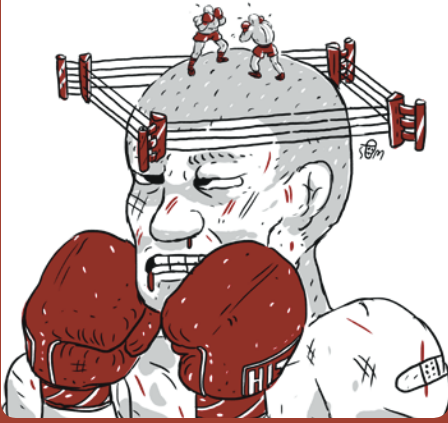
ROUND

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ROUND

3



Worms Among the Flesh

New occupations, backgrounds, drives and sigils.

The Giant's Carcass

An incursion in search of eternity.



TROPHY

SABINE V

Worms Among the Flesh

The following are new options for treasure-hunters for use with the IncurSION *The Giant's Carcass*, or any other session of Trophy.

OCCUPATIONS

Butcher (*skilled in killing, calming, animals*)

Bodyguard (*skilled in defending, looking out, enduring*)

Medicus (*skilled in wounds, sickness, humours*)

Prostitute (*skilled in seduction, haggling, body language*)

Undertaker (*skilled in masking, religion, symbols*)

BACKGROUNDS

While all these Backgrounds imply that the treasure-hunter is unable to follow their former profession because of physical disabilities, that does not mean that they necessarily see this as a problem, or something they want or need to have changed. Rather, the reason they are not following their former calling could originate in a cruel society, a double-dealing rival, or something that is not related to their disability at all—or perhaps the treasure-hunter's inability to come to terms with their circumstances is actually the flaw that drives them to seek “magical solutions” by going on an incursion.

Hoarse-voiced Singer (*skilled in drinking*)

Limping Dancer (*skilled in performance*)

Palsied Scribe (*skilled in lore*)

Scarred Courtesan (*skilled in poison*)

Worn-out Gladiator (*skilled in fighting*)

Weak-eyed Scout (*skilled in listening*)

DRIVES

Escape your dreary life in the slums of Fort Duhrin

Heal the wound your enemy gave you in the streets of Tesod's Rest

Make your rival in the twin cities Ror and Rar regret their victory

Show the spouse that had you imprisoned in Barsul

Triumph over the critic that humiliated you in songs sung in Ambaret

Become the giant you always knew you were

SIGILS

These work the same as rituals and can be chosen in their place.

Collarbone (*break something important*)

Earlobe (*cause bleeding from the ears*)

Eyelash (*temporarily blind another*)

Fingernail (*cause deep scratches to manifest*)

Liver (*cure any poison*)

Stomach (*turn something inside out*)



HIGHER SIGILS

These may only be discovered in the Carcass. If a treasure-hunter wants to put these on their body, they have to first succeed at a Risk Roll that is treated like the use of a ritual.

Breath (*call up a hurricane or suck all life from a place*)

Black Bile (*crush a person's hope and take their strength for your own*)

Blood (*give a person superhuman energy and power; make somebody young*)

Phlegm (*age someone or something until it is old and frail*)

Yellow Bile (*make a person angry and give them strength; heal a debility*)

Heart (*become immortal*)



INCURSION

The Giant's Carcass

*Come to me with sword and axe and lance,
And as my trophy, I shall take your hands.*

*Come to me with spells that you deem wise,
And as my trophy, I shall take your eyes.*

*Come to me and tell me who is right or wrong,
And as my trophy, I shall take your tongue.*

*Come to me with song and poem and art,
And as my trophy, I shall take your heart.*

Once, there lived the most powerful wizard in all the land. Their magic was strong, unusual and unthought-of, but they wanted nothing more than to discover and learn. Legend has it that they even ventured into the Kalduhr to wrest magical secrets from this place, and to insure their own immortality. And they were successful: they came back even greater than before, and with time, they grew to an immense stature, first overshadowing trees, then cities, then mountains.

That was when the gods decided to intervene against this giant: the godsmith Vestor forged a mighty lance; the demon-enchantress Terca provided a deadly poison; and the hero Chant pierced the giant's side. Crying out, the wizard fell with a mighty sound, levelling hills and forests under their enormous body.

And there they lie, still, a giant's carcass, not alive, but not truly dead. The legends claim that the giant still wears the sigil the forest gave them on their heart, and that this is what keeps them alive. Even more outrageous legends claim that brave treasure-hunters might enter the Giant's Carcass and there retrieve the sigil, thus becoming immortal.

THEME

Body

INCURSION: THE GIANT'S CARCASS

STARTING QUESTIONS

- ◇ What would you change about your body?
- ◇ What do you like about your body?

MOMENTS

- ◇ When the treasure-hunters approach the Carcass, describe how huge it is. Tell them about hillocks and cliffs that turn out to be limbs or the torso.
- ◇ The giant is not truly dead. Everywhere the treasure-hunters go, there are puddles or streams of blood they have to wade through. The color and composition vary with the Ring they are in.
- ◇ Crusted carvings on the wall, twisted by the healing flesh.
- ◇ Crude lichen battling an infection. You never knew lichen could groan.
- ◇ A sluggish stream of lymph comes up to your knees. It smells vaguely of flowers.
- ◇ The cracked ends of bone rub together with the glacially slow breaths of the giant.

CONDITIONS

- ◇ Your hair falls out. Do you try to cover it? If yes, say with what. If not, ask another player to describe the mark that becomes visible on your skull.
- ◇ You hear the sound of a heart racing in your ears. Bo-bom. Bo-bom. What makes you so sure it's not your own heartbeat? Whose is it?
- ◇ If you clench your hands, blood wells from beneath your fingernails. Why does this assure you rather than disturb you?
- ◇ You have blisters on your feet, and the skin slowly sloughs off. This should hurt more.
- ◇ Your teeth feel loose. Somehow you know that one loud word—one shout—will be enough to push them out.
- ◇ The taste of blood is in your mouth. Did you bite yourself, or did you inhale a bit of the giant's blood?
- ◇ Hair sprouts on a body part it usually wouldn't. Where is it, and what do the myths of your culture say about people with hair in this spot?
- ◇ Your intestines are making noises that sound like words. What words do they repeat over and over again?
- ◇ With every breath, you hear the air whistle and wheeze. There is a word that wants to climb out of your throat—what is it? What does it mean to the person you like most in the party?

INCURSION: THE GIANT'S CARCASS

RING 1 — THE WOUND

The blood is dried, brownish, and smells of decay. It flakes at the touch.

MOMENTS:

- ◇ A large piece of scab falls and breaks apart, showering you with dry flakes.
- ◇ Pus oozes from the Wound's edge. It smells sharp and oddly clean.
- ◇ The edges of the Wound are healing ever-so-slowly, and you have to carve your way into it.
- ◇ The giant's bones are glowing with a dim yet steady light. Everything feels sepulchral.

TERRORS: Within the other periphery of the Wound, the giant-delvers have carved a settling into the giant's half-living flesh. Here they breed the Acheron larvae, grotesque mouthless beings making wet sounds with their enormous eyes. These larvae are feeding on the giant's flesh, and their excretions make a powerful drug that numbs pain and makes every touch feel like being enveloped in the softest velvet imaginable.

The giant-delvers revere the giant as some would a god, praying to them and carving tattoos and scars into their own bodies that reflect the wounds the giant took in the war. They will demand that the treasure-hunters do the same and will likely turn to violent coercion if they are reluctant. The delvers are wild-eyed and fanatical, yet they fight using only their bodies as weapons, enjoying every wound they take until they are quite overcome with ecstasy.

TEMPTATIONS: At the center of the delvers' camp, where the Wound is intersected by another injury, there is a shrine that houses the *Sigil of Black Bile*. If a treasure-hunter can cut it from the giant's flesh, they may put it on their own, acquiring—and being acquired by—this new sigil.

The path along the Wound is well-trodden, and there are many signs of previous expeditions. Some, the delvers will tell the newcomers, have returned from the Carcass, bringing strange flesh and mighty sigils with them.

INCURSION: THE GIANT'S CARCASS

RING 2 — THE LUNGS

The blood is a bright, cheerful red, full of oxygen and bubbles.

MOMENTS:

- ◇ Intermixed with blood is clear pleural fluid.
- ◇ Walking over the alveoli (about 2.5–12.5 cm in size) will make them pop like bubble wrap.
- ◇ Macrophagic dust cells waft up like pollen.
- ◇ The remnants of a delver are half-crushed into the other ligaments of the lungs.

TERRORS: When the treasure-hunters arrive at the Lungs, there is a steady wind of stale air in their faces, smelling of caves and something rotten. The pleural cavity is huge, filled with bronchi and bronchioles, dripping. They have to cross the lobe to reach the Spine, but the spongy underground is uneven, cresting in bronchioles and alveoli. A sudden shudder runs through the ground, and then the wind changes direction, comes from behind them and draws them tumbling into the cavity. Other things are pulled in, as well: a tiny songbird, a clot of flesh, blood and hair, the skull of a grave maggot—all buffeting the treasure-hunters, disorienting them, pushing them away from the Wound and deeper into the Lungs that grow greater and greater with the inhaled breath. The ground is unsteady with the earthquake-like convulsions. Will they keep in sight of each other? Ask the players what is sucked away from their treasure-hunters in the maelstrom of the giant's breath.

TEMPTATIONS: Like insects wrapped up in their cocoons, hermits live in the giant's lungs, ensconced in pulmonary lobules. They are bound tightly to their cells, contemplating the giant silently. They do not speak, and many of them have already grown into the giant. If one is pulled from their cell, they will weep and choke, speaking in rough whispers. Two of them carry the *Sigil of Breath* and the *Sigil of Blood*, and if the treasure-hunters are very, very careful, they might pull one of them off. But the hermits might wake and attack potential thieves with streams of bright blood or their air-stealing magic.

INCURSION: THE GIANT'S CARCASS

RING 3 — THE SPINE

The blood is a deep dark red and stains anything that touches it. It is sticky and clings to body parts.

MOMENTS:

- ◇ Some of the ribs are fractured and will seem to claw at you as you pass.
- ◇ You have to duck under the vertebrae, and every time you do, it becomes harder to stand up straight again.
- ◇ Clambering on the spine, you touch a nerve, and a vast shudder comes from a far part of the giant.
- ◇ Tiny dandruff butterflies flit around the spinal column. They are fragile and easily crushed.

TERRORS: The vertebrae that lead to the Heart are sharp-edged and likely to draw blood. Once a treasure-hunter suffers an open wound, corpse maggots crawling around will notice them. On closer inspection, these maggots seem to have faces. Some have vestigial arms and legs. As they crawl closer, ask the player what about their tattoos or skin markings seems familiar. Ask them which of the other party members carries a similar sign on their bodies.

The maggots murmur and mumble quietly, but as they come close, the treasure-hunters will see their mouths, full of sharp bones, broken bones, hinged wider than they should be. They are hungry, those maggots, those delvers, they want to feed on the treasure-hunters—but maybe they can be assuaged if you give them a pound of flesh?

TEMPTATIONS: The maggots talk. They are former delvers transformed. They speak their dreams and echo the treasure-hunters' desires. Ask the players what familiar phrases the treasure-hunters hear, and what speech pattern they recognize. The *Sigil of Yellow Bile* may be discovered on one of them.

INCURSION: THE GIANT'S CARCASS

RING 4 — THE AORTA

The blood is a deep red with flashes of oil stain colors—purple or black or ochre. And sometimes there is a rare flash of gold.

MOMENTS:

- ◇ It has grown very warm in this tight space, almost too hot to breathe.
- ◇ The walls are moving continuously—a smooth, almost soothing, movement.
- ◇ There is a long slash in the Aorta's wall. Acheron larvae are feasting here.
- ◇ There is a large blood clot blocking your way. It can be removed by force, though that will lead to a sluggish wave of more blood than usual.

TERRORS: The Aorta is a very tight crawl. The flesh of the walls seems very alive, and when the treasure-hunters have entered this narrow tunnel, the walls will start shivering and embracing them. Their embrace targets precisely those parts of the body the treasure-hunters hate the most or like the best. What will they give up to move quickly through this tight space? This almost seems like a birth canal—what do the treasure-hunters envision they might be born as?

TEMPTATIONS: The Heart's pulse can be heard as distant thunder—the treasure-hunters are close! Ask for a marching order. Who is in front? The *Sigil of Phlegm* might be found crammed into the waving, undulating walls.

INCURSION: THE GIANT'S CARCASS

RING 5 — THE HEART

Ask the players what color they think a giant wizard's blood should be. The blood here is precisely this shade.

MOMENTS:

- ◇ The heartbeat is very slow, but loud, like the sound of an alphorn, or the long bray of an elephant. What does it remind you of?
- ◇ Someone erected a shrine to the giant in the cavity that houses the Heart.
- ◇ There are bones lying exactly before the sigil, the skeletal hand still reaching out
- ◇ A spear has been thrust into the Heart, tiny and insignificant (if a treasure-hunter has a signature weapon, make it one of this kind instead)

TERRORS: The giant's magic is still alive here—they both resent the intrusion and yet welcome the opportunity to share their nightmares and dreams. Memories of the giant and memories of the treasure-hunters will start to intermingle and merge. Let the players tell you what spurred their treasure-hunters' desires, and mix that with the humiliations and triumphs of the giant.

There is only one *Sigil of the Heart* here. Only one of the treasure-hunters can attain it. Let them stumble through the memories, so that everyone has a shot at trying to be the first to grab hold of it.

TEMPTATIONS: The Sigil of the Heart is on prominent display here. It is the one thing that keeps the Giant's Carcass alive, and it can be grabbed by only one treasure-hunter. If this person successfully takes it into their body, it will make them immortal, but the sigil does not heal any harm that person might have suffered before.



THREE DOZEN MORE CULT HORROR MOVIES!

1-1

IMAGINARY FIEND (1992) Summary: A by-the-numbers, direct-to-video “killer child” film mostly notable for its bombastic tag-line (“...Jason, Michael, and Freddy were too scared to play with Dakota.”), the elaborate, Rube Goldberg-esque murder sequences, and the poor quality cgi reveal of the titular “fiend” behind the killings. Best kill: Dakota and the fiend kill babysitter Mandy with a life-sized re-enactment of board game Mousetrap, complete with bowling ball, bathtub, and a razor-sharp “cage” finale.

1-2

THE RATS IN THE WALLS (1986): Summary: Mad scientist Alfred Delapore’s radiation experiments on rats goes horribly awry, and a swarm of the now-bloodthirsty and cunning rodents terrorizes the sleepy community of Arkham, Massachusetts. This low-budget film bears little resemblance to the H.P. Lovecraft short story on which it was based. Best kill: While the radioactive rat swarm is killing the kitchen staff of the local Burger Palace, “Drive-Thru Customer #1” pulls his car up to the microphone and orders “Today’s Special”. Hearing no reply, he proceeds to the drive-thru window, where the rat swarm leaps into his car and devours him.

1-3

BLOOD TRACTOR (2014) Summary: A struggling farmer finds his high tech tractor bricked because its manufacturer was sold by stock market profiteers and their servers have been shut down. Desperate, the farmer visits the Dark Web for bootleg tractor software, little realizing they’ve downloaded a CIA trojan horse program that converts heavy machinery to moving murder factories! Best kill: The tractor careens into a corn maze and the screen fills with airborne corn scraps, blood, torn clothing, screams, an entire scarecrow, even more blood, etc. while a lady in a straw hat and overalls repeats “Aww no... aww... aww no!” in dismay from a nearby pumpkin patch.

1-4

JOHNNY HATCHETSEED (1976) Summary: Another example of the short-lived subgenre of bicentennial American folk horror. Johnny Appleseed’s green thumb gets him marked as a witch by angry Puritans, who burn down his orchards in Roanoke Island, North Carolina, prompting a spree of revenge. Best kill: An idler attempting to steal an apple pie from a windowsill is horrified to see the pie’s crust is actually the face of the former Judge Goodman!

1-5

FREAK OUT! (1987). Summary: When an accident in the desert swaps three nuclear test pilots into the bodies of “freaks from the 11th dimension,” the now-monstrous pilots must convince six students in detention at the nearby high school to help them reverse the swap before their stolen bodies (and access to nuclear devices) are used to start an all-out invasion. Best kill: When the last living pilot (played by a young Tara Drake) teams up with the track star and the drama nerd to murder her own stolen body. “We earthlings have something you don’t,” she taunts just before triggering the trap. “Life insurance.”

1-6

RAINBOW BLIGHT II: BLACK FRIDAY (1994) Summary: Rainbow Blight is back to terrorize consumers during the all-important holiday shopping season. Her new gang of terrible toys includes prophet of doom Mr. Potato Dread, pyromaniac Barbie Q, and undead automotive horror Rot Wheels. Best kill: The famous “door-buster” scene in which Rainbow Blight unlocks the doors to a big-box retailer before the workers are ready for the herd of Black Friday shoppers, causing several people to be trampled to death.

2-1

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S MACDEATH (1989) Summary: A community theater stages a production of "The Scottish Play" but the deranged director goes "full Method" and murders each of the actors on-stage on closing night. It's up to the plucky 3 Witches to stop him. Best kill: The flashback montage to previous productions where the director has staged similar bloodbaths, in which we actually see a screaming actor exit stage left, pursued by a (bloodthirsty, man-eating) bear.

2-2

GO-GO TO HELL! (1968) Summary: Unsuccessful actress Chrissy Bloom signs a pact with the Devil to become the most popular go-go dancer in L.A. But it turns out her end of the bargain is to die for! Best kill: Chrissy kicks the stiletto heel of her go-go boot through a too-friendly spectator's eye.

2-3

WIENER SCHATTEN ("SHADOWS OF VIENNA") (Austria, 1933) Summary: Mysterious yet charismatic politician Klaus Baden (Conrad Veidt) rises to power and becomes mayor of Vienna, his career bolstered by former political rivals who suddenly become ardent supporters. Journalist Maria Stern (Brigitte Hornay) investigates and discovers the sinister truth: Baden is a vampire who is drinking the blood of his rivals and turning them into undead thralls! This thinly-veiled critique of the rise of fascism was thought to be lost, until a complete copy was discovered in a private film vault in 1962. Best kill: In the penultimate scene, Maria confronts Baden, holding him at bay with a crucifix. In a shocking twist, Baden smiles, takes the crucifix from her, and quips, "Not even the church has power over me!" He then pulls her into an embrace and sinks his fangs into her throat. (Final image: The front page of the next day's newspaper with a headline praising the beloved mayor. By-line: Maria Stern.)

2-4

WIDOWMAKER (1976) Summary: Critics consider this entry the oddest, but most compelling, of the short-lived bicentennial American folk horror trend. It's the story of Pecos Bill's horse, set during the years preceding its actual team-up with Bill. The film (shot from a horse's POV) featured avant garde spectacles such as: 1st-person galloping scenes (with some risk of motion sickness), dream sequences about dancing apples and sugar cubes, and several incidents of cruel hoof-murder. Best kill: With a twister approaching, a desperado ropes Widowmaker only to be kicked into the air where their lasso slithers around their neck and also catches a spinning weathercock, which swings them in great gasping circles above the town, their lasso transformed into a noose.

2-5

FOOD FRIGHT (1983) Summary: This is a Z-rated flick with terrible special effects and wooden acting, and would have been consigned to the dustbin of history were it not for two related things: The last onscreen appearance of Hollywood legend Tim Drayford, and the last footage of him alive, as shortly after the Cabbage Ball dance scene he was found dead of unknown causes on the studio lot. Best kill: The possessed pizza flying out of the oven and decapitating several teens, leaving their bodies to spin wildly on the bar stools.

2-6

ALLIGATOR ORGY! (1979) Despite all the promotional material depicting a sultry, barely clothed Marie Clesham, she never appears in the film due to a much-debated royalties dispute. The curious artistic choice to dress the replacement female lead (identity unknown) in a mask of Marie Clesham is incredibly unnerving. Also, who knew there was so much stock footage of alligator sex? Best kill: Sylvester, the well-meaning swamp guide's death by frog gig is a rare moment of good cinematography—a three minute, single shot action sequence both in and out of the water.

3-1

PORTRAIT (1994) Summary: Celeste, a talented young painter, is patronized by a wealthy widower, Garamond. As the relationship grows more intimate, Celeste is asked to paint increasingly decayed versions of the live models provided. The final revelation of Garamond's dead spouse is not only predictable, but ruined by poor CGI. Ugh, 90's special effects... Best kill: Garamond falling from the window's walk is so comically bad it's been remixed recently into a meme about trying hard to fail.

3-2

BRUNCH 2: THE SECOND COURSE (2004). Summary: A follow-up to 2000's sleeper hit Brunch, this sequel saw a foolhardy band of profiteers buy up the restaurant from the original film and rebrand it as a ghoulish tourist trap called Bloody Mary's. Mary herself, predictably, doesn't take too kindly to their impertinence. Best kill: Matt realizes that the croque monsieur wasn't made of ham, but of Other Matt—but as he runs to warn the other investors, Bloody Mary hamstringing him with a sharpened spatula and drags him back into the kitchen where she's working on the next round of "man sandwiches."

3-3

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE JR.'S MACDEATH II (2001) Summary: In the year 4040, scientists revive the director from the original film and force him to teach a group of cyborg criminals the redemptive power of the stage. Riots ensue. Stars Rod Van Hamlet as "Chromeo." Best kill: One of the convict players tearfully delivers the "Is this a dagger which I see before me?" speech before answering in the affirmative and embarking on a shanking spree in the cyber-prison's cafeteria.

3-4

THE FLICKER (2015) Summary: Featuring silent movie-era black and white sequences featuring gruesome murders with the violence itself happening off screen intercut with a 1990's era suburban pressure cooker of infidelity, drug abuse, and financial peril covered by a thin veneer of success and idyllic marital bliss, The Flicker is a slow burn where tension builds as multiple untenable situations move towards inevitable confrontations only to have the third act explode into a gorefest as the killer from the black and white sequences goes from being a symbolic representation of resentment, regret, and fear to a very real supernatural killer, still rendered in flickering black and white even as the rest of the setting remains drearily naturalistic. Best kill: When failing life insurance salesman Bobby Cormack charges the nameless killer with a pocket knife after losing his wife, his job, his home, and his car in quick succession only to dissolve into a cloud of blood, organs, and bones, the slow motion explosion lovingly rendered from multiple angles in a sudden switch to split screen, a particularly surreal moment in a surreal film.

3-5

SHARK ATTACK: THE BIGGER BOAT (2018) Summary: A group of college students slowly come to the realization that the spate of shark attacks at their New England resort town is somehow related to both the shark-infested weather front that threatens New York City and the prehistoric giant shark that sank a research vessel: all are being controlled by an international cabal attempting to appease the god Dagon. Best kill: After reaching the cabal's undersea headquarters, the heroine smashes the glass wall that caged the Sharktopus, which then lashes the cabal's leader (Bradley Whitford) in its tentacles and drags him into its maw.

3-6

SLAAAY QUEEN II: DRAG THEM TO HELL! (2017) Summary: Vampire drag queen Ginger Vitus is back! This time, Ginger is stalking the sweaty, manicured lanes of the annual Fire Island Pines party! Best kill: Ginger beheads a bitchy young twink at a dance party just as the chorus to rave classic "Dive in the Pool" starts, getting the other revelers "soaking wet" by slinging her victim's blood all over them.

4-1

HEART ATTACK (1997) Summary: Heart transplant recipient Dot Lang is plagued by post-op hallucinations of terrible murders. She realises too late her donor was one of the America's worst serial killers and is forcing her to kill from beyond the grave. Best kill: Dot's double defibrillator kill of the two county deputies trying to take her in: "Y'all are under cardiac arrest!"

4-2

GYMNASTY (1988) Summary: The path of a professional athlete is full of sacrifice, sweat, and blood. But it has never been full of sacrificial blood—until now. There is a single spot remaining on the Olympics gymnastic team, and a number of fierce competitors are vying for the spot. As the time for the final selection in an old palace-turned-gymnasium approaches, contenders are dying one by one, their blood dedicated to a demonic creature from beyond. Best kill: A full split becomes just a little bit fuller with the help of a halberd.

4-3

PARROTS OF DEATH (1993) Summary: A group of friends and lovers go on a wild tropical vacation only to find the birds of the forest have gone mad from a virus. Will any survive, or will these friends succumb to the terror? Best kill: An extra-large, colorful parrot claws out the heart of Tiffany while she is making out with her boyfriend in the forest. It calls out "I want you bad."

4-4

DRACULA: BLOOD OF BUNYAN (1976) Summary: This bicentennial bite-fest, filmed in the Philippines, relocates American folk hero Paul Bunyan to the jungle where he clashes with Dracula (Filipino film star Antonio Ocampo) and his paramilitary vampire strike force. Best kill: Dracula enters Babe the Blue Ox's mouth as a swarm of bats, then pushes on Babe's stomach (a practical effect built with blue stretchy latex), Dracula's face and claws distending the belly before tearing out, dumping gallons of blood and Ocampo's stunt double.

4-5

THE TOT VS. RAINBOW BLIGHT (2013) Summary: Two pint-sized titans of terror clash in this cinematic mash-up of the Death Rattle and Rainbow Blight series. Best kill: The world simply was not ready for the scene in which The Tot entered the universe of Rainbow Blight by being "birthed" into it, a moment described by one critic as "a neonatal abattoir," and by another as "a very complicated pregnancy."

4-6

MACDEATH III: THE TEMPESTING (2006) Summary: The Director returns to torment the passengers and crew of the luxury cruise liner Capulet. Best kill: On the twelfth night of the voyage, during a masquerade ball being held on the Capulet's main deck, The Director, wearing a rubber donkey mask, asks the captain "Is this a dagger you see before you?" just before plunging a knife into his gullet.

5-1

APPALACHIAN MEATHOOK MAYHEM (1975) Summary: A cheapo knock-off of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, redneck psycho Deerhead hacks his way through a group of young travelers whose car breaks down on a dirt road in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The film is infamous for including gory footage of an on-set accident where an actor's arm really was skewered by a too-real prop meathook. Best kill: Deerhead's first jump-scare appearance in the film, where he erupts from roadside bushes, impales his meathook through the neck of the man sitting in the passenger seat, and drags the struggling body through the car window back into the bushes—with gore spraying everywhere.

5-2

THE RESIDENTS (1992) Summary: A group of urbane university students on a roadtrip from New York to Miami take a wrong turn and get lost in a suburb near an unnamed city. They get lost among the meandering streets and identical houses that seem strangely empty of people until night falls, when the lights come on to illuminate scenes of horrific violence being played out in every window. Having run out of gas, the group tries to escape the area on foot, but the residents stream out of their houses and give chase. Becky, the only character who isn't horribly murdered, is pushed into a previously empty house where she is forced to relive the murder of her friends over and over. Best kill: The drawn-out, partially in slow motion death-by-lawnmower of Becky's boyfriend Kenneth, played out in gruesome detail while the others are hiding in the bushes a few feet away.

5-3

BOONE'S BONES (1976) Summary: As one of the more sordid examples of the folk hero horror subgenre, this movie recounts the story of Daniel Boone's bones, and the horrible fate befalling those that stole them from their grave in Missouri for use in black magic rituals. The movie's plot doesn't make a lot of sense, but there are lots of gory attacks by fake animals and horrible traps in it. Best kill (maybe not the best, but certainly the cheesiest): Jasper Shelby (Whitaker Pryce), a corrupt Kentucky politician, gets mauled and killed by a thing that is supposedly a bear, but is really a man in a horrible bear suit. The contrast between Pryce's realistic screams, groans and whimpers and the Bear Man's (uncredited) unenthusiastic growling make the scene especially hilarious.

5-4

GATORS? GATORS!!! (1986) Summary: Families moving in to a newly-minted housing development in Miami discover their leases didn't say anything about their neighbors: a congregation of albino alligators with a taste for flesh! Best kill: Alfonso, in an open-chest silk shirt, gold chains, and alligator boots, sniffs a line of coke off a mirror in the driver's seat of his Ferrari Daytona Spyder before noticing, via the rearview mirror, a gator in his back seat. "Is this about the shoes? ... Would a bump make it better?" he asks, offering the mirror to the reptile before the camera pulls back and the interior glass is splattered with blood.

5-5

GOLDEN GHOULS (1988) Summary: A quartet of septuagenarian cannibal women take-up residence in a breezy, bungalow-style home on a palm-tree lined street in Dade County. They spend their days on the lanai, sharing stories of laughter and love, but at night they feast on the scantily-clad young co-eds—the "cheesecake"—imprisoned in their basement.

5-6

SINFONIA (2018) Summary: A shot-for-shot remake of the 1991 classic. A young cellist is invited to attend an elite, secretive music conservatory. Little does she know, the instructors are actually a cult dedicated to a dark, primordial god. They are gathering gifted musicians to put on a grand, ritualistic performance to summon this dark being into our world. Best kill: A hypnotized violinist re-strings her bow with razor wire and then "plays" her body to Camille Saint-Saëns's *Danse Macabre*.

6-1

SN'OTTERS (1986) Summary: Equal parts horror movie and promotional vehicle to sell plastic figurines of otters in small tubs of slime, this film's ecological message was buried somewhere under eruptions of goo and slithery river mammal attacks. The plot was basic: industrialists dump toxic goo in river, affected otters kill men in suits. Best kill: CEO Hoyleman's shareholder call is interrupted as a sn'otter slides down a conference table and into his mouth, back legs scrabbling. An obvious replacement Hoyleman head in close-up is inflated with slime until it erupts out the eyes, ears, and mouth in jets.

6-2

GHOSTS OF YORKTOWN (1976) Summary: Another bicentennial horror movie, this film eschews American folklore for history. The first 25 minutes of the film is a gory reenactment of Washington's Christmas 1776 nighttime raid on the Hessian mercenary camp in Trenton (erroneously called "Yorktown" in the film). 200 years later, the ghosts of the slain Hessians re-awaken to terrorize the modern-day city. Best Kill: In 1776, a redcoat holds a Continental Army soldier at pistol-point, as a bayonet erupts from his chest. The redcoat slumps forward, to reveal George Washington himself holding the bloody musket!

6-3

DUNGEON MASTER (1986) Summary: Unwitting suburban teens are drawn into a deadly game of Dungeons & Dragons. When a player character dies, disturbed DM Todd kills the player in a similar manner. Ironically, still one of the best DnD-related movies made. Best kill: After Todd's first group is wiped out by a red dragon, he excuses himself then returns to the basement with a flamethrower and fire retardant gear. "TPK! TPK!" he chants as he pulls the trigger.

6-4

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED (1955) Summary: A melancholy film about a young man escaping from a nameless prison and returning to his devoted father. Strange men with incredible powers hunt the young man, and slowly, the viewer learns that the boy died as a hero and has returned as an undead refugee. There isn't a great kill here, but the final twist makes up for that: the boy hasn't escaped Hell; he is running from Heaven.

6-5

VAMP-PILE DRIVER II (2003) Summary: This direct-to-video sequel to the direct-to-video original discards all pretense of story in favor of non-stop, bloodsucking, vampire-themed wrestling action. Best kill: Terry "Boom-Boom" Howard, playing the legendary vampire Count Smackula, wins a match by performing a DDT into a coffin which he had just emerged from on the vampire hunter Van Hell-Sling.

6-6

WASPS II (1990): Summary: This sequel discards entirely the original's commentary on American class struggles in favor of a story about big-ass wasps tormenting a small Southern town. Best kill: A young man, desperate to save himself from mutant wasps, jumps from a three-story balcony to the lake below, but is caught mid-air by the ferocious swarm. Only his bones, picked-clean of flesh, hit the water.

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Aaron, Keeper of the Child Upon Whom We Dare Not Look

Jesse Abelman, Keeper of the Moon's First Memory

Rob Abrazado, Keeper of the Purple Falsehood

Stras Acimovic, Keeper of the Man Who Dies Every Third Day

Quentin Acord, Keeper of the Word that Binds and Blinds

John Adamus, Keeper of the Endless Page

Benjamin Adelman, Keeper of the Brotherhood of the Black Dragon's Great Saga

Javitt Adili, Keeper of the Arms of Torg the Blasphemer

Joaquin Aguirrezabalaga, Keeper of the Blood of Lursiss

James Aitken, Keeper of the Wendigo Clan's Lost Cookbook

Jesse Aldrich, Keeper of Azurix, the Blue Dust Planet

John Alexander, Keeper of the Child Whose Face is a Mirror

Zach Alexander, Keeper of the Weeping Cells

Jack Alexander, Keeper of the Lies of the Child Kingdom

Brendan Allison, Keeper of the Child Who Creeps and Crawls

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