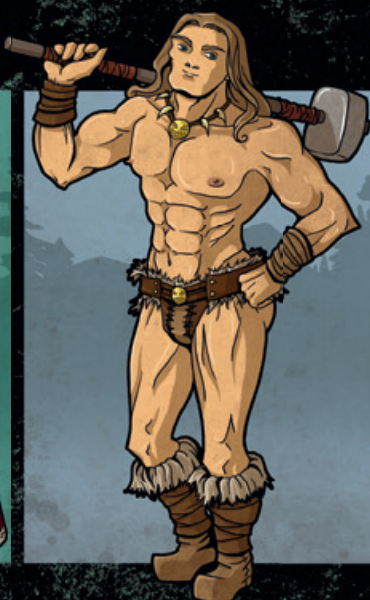


ADVENTURES IN KAPHORNIA 03

Let's play Hardball

A FANTASY MOVIE FOR YOUR GAME TABLE

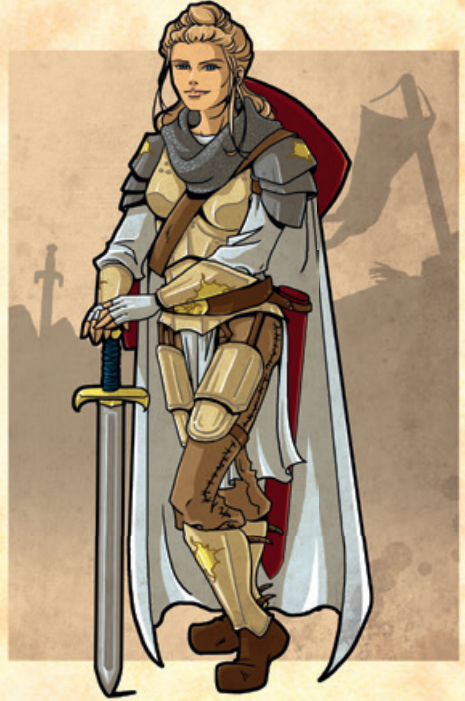


CHRONICLE
CITY





GRAGG



MELISSA



DUPINI



FLAMELETT

Let's play Hardball

A FANTASY MOVIE FOR YOUR GAME TABLE

**Make yourself and your friends a nice evening
for the price of two movie tickets!**

based on the Ulisses Adventure Game Rules by Markus Plötz

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www.freelancer-rpg.de/Kaphornia.html



Let's play Hardball

It doesn't make you a hero if you stand in a victorious pose over your enemies, because ultimately anyone can do that, no matter whether justified or not. What really makes you a hero is what you do when you're stuck deep in the dirt and the situation seems completely hopeless. To flourish in such a moment, to grow beyond yourself and achieve the impossible, while enjoying the whole thing to the fullest, that's what makes you a hero.

Giacomo knew that better than most, because his whole life seemed to be nothing more than a succession of such moments. Just like this very moment. They were deep in the Shadow Realm, on a brutal, merciless hardball playing field, and the point of no return lay so far behind them that Giacomo could not remember what it looked like when they passed it. He had in turn picked a quarrel and made good with Goblins, Dark Dwarfs, Orcs, Ogres, and Trolls and in doing so endured more bludgeoning than anyone would ask of an ordinary mortal. He had explained the rules of a sport to the Blackbloods that he himself had learned only a few days ago, he had motivated the audience and intimidated the referee. And now that the game was already in extra time, he would make sure that his team would walk away from this playing field not just alive, but also victorious.

Dribbling the hardball, he marched towards the opponent's goal, directly towards a wall of gigantic ogre defenders. It would be extremely painful, but he would somehow manage to score the winning goal, come what may. Now, at this very moment, he was a hero.

"Let's Play Hardball" is a fantasy movie brought alive at your game table. Instead of leaning back into a cinema seat and watching passively, you now have the chance to **be the hero yourself!** You can crawl through moldy dungeons, fight terrifying monsters, and return from your adventures laden with precious gold. Only through your hero's eyes of course, but in the comfort of your game table, with some fantasy and a sprinkling of poetry, soon you will be immersed in the images, sounds, and smells of a strange world, and you will root for your hero as if you are going into the adventure by his or her side.

WHAT KIND OF GAME IS THIS? HOW DOES IT WORK?

This is probably going to be the most important question you, as the one having bought the book and suggested it to your friends, are going to hear. And here is the answer you can give to your fellow players before the game begins:

"Let's Play Hardball" is a Fantasy movie reenacted at a game table. I am going to be the "Narrator", so I will narrate a lot during the game. You are the "heroes". Every one of you will choose one of the eight available heroes and then the game begins. I will explain everything else during the game.

IS IT NECESSARY TO READ THE RULES FIRST?

The Narrator should have read the rules of the game from pages 4 to 14 through once before starting the game. The heroes may also read these rules if they want, but they don't need to. They only have to choose a hero; everything else is best explained during the game.



PREPARATIONS FOR THE GAME

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

In order to play “Let’s Play Hardball“, you need at least 3 participants. One of you will be the **Narrator**, the others are the **players** who will each take on the role of one **hero**. There are 8 different heroes to choose from, shown on page 20 to 35. While you could have eight heroes, we recommend group sizes of about three to five heroes and one Narrator. If there are more than four heroes, the game will take about half an hour longer per additional hero. In a game with two players each of them plays with two heroes.

We recommend that each hero is only chosen once. If two players insist on playing the same hero, then they may do so, and in this case the two heroes are considered twins. Keep in mind, though, that the effects of special abilities like “Combat Blessing” or “Battle Song” are not added up, if used by two or more heroes at the same time.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

To play the game, you are also going to need...

... a **game table**. This should be a table at which the narrator and the heroes can all sit comfortably. All of the stuff not necessary to play the game should be removed from the table beforehand.

... a photocopy of each of the eight **hero documents** on page 20 to 35, so that every player can choose one. The hero documents are also available on our website (see below).

... a **pen** for your heroes, to allow them to make changes to their hero documents. (This will be extremely rare.)

... a large number of **dice**. You need regular, six-sided dice. Around 15 dice per hero would be perfect, but you will also be okay with a much lower number if the heroes take turns at rolling the dice.

... **stones** or **coins** to use as game markers during the game. You can also look through your board game collection for suitable candidates. Ideally, you need two different types of marker, one for representing Stamina points (page 6), the other for representing Fate points (page 6).

... drinks and junk food. Or healthy food, if you’re inclined that way.

You can enhance the game by photocopying the cards in the Appendix starting on page 80 and handing them to the heroes at the relevant points, thus allowing them to look up their opponents’ game stats at any time and keep track of the game effects that are currently in play. The cards are also available on **www.freelancer-rpg.de/Kaphornia.html**.

AND NOW?

Now the game begins. Turn to page 36 and take your heroes to a realm of fantasy!



GAME RULES

A HERO'S ATTRIBUTES

Apart from his background and personality, a hero is defined by his **Attributes**. With their help he is going to face the **Challenges** (see page 8) presented to him by the Narrator.

Attributes are...

... **Skills**. These stats show what the hero has learned in his youth, both his areas of expertise, and also his weaknesses. The higher a skill value, the more adept the hero is at this particular skill. A hero has twelve skills: Close Combat, Ranged Combat, Toughness, Reflexes, Charisma, Climbing, Knowledge, Perception, Running, Strength, Stealth, and Willpower.

... **Special Abilities**. These describe a hero's special talents. Specific items in the hero's possession as well the spells of magic users are also described as Special Abilities.

... **Stamina points**. These represent a hero's tenacity. When the hero is hit by an enemy's attack, those points keep him from going down.

... **Fate points**. These points measure a hero's mental and spiritual reserves, his luck, his karma and that certain something that made him a hero in the first place. Fate points allow a hero to tip the scales in his favor by providing him with additional dice or allowing him to activate Special Abilities.

THE SKILLS

The skills cover all areas of expertise in which a hero is tested as he faces the obstacles and adversities of an adventurous lifestyle. Obviously, a hero cannot be perfect in all of these areas; there will always be skills in which he doesn't excel.

Heroes begin their careers with skill ratings between 8 and 13. A value of 8 means that the hero's ability is below average for this skill. With a value of 11 he is considered talented or well trained, while a value of 13 represents an outstanding ability.

Close Combat

At short range, in the hands of a skilled close combat fighter, every weapon becomes a deadly tool. Whether with sword, axe or barehanded, when he can see the white in his enemy's eyes, the close combat fighter is in his element. Every hero has the ability to fight in close combat if he wants to, but some heroes are a lot more adept in it than others.

Ranged Combat

Some heroes specialize in attacking their enemies from a distance. Bows and crossbows are especially effective in this kind of combat. Every hero has the ability to fight in ranged combat if he wants to, but some heroes are a lot more adept in it than others.

Toughness

In combat, Toughness is the counterpart of the Close Combat skill. With it the heroes defend themselves against their enemies' close combat attacks, using blocks, parries or evasive maneuvers. Heroes with high toughness also find it easier to shrug off the damage caused by accidents or falling from great heights.



Reflexes

While Toughness is used against close combat attacks, a hero's Reflexes help him defend against ranged combat attacks. Outside of combat, Reflexes can save a hero by allowing him to get out of the way of traps, falling stones or other dangers. In some situations, the Reflexes skill represents a hero's sleight of hand when handling tiny objects.

Charisma

If a hero wants to persuade, encourage or sound somebody out, or even wants to make a good impression, he uses this skill. And even when a silver tongue is not getting a hero anywhere and he has to intimidate an opponent with a threatening gesture, this also requires the Charisma skill.

Climbing

Moving up or down, using either hands and feet or just the hands, and with or without the help of climbing gear, as quickly as possible while avoiding a fall. All of this makes a good climber.

Knowledge

The hero's book learning and general education. Knowledge is required to analyze a situation or make a good decision. It also helps in searches for a specific information, because the hero already has an idea where to look. The Knowledge skill is also used when handling or repairing technical equipment.

Perception

Perception encompasses all of a hero's senses including his intuition. With a high Perception score he not only notices more details but is also faster in recognizing what he is faced with and how to react to it. In the wilderness, Perception is essential in finding a safe passage to your destination.

Running

Running represents not just a hero's mobility and speed, but also his balance and endurance. The Running skill helps in keeping up with a fleeing opponent as well as getting away from all kinds of dangerous situations.

Stealth

This skill allows a hero to remain undetected when necessary. Apart from moving silently, the hero is able to find good hiding places and remain there for an amount of time without betraying his presence by sudden movement or an uncontrolled cough.

Strength

When faced with tasks that require nothing but pure brawn, this skill is called for. Bending bars, lifting heavy weights or arm wrestling an opponent into submission? No problem for a hero with a high level of Strength.

Willpower

A strong-willed hero is not easily frightened nor controlled. He can hold the gaze of an enemy wizard as well as withstanding the manipulative charms of a beautiful nymph. This skill is used to defend against enemy spells and supernatural attacks. In frightening situations it enables the heroes to show their heroic courage.



STAMINA POINTS

Real heroes are distinguished not only by their talents, but also by the fact that they never quit. Where others give up or turn tail and flee, they just get their act together and continue onwards. This heroic level of endurance is represented by Stamina points.

During the game a hero's Stamina points are subject to constant change, so they should be represented with game markers.

Losing stamina

Heroes lead a dangerous life. Vines are trying to strangle them, wild beasts are trying to tear them apart and there's a constant treat of avalanches, floods and walls of flame. All these dangers may result in the loss of Stamina points. Should a hero's stamina go down to 0, he falls down unconscious and can no longer take part in the action. There are three ways to get him back on his feet.

Adrenalin boost

Good old adrenalin! A unconscious hero may spend 1 Fate point (see below) at any time to raise his Stamina points from 0 to 1 and get back into the game. During combat an Adrenalin boost also requires an action, so the hero may take no other action during the same turn and counts as unconscious until the beginning of the next turn, when he wakes up with 1 Stamina point.

Healing spell / Healing potion

When a hero doesn't want to or is unable to spend a Fate point, he has to cast himself into the trustworthy hands of a healer. Heroes with the special ability "Healing spell" or in possession of a healing potion are able to give Stamina points back to their fellow heroes, thus bringing them back onto their feet immediately—the hero regains consciousness at once and is allowed to act normally. During combat the application of healing requires an action. Healing is also able to raise Stamina points above 1, but never above the value noted on the hero document.

Time heals all wounds

If nobody is helping him, an unconscious hero wakes up at the end of an act with 1 Stamina point. As has already been mentioned, heroes are tough. However, should **all** the heroes of the group fall unconscious at the same time (even if they have some Fate points left), then the adventure is over and the heroes have failed, unless the adventure text says something different.

At the end of an adventure Stamina points are returned to their original value, as noted on the hero document.

FATE POINTS

The heroes have been chosen by fate to perform great heroic feats. This is represented by Fate points, which allow a hero to succeed even against insurmountable odds when necessary. However, a hero should use his Fate points sparingly and with caution, because he hasn't got an unlimited supply of them available.

At the beginning of an adventure every hero starts with a specific number of Fate points noted on his hero document. As a hero's number of Fate points is constantly changing, they too should be represented by game markers.



When a hero spends a Fate point, it is being used up and discarded.

At the end of each act each hero receives 3 additional Fate points, and their total number may surpass the starting value noted on the hero document.

At the end of an adventure, Fate points are set back to the starting value noted on the hero document.

Fate points may be spent in one of the following ways:

Activating a special ability

Some special abilities (see below) can only be used when the hero invests one or more Fate points. The Fate point cost of an ability is given in its description.

Raise the ante

After a hero rolled for a challenge and is being told by the Narrator that he hasn't achieved enough successes, he is allowed to spend 1 Fate point to immediately roll another 3 dice and add all successes from that roll to his previous result. Each hero is allowed to do this **once** per challenge.

Adrenalin boost

By spending 1 Fate point an unconscious hero may get back onto his feet, see page 6.

NARRATOR FATE POINTS

A real adventure distinguishes itself by the level of tension. Will the heroes be able to overcome the seemingly insurmountable challenges placed before them or will they fail miserably? When the heroes act smartly and have luck on their side, then their heroics come more easily to them than on other days. To enable the Narrator to maintain tension for highly successful heroes, he can make heroic tasks even more difficult and dangerous. In return, a higher reward waits for the heroes at the end of the adventure, if they get there. All of this is represented by **Narrator Fate points**.

Narrator Fate points work in a completely different fashion to hero Fate points. At the start of an adventure the Narrator has no Fate points. However, at specific points during the adventure he is allowed to take one or more Fate points to activate special Narrator events which are aimed at making the game more difficult for the heroes. For every Fate point collected by the Narrator the heroes receive additional 5 experience points at the end of the adventure, so it is actually in the heroes interest to present themselves as being as fit and tough as possible in order to have the Narrator activate as many Narrator events as possible.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Special abilities allow a hero to stand out from his fellow adventurers. It may be a special talent, a specific training, access to mystical powers, or a special item in the hero's possession—all these things are called special abilities. What special abilities a hero has available and how they work is noted on his hero document.



CHALLENGES AND HOW TO FACE THEM

During an adventure the heroes are faced time and again with situations whose outcome is not predetermined but depends largely on the heroes' abilities and a touch of luck. This section describes the most important set of rules in the whole game, and fortunately they are very straightforward.

1) ISSUING THE CHALLENGE

The Narrator asks the hero(es) to roll on a specific skill. The skill is determined by the adventure's text: "The hero has to face a **skill name [Target number]** challenge." The narrator only reads the contested skill aloud; he must not tell the Target number to the heroes!

2) CALCULATING THE NUMBER OF DICE

The hero takes his hero document and looks up his hero's value in the contested skill. In some cases additional dice are added to this number, due to special abilities or specific adventure situations. In some cases the number might be reduced. The result of the skill value and these positive and negative modifiers is the number of dice to be rolled for the challenge.

NUMBER OF DICE = skill value +/- modifiers

3) ROLL THE DICE AND COUNT THE SUCCESSES

The hero rolls the number of dice calculated in the previous step; this is called "**facing a challenge**". Only the dice showing a result of 5 or 6 have an effect. The hero counts them—each of them is considered a "Success"—and tells the Narrator how many successes he has scored.

SUCCESS = A die showing a 5 or 6

4) RATE THE OVERALL SUCCESS

The number in square brackets after the contested skill is called the **Target number**. This number equals the number of successes the hero has to achieve with his dice roll in order for his hero to be successful. After the dice have been rolled, the Narrator compares the achieved successes with the Target number. If the hero has rolled at least as many successes as necessary, he has succeeded at the challenge. If he has rolled fewer successes, then he has failed.

But wait! Even if a hero has failed, not all is lost! In this case the Narrator lets the hero know that he hasn't scored enough successes. The hero may now choose to spend a Fate point (more on this on page 6) or activate Special abilities to roll additional dice in the hope of eventually getting to the necessary number of successes.



5) THE OUTCOME

The outcome of a success or failure always depends on the situation. In combat it is usually about defeating enemies or avoiding taking damage (more details on combat are provided later). Outside of combat, the adventure explains in detail how to proceed in case of a success or failure. If the hero was successful, the Narrator reads the narrative text listed under “**Success**” and applies the game effects specified below the narrative text. If the hero has failed, then the narrative text listed under “**Failure**” is read and the relevant game effects applied. In some cases there are no specific game effects, just some text to read.

***Example:** Gragg the Barbarian faces a **Strength [5]** challenge. The player looks up the “Strength” entry on Gragg’s hero document (page 20) and sees that it is followed by the number “15”. So he picks up fifteen dice and rolls them. Now he looks at the dice results: He has rolled the “1” four times, the “3” four times, the “4” three times, the “5” one time and the “6” three times. Altogether four dice are showing either the number “5” or “6”, so Gragg has achieved four successes. He tells the Narrator: “I got four successes.”*

The Narrator now tells him that those successes are not enough to succeed at the challenge, so Gragg decides to spend a Fate point to roll three additional dice. These are showing the numbers “2”, “4” and “5”. The “5” means an additional success, so Gragg has now a total of five successes. The Narrator reads the narrative text listed under “Success” and applies the relevant game effects.

TERMINOLOGY OF CHALLENGES

To ensure that the game runs smoothly, the adventure text provides clear stage directions for the narrator. Part of that is the description of who is going to face a specific challenge. There are three basic wordings for this:

- 1) “**One [or The] hero has to face a XYZ challenge.**” In this case, a single hero faces the challenge. In the case of a special action during a combat (see page 10), this is the hero performing the special action, unless the special action’s text indicates something different. In case of a non-combat related challenge, the heroes have to choose one of their group to face the challenge before rolling the dice. Only the chosen hero is allowed to face the challenge. If he fails, then the challenge is a failure for the whole group.
- 2) “**Each hero has to face a XYZ challenge.**” In this case, every hero in the group has to face this specific challenge. Each hero rolls separately and applies the result of a success or failure separately. In these cases, it is likely that some of the group’s heroes will be successful, while others fail.
- 3) “**The heroes have to face a joint XYZ challenge.**” In this case, every hero in the group has to roll a challenge on the contested skill and all their successes are added up before comparing the sum with the Target number. The result affects the whole group, so the heroes are successful together or they fail together. During a joint challenge each participating hero is allowed to use 1 Fate point in order to roll additional dice and raise the sum of successes accordingly. The heroes may freely choose the order in which they make additional rolls, but no hero is allowed more than one additional roll per challenge.



OPPONENTS AND HOW TO FIGHT THEM

During an adventure, the heroes are faced with a variety of opponents who have to be defeated for the adventure to go on and ultimately come to a successful conclusion. Such combat is a tension-packed succession of challenges: on the one hand the heroes have to wrestle down and defeat their opponents, while on the other they have to prevent the opponents from striking them down.

OPPONENTS' GAME STATS

Like the heroes, opponents have a number of skill values. Those are Defense, Attack, Damage and Stamina. An opponent's description is completed by his maneuvers and special abilities, tips for the narrator as to how to represent the opponent's Stamina values, and the conditions under which the combat ends. All this information is available to the heroes at all times during the combat, usually because the narrator has photocopied the stat cards from the appendix and presented them to the heroes for the duration of the combat. The only exception is the conditions for ending the combat, to preserve the tension and keep the combat exciting.

- ◆ The **Attack** value is what a hero has to defend against, when being attacked by that enemy. The value shows the number of successes the hero has to achieve in order to avoid taking damage. The attack value is followed by a skill name in brackets. This skill has to be used by the hero to defend against this attack. It is either Toughness, Reflexes or Willpower.

Some opponents have more than one attack. In these cases all attacks are shown, each followed by the skill with which to defend against it.

- ◆ The **Damage** value shows how many Stamina points a hero loses when hit by this attack. The value is followed by a description in brackets indicating what kind of attack it is, so the heroes know what they are defending themselves against.

Enemies with more than one attack have their Damage value noted down for each separate attack, in the same order as the Attack values.

- ◆ The **Defense** value is the number of successes a hero has to achieve with his attack dice in order to wound the enemy.
- ◆ The **Stamina** value indicates how much damage an enemy can endure before he is defeated.
- ◆ **Maneuver** describes in detail how the opponent acts in combat, who he attacks, whether he is using special abilities, and so on.
- ◆ An enemy's **Special Abilities** may include resistances, special attacks or other game effects.
- ◆ **Representation** suggests ways to represent the enemies' Stamina values by using dice. (As an alternative those values can also be written down on a piece of paper.) At some points there are references to the cards in the appendix. Those may be photocopied and placed on the game table when relevant, to make it easier to remember game effects in place.



♦ **End of combat** explains when the combat against this opponent is over, usually by defeating the opponent or causing it to flee. Some combats might end under completely different conditions, however. **Keep this information a secret from the players!**

AT THE START OF COMBAT

The time has come. The heroes are faced with a horde of dangerous monsters. And more often than not a confrontation like this will result in only one side leaving the battlefield victorious—and alive.

Before the start of the combat, the Narrator tells the heroes, how many opponents are attacking them as well as their game stats, their maneuvers and their Special Abilities. He is not revealing what determines when the combat ends.

The heroes are also told which **Special actions** are available to them during this combat. A fierce battle like this isn't a static business where both sides hit each other until one of them goes down. Instead it is full of action and drama, with many different situations that the heroes can exploit to their advantage. This is achieved by special actions. **If a special action's effects cannot be derived from its title, the narrator may read the special action's introductory text to the heroes.** Most special actions involve a challenge of a specific skill. The heroes are told which skill is going to be contested, but not the Target number or the consequences of a success or failure.

DURING COMBAT

The weapons have been drawn, the enemies and special actions been considered, and now the battle can start. But what happens now? Who acts first and what can you do? All this is explained in this section.

Turn by turn

Combats are resolved in turns. First the heroes act, then their opponents. If the heroes are supported by allies, their description indicates when and how they act. After everybody has acted, one turn ends and the next turn begins, continuing until one side is defeated.

One after the other

At the beginning of the adventure, the hero sitting immediately to the left of the Narrator becomes the **Start player**. He receives the Start player card from the appendix (also available to download from the website), or any other object being used as the Start player marker—a chess piece, a paperweight, and so on.

The Start player acts first. After he has completed his hero's action—including the use of Fate points and Special Abilities—the other heroes follow in a clockwise order. After that the opponents take their actions.

On the following turn the Start player card is passed to the next hero to the left who is not unconscious, and at the end of each following turn the card is also passed to the left, so that the Start player changes each turn.

After a combat is finished, the Start player card remains with the current Start player. In the next combat, it is passed around the table once more.



It's my turn, what now?

When a hero's turn has come, he can take exactly one action. He may ...

- ... **attack**. In order to do this he makes an **Attack roll**. This is explained in the next section.
- ... **use a special ability**. This takes effect immediately, unless the ability says something different. Some activations are not considered a separate action but are part of an attack or defense.
- ... **perform a special action**. All combats come with what are called "special actions". They could be an attack against an enemy's vulnerable spot, the opening of a locked door to allow the heroes to escape from an overwhelming horde of monsters or any other action imaginable. Sometimes the combat situation changes, making new special actions available—those are immediately announced by the Narrator. Performing a special action always requires an action and is usually followed by the hero facing a skill challenge, which is handled in the normal way. A special action may be performed any number of times per turn by any number of heroes, unless its description says something different.
- ... **tease the enemy with a cool remark**. This does not give you a game advantage but is never a bad idea nevertheless. Also it's not using up an action.

ATTACK

It is time for the ultimate moment of truth. The hero has cornered his opponent and hits him over the head with his weapon or strafes him from a distance. Well, at least he is now allowed to try. First, however, he has to announce which opponent he is going to attack. This is important in combats with more than one kind of enemy, but even when faced with identical enemies a hero might want to choose whether to attack an unscathed enemy or one that has previously been injured by him or another combatant.

After announcing the target, the hero makes an **Attack dice roll**. This works in exactly the same way as any other challenge, with the contested skill being "Close Combat" or "Ranged Combat", depending on the kind of attack.

Some Special Abilities provide special attacks (usually in form of combat spells). Instead of relying on the hero's Close Combat or Ranged Combat skill, they provide him with a fixed number of attack dice. Apart from that those attacks are being handled similar to a normal attack.

The attack value might be modified by Special Abilities or specific combat situations. This works in the same way as normal challenges. Eventually the hero has a number of dice to roll for his attack.

ATTACK VALUE = Skill + Special Abilities +/- modifiers

The hero now takes a number of dice equal to the attack value and rolls them. This is called the attack roll, and every 5 or 6 counts as a success. In order to hit the opponent, the hero has to get a number of successes at least equal to the opponent's Defense value.

If the hero rolled successfully, he has caused damage to his opponent. If the roll is unsuccessful, things aren't over right away. By using Special Abilities or Fate points, or both, a hero might still be able to hit his enemy after all.



Damage

A successful attack roll causes the enemy to lose one of his Stamina points. To account for an enemy's Stamina points, the Narrator places a number of dice equal to the number of enemies in front of him, the number shown on each die representing the current Stamina of that enemy. Every time an opponent loses Stamina the Narrator turns the die accordingly so that the current Stamina points are shown. If the Stamina goes down to 0, the die is removed, indicating that this opponent has been defeated.

Any number of heroes may attack and wound the same enemy in the same turn.

Severe hits

If a hero rolls several times the successes necessary to hit the enemy, he has scored a severe hit: an arrow hits the enemy directly between his eyes, a blade struck a vital organ, and so on.

Successes equal to or exceeding twice the opponent's Defense value means a loss of 2 Stamina points, three times as many successes means a loss of 3 Stamina points, four times means 4 lost Stamina points, and so on.

As with a regular hit, this damage is marked on the die representing the enemy. If this causes the Stamina to sink to 0, the enemy is defeated.

***Example:** Gragg attacks a wood golem that has a Defense value of 3 and a Stamina value of 5. Gragg manages 8 successes for his mighty blow. This is more than twice the Defense value, so the golem loses 2 Stamina points. If Gragg had managed to roll 9 successes, the golem would have lost a staggering 3 Stamina points.*

The horde rule

If a hero is fighting a horde of enemies with Stamina 1, then a severe hit means that more than one enemy is defeated. Twice as many successes as the opponents' Defense value means that two enemies are taken out at the same time. Three times as many successes means that a total of three enemies are defeated by one giant strike. However, it is not possible to defeat more than three enemies with a single attack.

***Example:** Gragg attacks a group of zombies with a Defense value of 2, a Stamina value of 1 and the horde rules. Gragg pulls off 6 successes, which is three times the Defense value, so Gragg destroys 3 zombies with one attack. If he had rolled 8 or more successes, this wouldn't have destroyed any more zombies, because 3 is already the maximum.*

Changing between Close Combat and Ranged Combat

A hero is allowed to change his attacks from ranged combat to close combat and vice versa at any time without having to use up an action or suffer from any other drawbacks. After all, he's a hero.

Weapons have no separate game stats

The skill values for "Close Combat" and "Ranged Combat" already include the weapons used by the heroes. Thus, the kind of weapon does not provide extra dice for the roll. Later in the game heroes may obtain magic weapons (see page 77) which provide special advantages in combat.

Ammunition is not a problem

The heroes bring enough ammunition for their Ranged Combat weapons, so they are able to use them without ever running out of ammo. Therefore it is not necessary to count the number of projectiles that have already been fired.



DEFEND YOURSELVES!

After the heroes have performed their actions it is their enemies' turn. In the enemies' description you will find the "**maneuver**" entry, which describes how the enemies act during combat. Here the Narrator can find out which heroes they attack or whether they have entirely different plans in mind.

Often the maneuver entry states that the enemies "distribute themselves evenly among the heroes, starting with the Start player". This means that the number of enemies is divided by the number of heroes to determine the number of enemies each hero is facing. Fractions are dealt out from left to right, starting with the Start player. If there are fewer enemies than heroes it means that those heroes sitting to the far left of the Start player are spared during this turn.

***Example:** A group of 4 heroes is faced with 10 enemies, who "distribute themselves evenly among the heroes, starting with the Start player". This means that the Start player and the hero sitting to his left have to defend against 3 enemies each, while the other two heroes have to defend against 2 enemies each.*

Fighting monsters is dangerous. Depending on the way in which they attack, a hero has to defend himself with a dice roll on Toughness, Reflexes or Willpower. In the same way as for the attack dice roll, modifiers by Special Abilities or situations might apply. The resulting value is the number of dice the hero is allowed to roll for this challenge.

DEFENSE VALUE = Skill + Special Abilities +/- Modifiers

The hero has to succeed at a challenge against the enemy's attack value in order to withstand the attack without taking damage. In case of a failure (the hero is allowed to back himself up with Fate points and Special Abilities as usual, see page 6) the enemy causes damage as indicated by his Damage value. The hero's Stamina points are reduced by this amount.

If this causes the hero's Stamina to drop to 0, he falls down unconscious and no longer participates in this combat unless he uses an adrenalin boost (see page 6) or is healed. As long as a hero is unconscious, opponents do not attack him. The opponents instead distribute themselves among those heroes who are still conscious.

If at the end of a turn all heroes are unconscious, then they suffer a group defeat at the hands of their enemies—the adventure ends in failure and tragedy.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

If the heroes have succeeded at the challenges set before them, defeated their opponents and protected the innocent from a grim future, then at the end of the adventure they are rewarded for their heroics with Experience Points. Those points may be spent to raise the heroes' abilities, so they can go into their next adventure invigorated. How all of this works is explained to the heroes once they have managed to actually get to the end of an adventure. So what are you waiting for? It's time to jump right into the fun!



TIPS FOR THE NARRATOR

Hello there, dear Narrator! In this game you play a special part which is neither more nor less difficult than that of the heroes, but simply consists of a different set of tasks. Your most important task is to handle the adventure from start to finish. Don't worry, the adventure text will not abandon you for even a second, and instead will provide you with clear and comprehensible stage directions that allow you to keep the game running unhindered. It is not even necessary to read the adventure text beforehand, but as you might have already guessed, it cannot hurt either.

THE MAKEUP OF THE ADVENTURE

Within this adventure there are basically two kinds of text. First, there is the **narrative text**. This is always written in *italics* and is meant for you to read aloud at the appropriate moment. All other texts are **stage directions** for you. One such stage direction could go as follows: "Please read the following aloud", followed by a narrative text in italics.

Another very frequent stage direction is telling you when one or more heroes have to face a specific **challenge**. This is always followed by a text box explaining the result of a success or failure. At no point during the game are you forced to decide on your own what challenges to face the heroes with or what the results of a success or failure will be—this will always be predetermined by the adventure text. Also, when you have to jump to the next scene, this will be mentioned as a stage direction. In case there is no such direction, this simply means to read right on.

Combats have a special role. They first provide information about the type and number of opponents the heroes have to fight. This is followed by the opponent's game stats and the special actions available to the heroes during this combat as well as special events that might occur during the combat. A combat section is concluded by special rules that may apply during the combat. Special rules could for example describe allies fighting alongside the heroes, or specific tasks that the heroes have to perform in order to win the combat. During combat it is very likely that you will have to flip back and forth through the pages, but don't worry, the information is always presented in the same fashion, so after one or two combats you will have gotten the hang of it.

Another special role are **conversations** with important persons that the heroes meet during the adventure. Those sections usually start with the sentence "Assume the role of XYZ now". This is the one part of the game that is most difficult to anticipate and most difficult to put into rules. It has however also the potential of becoming the most interesting part, once your players have gained some experience with it. This part usually starts with a description of the person you are to portray at the game table. How much you want to get into this role is completely up to you—it is also a matter of experience, personal taste and your actual form of the day. Don't feel sad if it doesn't work out perfectly from day one—skill comes with practice! All conversations are made up in such a way that it is not about the heroes having to persuade the person to do something that she wouldn't want to do anyway, and also not the other way around. Instead it is merely about exchanging information, usually from the adventure person to the heroes. The main part of the conversation text contains the usual questions that can be expected from the heroes, followed by the relevant answer. The questions are arranged in the same order in which the heroes are usually asking them, but be prepared to jump back and forth if necessary. The most important goals of this sequence are to provide the heroes with as much of the available information as possible and to reach the final outcome mentioned after "The conversation should end with ..."



Last but not least the **Narrator actions** are worth mentioning: these are indicated by a header of the same name and provide optional events that make the adventure more difficult but also more diversified. For additional information regarding Narrator actions see below.

CHALLENGES AND THE USE OF FATE POINTS

When presenting a challenge to the heroes, do not tell them the Target number! This is important to create a sense of tension, as the heroes cannot be exactly sure of what is coming for them. On the other hand it is not a big problem if you do let the Target number slip out accidentally; the heroes still do not know whether they will succeed.

Keeping the Target number a secret from the heroes is not meant to harass them. Instead, let them roll for the challenge and get into the habit of reacting in a specific way to each kind of result. If a hero needs only 1 additional success to succeed in the challenge, then tell him: "It would be worth spending a Fate point, if you want to succeed." If there are 2 successes missing, then you could say: "That's difficult, but manageable." With 3 or more successes missing, you should instead say: "This wouldn't warrant spending a Fate point."

Such a statement from you is obviously ambiguous, because you too have no idea whether or not the hero is going to roll the necessary successes. It is entirely possible for him to not roll a single success on three additional dice. On the other hand he might just as well achieve three additional successes on three dice on rare occasions.

In any case you should refrain from trying to fool the heroes by leading them to waste their Fate points without achieving anything. Under all circumstances try to be honest with them! If you are, the heroes will learn to trust you and you will be able to properly share the thrill with them. The end result will ultimately be decided by the dice anyway.

The same guidelines apply to joint challenges, where each hero is allowed to spend 1 Fate point to roll additional dice. Let the heroes know beforehand whether they have a chance of reaching the necessary Target number by spending Fate points or not. Allow each hero to spend his Fate point, roll the dice and add the additional successes to the sum, before the next hero does, so that no Fate points are spent unnecessarily.

During combat, the opponent's Attack and Defense values are not withheld from the heroes. This is because they are used very often in a large number of successive dice rolls, which makes it impractical to keep them a secret. Also, after the first round of combat clever players would have found out those game stats anyway.

GAME MARKERS AND CARDS

You can play this game with just the book and the hero documents with no problem, by keeping track of current Stamina and Fate points on a piece of paper and just reading the opponent's stats and other relevant information to the heroes. That said, we strongly recommend using the cards from the appendix and representing Stamina and Fate points with game markers. With some resourcefulness you will be able to find appropriate counters in any board game collection. Handing those game elements out during the game not only speeds it up, the whole game also becomes a lot more tactile.



NARRATOR ACTIONS AND NARRATOR MERCY

Before activating a Narrator action for the first time, you should play at least one complete adventure, making yourself familiar with the dangers and pitfalls of certain game situations. Once you have gained the appropriate experience you will be able to decide when the use of Narrator actions makes sense and when it doesn't. Excessive use could result in the heroes failing the adventure due to the raised difficulty. Even if the heroes do succeed in a combat with a raised difficulty, they may have spent too much of their resources, especially in the form of Fate points, making the rest of the adventure very difficult for them. On the other hand, when used in moderation, Narrator actions can enhance the game with lots of drama and tension.

If you feel like you have overdone it and the heroes are on their last legs (regardless of whether this has been caused by a Narrator action or by pure bad luck on the heroes' dice rolls), you can save the heroes from defeat by reducing the Attack value of one type of opponent by 1. This should usually do the trick. In return you should also discard a Narrator Fate point that you took previously or at a later time activate a Narrator action without taking a Narrator Fate point.

Another option could be to show no mercy and allow the heroes to lose an adventure if they have a bad day and fail at the challenges presented to them. However, if you have young or sensitive players sitting at the table we advise against such an approach! On the other hand, with mature players the constant threat of defeat could be exactly what's necessary in order to keep the game exciting and challenging. Also keep in mind that the more Narrator actions you activate, the more experience points the heroes will gain at the end of the adventure. Especially if the heroes already know the adventure, you could jointly decide to play the game in the "Hardcore mode", in which all Narrator actions are going to be activated, no matter what. This is however only recommended for expert players.

FRIENDLINESS AND GAME BALANCE

You may already have noticed that in this game you are not really playing against the heroes, but together with them. All dice are rolled by the heroes anyway and there is no secretiveness of any kind. Instead go for it and root for the heroes, provide tactical tips and share the thrill when the dice are rolled. In this way you will create a good sense of community at the game table and also improve your own fun.

As a general rule, be nice to the heroes! There is no reason to make their life difficult, that is already done by the adventure. If you feel uncertain of how to handle a certain rule, then there are usually two interpretations: the one that favors the heroes and the one that doesn't. In those cases you can always go for the one favoring the heroes.

But also remind the heroes of the fact that the adventure is only exciting if they manage to succeed at it by a hair's breadth. Cheating at the dice rolls or making up rules exceptions is not going to enhance anybody's fun.

STRAYING FROM THE PATH

This adventure has a detailed, predetermined storyline. During the story the heroes are presented with a variety of choices on how to proceed, creating a feeling of free choice, but apart from that the adventure follows a clearly marked out route, as you would expect from reenacting a movie. That said, it can sometimes be fun to stray from the well-trodden adventure path, and if



the heroes bring up their own ideas not mentioned in the book, the Narrator should allow them to proceed. When doing so, in order for the adventure not to fall apart, please remember the following guidelines:

- ♦ **The Narrator always has the last word.** If he thinks that the heroes' alternative action doesn't suit the adventure, then he is allowed to forbid it without having to explain himself. After all, he knows the adventure best, including which additional ideas make sense and which don't.
- ♦ **Don't destroy the storyline.** Alternative actions that mean a radical change to the story should not be allowed.
- ♦ **Make it depend on a challenge.** Most alternative actions will improve the heroes' situation, so they shouldn't be successful right away. Instead the hero performing the alternative action should face an appropriate challenge. The Narrator chooses a skill that fits the task and secretly decides on a Target number between 3 (easy) and 5 (difficult). A challenge roll resulting in a failure might very well have negative effects for the heroes!
- ♦ **Make it require an action.** If a hero wants to perform an alternative action during combat, this should always require him to spend a regular action, meaning that he cannot perform any other actions in the same turn.
- ♦ **Restrict the reward.** If the hero succeeds at the challenge roll, this should result in a considerable, but not game-breaking advantage. For example, a permanent bonus on a skill value would be far too much. The best suited reward is a temporary dice bonus that allows the hero to roll an additional 2 to 3 dice during a later challenge that fits this specific bonus.



GRAGG



MELISSA



DUPINI



FLAMELET



GIACOMO



TAMYA



BALTASAR



NAZOMI

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below you will find a list of questions that your players might ask, with the relevant answers:

Are the weapons and armors used by a hero included in his Close Combat, Ranged Combat and Toughness skill values?

Yes, in order to make the game easier to play, the qualities of those items are already included in the heroes' game stats and so provide no additional game effect. After succeeding at an adventure, however, the heroes may use their earned gold pieces to purchase weapons, armor and other equipment (see page 77) that provide a variety of game effects.

Why does Adrenaline boost give a Stamina point to the hero only on the next turn and not immediately?

The reason for this is that the hero has to spend his action in order to perform the Adrenaline boost. He is therefore not able to act in the current turn, leaving him standing in front of his opponents with only 1 Stamina point. Since he would not be unconscious, the opponents would probably strike him down before he could perform a single useful action. Since he is, instead, unconscious at the end of the current turn, he is ignored by the opponents and is guaranteed at least one action during the next turn (unless all of his companions are also knocked unconscious in the current turn).

Does a combat end immediately, when the End of Combat condition is met, or is the current turn completed first?

As soon as the conditions mentioned in the "End of Combat" entry are met, the combat ends immediately. The current turn is not continued and the Start Player card remains with the actual Start Player.

If a hero is attacked by several opponents during a turn and becomes unconscious by the first attack, what will the remaining opponents do?

In that situation, the remaining opponent's attacks are forfeited.

How can I keep track of the number of dice to roll in the challenges? Usually the number of dice needs to be adjusted just by one or two between different skills, but I have to count all the dice in order to not get the number wrong.

There is a neat trick to get a grip on this problem: Have ten dice in a specific color and all other dice in another color available. This way you always know that there are ten dice of the one color, so you can add and subtract from that amount. Try it, it really helps speeding up your dice rolling!



ACT I:

CUSTOMS CON-TROLLS

You've been traveling for days in dark tunnels and cave systems, on a trip to Deep Water, the capital of the Blackbloods. The Blackbloods is a collective term for Orcs, Ogres, Trolls, Dark Dwarfs, and Goblins, who have established, deep underground, their own realm - the Shadow Realm. The Shadow Realm and the free trading city of Kaphornia have been at peace for many years, a peace underpinned by a number of trade agreements. You are here on a very official diplomatic mission, to renew those agreements and preserve the peace.

The city council of Kaphornia chose you for this important task because you have proven by your past deeds that you possess the courage and toughness required for dealing with the rabid Blackbloods. In addition, your competitors withdrew at the last minute after a story made the rounds of what happened to the last diplomatic envoy who was sent into the Shadow Realm. Such rumors of torn limbs cannot scare you away, right?

The Shadow Realm is called that for a reason - it's so pitch black that you can't see your hands in front of your eyes, unless you're a dwarf or a fairy. Since the city does not want you to stumble around helplessly, the friendly alchemist Refraktus has prepared a special carrot juice for you, which gives you perfect vision even in total darkness.

The Fairy and the Dwarfs are able to see in the dark, and all other heroes start the adventure with one canteen of carrot juice, which you can hand over to the players by giving them the appropriate cards from the appendix (page 83).

Carrot Juice

A big canteen filled with magical carrot juice. The juice gives you the ability to see in darkness as if it were broad daylight. With one gulp per day you can make sure that this ability doesn't vanish.

As long as the hero has the carrot juice, he can see in total darkness without problems. If he should ever lose the carrot juice, he will have to roll with two dice fewer than usual in all challenges.

But even with your enhanced senses it is not exactly easy to find your way through the maze of tunnels and corridors that make up the Shadow Empire.

The heroes have to face a joint Perception **[Number of heroes x 5]** challenge.



Success: *Such a little cave system as this cannot fool you. You find your way without any noteworthy problems.* Each hero receives 1 Fate Point.

Failure: *After a short while you have completely lost your way, but that shouldn't be a problem—that's what the signposts are there for after all, right? Unfortunately you notice too late that whoever put up these signs played a cruel joke on you, and after walking in circles for a couple of days you finally reach your destination more by pure chance than anything else.* Each hero loses 1 Fate Point.

Eventually you enter an enormous cavern filled with a huge lake called “Dark Lake”. You know that on the far side of the lake lies Deep Water, the center of the Shadow Realm.

When you reach the port that serves as a major supply hub for Deep Water, you spot a small, harried figure running towards you, followed by a group of very large, very dangerous looking figures. The small figure turns out to be a Goblin, less than 5 feet tall and skinny, like all of his folk. Fearfully he hides behind you, whilst the large figures come closer and turn out to be Trolls. With their height of two and a half meters and their gigantic muscles, they are amongst the Shadow Realm's largest inhabitants, but not exactly well known for their intellectual capacities.

The Troll's Leader, a plump giant with very likely the ugliest face you've ever seen, bellows at you: “What?!? You hidin' gutless Goblin from us! So we give you good clobbering now!” His putrid breath flows over you and makes you writhe with disgust. Shortly thereafter you find yourself in a fierce brawl, not even knowing why.

The heroes have to fight against **[Number of heroes]** Trolls and the **Big Ugly Troll**.

Trolls

Attack 4 (vs. Reflexes), **Damage** 2 (Heavy Club), **Defense** 3, **Stamina** Number of heroes

Maneuver: The Trolls distribute themselves evenly between the heroes, beginning with the Starting Player.

Heavy Clubs: Instead of dodging a Troll's heavy club, a hero may decide to parry it. He then has to face a defense roll on his Toughness skill with a target number of 3. If he rolls successfully, he has withstood the club's damage, but its force hurls him around and he has to roll a die to find out the consequences of that: 1-2: smooth landing (no further effect), 3-4: hurled against a wooden crate (the hero loses 1 Stamina Point), 5-6: home run (the hero loses 1 Stamina Point and immediately has to face a **Running [5]** challenge; in case of a failure he may not act in the next round)

Representation: Place a number of dice in front of you equal to the number of Trolls, each die showing the current Stamina value of that Troll. As an alternative, the Stamina points can be noted down on a piece of paper. If you are using the cards from the appendix on page 83, put the Troll cards and the card with the available special action in front of the players.

End of combat: The combat ends when the first Troll is taken out by a tropical fruit (see below).



Big Ugly Troll

Attack 5 (vs. Willpower), **Damage** 1 (Obnoxious breath), **Defense** 4, **Stamina** Number of heroes x2

Maneuver: The Big Ugly Troll always attacks the Starting Player.

Obnoxious breath: When a hero suffers damage from the obnoxious breath, he also loses his action during the following turn.

Representation: Place one or more dice in front of you showing the Big Ugly Troll's current Stamina value. As an alternative, the Stamina points can be noted down on a piece of paper. If you are using the cards from the appendix on page 83, put the Big Ugly Troll card in front of the players.

Read out the following at the beginning of the combat:

During combat you may choose from the following special actions:

1) *Hand over the Goblin, a Reflexes challenge.*

1) HAND OVER THE GOBLIN

Maybe you are not too keen on the punch-up with the huge Trolls and instead want to hand over the Goblin to them? That would not be very heroic, but maybe it can convince the Trolls to leave you alone. The problem with this idea is that the Goblin is quicksilver fast and won't allow you to grab him so easily.

The hero has to face a **Reflexes [5] challenge**. This special action may be performed a maximum of once per turn, regardless of whether it is successful or not. Once the challenge is met with success, the special action is no longer available.

Success: *You grab the Goblin and dangle him in front of the Trolls. One of them grasps the little creature and delivers a violent blow that makes it cringe with pain. You feel a little bit ashamed on witnessing this, but no, it's too late to take back your decision. Or maybe it isn't?* The hero immediately loses 3 Fate points, but in return one of the Trolls is keeping himself busy with the Goblin, so he is removed from the combat. On a later turn the hero may decide to set the Goblin free. This requires an action, but no challenge. By doing so the hero gets 2 Fate points back and the Troll returns to the combat.

Failure: *The Goblin backs away from you in fear and you cannot grab him.*

At the end of the 1st turn read the following aloud:

To your unpleasant surprise, you discover that the Trolls are blessed with incredible regenerating powers, and their wounds are closing as fast as you can cause them. It seems that your attacks have no effect on the Trolls. If you want to make it through this combat, you have to come up with a better method pretty quick!





All Trolls have the following additional ability:

Regeneration: At the end of a turn, a Troll gets back all lost Stamina points, even if defeated during the current turn.

At the beginning of the 2nd turn read the following aloud:

During combat you may choose from the following additional special actions:

- 2) *Caging a Troll, a Strength challenge*
- 3) *Insult the Trolls, a Charisma challenge*
- 4) *Distract a Troll, a Close Combat or Ranged Combat challenge*
- 5) *Find the Trolls' weakness, a Knowledge challenge*
- 6) *Search through the crates, a Perception challenge that is only allowed once the heroes have found the Trolls' weakness*

If you are using the cards from the appendix on page 83, put the card with the additional special actions and the card with the Trolls' additional ability in front of the players.

BEGINNING OF 2ND TURN