TAINTED GRAIL

THE FALL OF AVALON



RULEBOOK

AWAKEN REALMS

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Finally, to Jordan Luminais for being the goodest bot there is.

Component List

Below, you can find a detailed list of all components inside the Tainted Grail: The Fall of Avalon core box. Please note that copies of the game with included expansions (such as the Niamh expansion) will contain additional components not listed here.

Models


1 Beor model


1 Ailei model

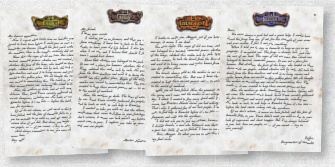

1 Arev model


1 Maggot model

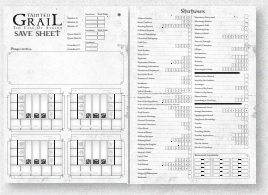

1 Fore-dweller model


3 Menhir models

Paper Components


4 starting letters


4 adventure maps


30 save sheets


Open & Play Guide


Rulebook


Fall of Avalon Exploration Journal

Trays & Tiles


1 green Tray


1 blue Tray


1 brown Tray


1 gray Tray


4 Character Tiles

Plastic Components



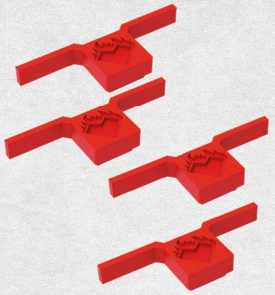
10 Dials



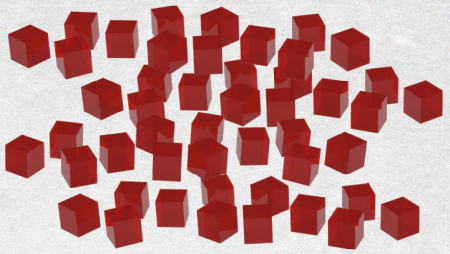
8 Time Tokens



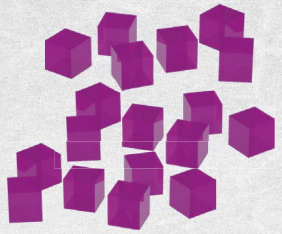
4 Quest Tokens



4 Health limiters



90 universal markers



25 large markers



1 regular Die



1 guardian Die

Cards:

Standard cards (556):



31 green Encounters



31 grey Encounters



50 blue Basic Combat/Diplomacy cards



50 green Basic Combat/Diplomacy cards



30 Beor cards



30 Ailei cards



31 purple Encounters



31 blue Encounters



50 gray Basic Combat/Diplomacy cards



50 brown Basic Combat/Diplomacy cards



30 Arev cards



30 Maggot cards



4 You're Going Insane cards



4 You're Dying (co-op) cards



1 You're Dying card



8 Advancement Pool divider cards



22 Random Event cards



70 Story Event cards

Oversized cards (72):



63 Locations cards



10 Help cards

Small cards (143):



43 Secret cards



65 Item cards



36 Skill cards



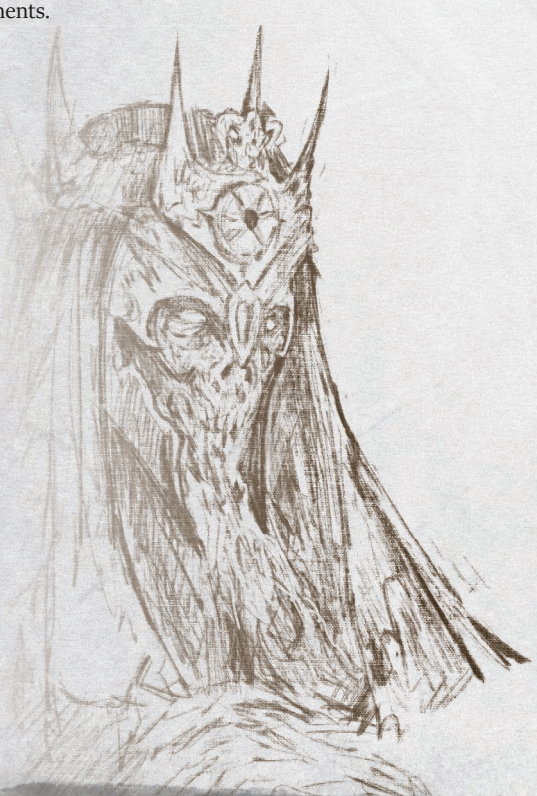
3 other divider cards

Tainted Grail Rules Update Summary

This Tainted Grail reprint (version 2.0) introduced some limited changes to the core rules of the game, and we recommend both new and returning players read the entire Rulebook. However, if you're still not sure what changed after reading the rules, here's the summary of the modifications introduced in this edition:

1. Character Setup, page 6 – Players now should choose a game mode (story, standard, challenge) before starting the game. Corresponding rules are on page 22 and on appropriate Help cards.
2. Start and End of the Day effects, pages 8 and 9 – All effects resolved during the Start and End of the day now have more precise timing.
3. Start of the Day, page 8 – Guardians are now moved before the Event card is resolved.
4. Resting rules, page 9 – Eating Food at the End of the Day is no longer mandatory, and failing to eat no longer Exhausts the Character. Characters may still choose to pay 1 Food to gain 1 and lose 1 during the Rest step. The old Rest rule was moved to a challenge mode instead.
5. Resources limit, page 10 – Characters can't carry more than 20 of each Resource (except EXP).
6. Global keyword, page 12 – "Global" keyword, known from TG expansions, is now a part of the core rules.
7. Resolving Combat/Diplomacy cards, pages 15 and 19 – The order of resolving a Combat/Dyplomacy card was rewritten to be more precise.
8. New cards – This reprint introduces two new cards: an additional Secret that can be gained during the Campaign, and a new Story / Challenge mode Help card.
9. Exploration Journal update – Many other changes, edits, new options, and interactions were added to the Exploration Journal (including quick travel and an additional Secret card). Discover them by playing the game using the 2.0 Exploration Journal or the App!

Lastly, it is important to note that each component in this version of the game is marked with the following symbol: . If you own multiple versions of the game it will help you diffrentiate the components.



Basic Information

This section of the Rulebook will give you a general overview of the game and its components. If you want to, you may skip this part and head directly to the "Campaign Setup" section in order to start your first journey. You can also learn all rules by watching our instructional video at: **www.taintedgrail.com/learn**

Introduction

Tainted Grail is a story-rich survival and exploration game for 1-4 players, set in a grim universe that blends Arthurian legends and Celtic mythology with the unique, dark vision of Awaken Realms artists and writers.

Each player controls one of four unlikely heroes who must face impossible odds, where stronger and wiser champions have failed. Chased by the encroaching, twisted power of the wyrdness, fighting an uneven battle against depleting resources and challenging Encounters, the Characters set out to achieve the impossible – and die many times in the process.

The different **Tainted Grail** Campaigns are set apart by many years, revealing the long-term consequences of player actions, while a deep, branching storyline allows players to tackle problems in different ways, ensuring no two games play alike.

Simple Gameplay Overview

During a standard game of **Tainted Grail**, you will spend most of your time journeying across the dangerous island of Avalon. Your Character will **Travel** from one **Location** card to another, spending **Energy** and revealing more Locations. To progress further, you often must activate one of the **Menhir** statues scattered throughout the realm. These monuments go dark after some time, and activating them requires considerable **Resources**, so plotting your course will test your planning and logistics skills.

At any point, you may **Explore** any Location you visit. This will throw you into the middle of a non-linear, branching storyline, contained in the **Exploration Journal** that often changes the game world around you, swapping some of the Location cards for their different versions or granting you game-changing **Statuses** or **Secret** cards.

At some point, your day will end. At the start of each day, a new **Event** card will be revealed, slowly pushing time forward and providing you with new **Quests**.

While playing, you will also stumble upon many random **Encounters**. To resolve them, you will use your **Combat** and **Diplomacy** decks, using your tactical and deck building skills.

Rewards from these Encounters will help your Character **advance**, letting you expand and optimize your two decks, gain interesting **Skills**, raise your **Attributes**, and – eventually – reach parts of the island that you would not have reached otherwise, until you finally complete your current story **Chapter** or arrive at the end of the **Campaign**.

That is unless you first succumb to **death** or **insanity**. Their shadow will hang above you right from the start. After all, The Fall of Avalon is not a good time to be alive...

When you return, you will hopefully be wiser and better prepared!

This island was never meant for humans. Looming on the border between our reality and the ancient power known as the wyrdness, it was populated by a mysterious, legendary race. Humans came here anyway, with their wooden ships, their ambitious king, and his fellowship of knights.

Running from a plague ravaging their distant homeland, they took the island piece by piece, raising menhirs of foreboding shape and mysterious purpose. The former masters of the island faded into legend.

Four hundred years later, not even their name remains; the people of Avalon call them the Fore-dwellers. Times are harsh. The Red Death is back. The menhirs are dying, and without their power, the land itself crumbles back into the wyrdness. That's why your hometown has gathered five of its strongest and wisest heroes and sent them to find help in distant Kamelot. As these champions set out to brave the dangers of this wild land, you watch from afar.

You are NOT one of them.

Components Overview

This page shows how **Tainted Grail** looks when played.
It will also give you a general idea of what each component is for.

Exploration Journal
Each location card has a corresponding section in the Exploration Journal.



Introductory Letters, Maps, Save Sheets
Additional paper hand-outs used during the game.



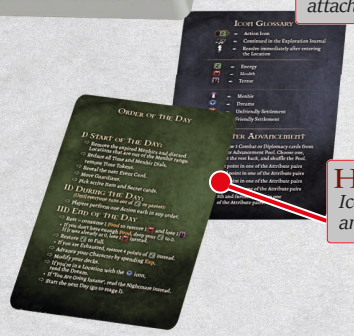
Death and Insanity cards
Attached to Character Trays of dying or insane Characters.



Location Deck
Contains unrevealed location Cards.



Help Cards
Icon glossaries, turn order, basic Actions and other helpful information.



Location cards
The modular board of the game.

Menhirs
Guardian stones of Avalon. They limit the number of revealed location cards.

Guardian Encounter
A powerful beast chasing the Characters.



Character Trays
Trays hold the Character Tile, Resources, Attributes and Survival Tracks.



Skill Cards
Bought with Experience and attached to Character Trays.

Secret Deck
These numbered cards may contain everything from unique items to extra rules!

Item Deck
Standard equipment, from a piece of armor to a coil of rope.



Dials
Placed and rotated inside Menhirs to indicate how much longer they are going to stay in play. Dials may also be used to track other values, decipher Secrets or to make a coin toss.



Skill deck
A pool of Skills players may choose from when advancing their Characters.

Encounter decks
Four types of dangers, some solved through Combat, some through Diplomacy.



Event deck & Discard pile
Cards that drive the story forward or provide various random effects.

Active Quest
A card containing an important Quest.

Character models
Your Characters; each has a corresponding Character Tray, Character Tile, and a set of Combat and Diplomacy cards.

Health marker
A special "T"-shaped piece, placed in the Health track of the Character Tray.

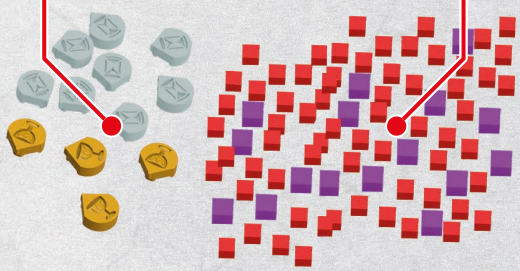


Combat and Diplomacy Decks
Each Character has their own deck for solving Combat and Diplomatic Encounters.



Time and Quest Tokens
Placed on various components or used as Dial indicators.

Markers and Large Markers
Large marker has the value of five standard markers.



Campaign Setup

To learn the game in the simplest way possible, we strongly encourage you to use the Open & Play guide that explains the basics in an introductory solo adventure. To set up any further Campaigns, please follow the steps below. If you come back to a Campaign in progress, you don't need to follow the full game setup below. Instead, go to the "Saving the Game" chapter in the Basic Rules section of this manual.

Character Setup

Each player completes the following steps separately.

I) Choose the type of playthrough. There are 3 game modes you may choose from:

- **Story mode** – Recommended for players who just want to experience the story without worrying too much about death and resource management. You will still be able to experience all core mechanics of the game!
- **Standard mode** – A standard, challenging way of playing the game. Focused on both immersion and survival aspects of Tainted Grail.
- **Challenge mode** – Recommended for experienced players of the genre, who do not fear death and replaying parts of the game. Using this mode before playing through at least the 1st Chapter of the game is highly discouraged.

During the game, you will still be able to change the chosen mode between Chapters if you feel like the game is too punishing or provides too little challenge.

If you decide to use the Story or Challenge mode, place the corresponding Help card in the play area.

Important: For the details of Story mode and Challenge mode, see page 22.

II) Choose your Character. Take this Character's cardboard Tile and a Character Tray of the same color.

__Hint:__ The main difference between Characters is their Character Action and negative trait, visible on the front of their Tiles, as well as the length of Survival Tracks on their matching Character Tray, and their unique Combat and Diplomacy cards.

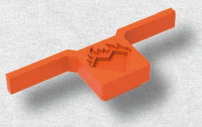
The expansion Character Niamh has a red Tile and may use a Tray of any color.

III) Mark the starting levels of your *(Energy)* **and** *(Terror)***.** Find the and tracks on your Character Tray. Place universal markers in the starting slots, highlighted by two red chevrons on these tracks.



IV) Place the T-shaped *(Health)* **marker in the track slot.** It is also highlighted with two red chevrons.

The shape of the marker will help you remember about the effect your has on the other two tracks (see: Playing the Game).



V) Mark your starting Attributes. You will find their starting values on the back of your Character Tile.

VI) Mark your starting Resources. They are also listed on the back of your Character Tile. Place the corresponding numbers of universal markers in the Resource slots on your Character Tray.



VII) Set aside the 80 Combat and Diplomacy cards that match the color of your Character Tray. There are 50 basic Combat and Diplomacy cards that match your Character Tray, and 30 advanced Combat and Diplomacy cards with your Character's name above their title.

You may use card numbers to help you assemble this pile. For example, Ailei (color green) should gather Combat cards numbered 1-25 G, Diplomacy cards numbered 1-25 G, Advanced Combat cards with her name, numbered 1-15 G, and Advanced Diplomacy cards with her name, numbered 1-15 G.

If you're still not sure how to tell the cards apart, see the detailed card overviews in Combat and Diplomacy sections of this Rulebook.

VIII) Create your 15-card Combat and Diplomacy starter decks. Pick the 15 basic Combat and the 15 basic Diplomacy cards with a banner that matches your Tray's color (see illustration below). The banner is located under the card's name. Shuffle these cards and place them to the left (Combat) and right (Diplomacy) of your Character Tray.

Characters from other Campaigns need to refer to the starter deck lists found on the back of their Character Tile.

In the Fall of Avalon Campaign, the starter cards used in this step are numbered 1-15/25.

Starter cards DO NOT have Character names on them!



IX) Create your 25-card Combat and Diplomacy Advancement Pools. Take the 15 advanced Combat cards that have your Character's name. Then, take the 10 remaining basic Combat cards of the color matching your Character Tray (the ones without the banner, that weren't used in the previous step to create your starter deck). Shuffle these 15 advanced cards with the 10 basic cards. This is your 25-card Combat Advancement Pool. As the game progresses, you will use it to buy additional cards and improve your deck.

Now, repeat the above with the Diplomacy cards to build your Diplomacy Advancement Pool.

Place both Advancement Pools in one of the Save Compartments in the box or cover it with the "Advancement Pool" card.

X) Place your Character Tile on the Character Tray. Setup information should face down, and your Character Action should face up.



XI) Read your Character's introductory Letter. Written by your former mentor, who disappeared with the previous expedition, it will reveal more about your initial situation.

Introductory Letters also contain your unique Character Number, used rarely to break ties and unresolved votes.

XII) Take your Adventure Map. If you have no knowledge of Avalon, it will help you reach some important landmarks of the Island. Beware though, the cartographer who created the map lived over a century ago, and his drawing may no longer be accurate!

World Setup

After all players have set up their Characters, follow the steps below.

I) Set the Starting Location. The Starting Location for the Fall of Avalon is Location card 101. Place your Starting Location in the middle of your play space and place all the Character models you are starting the Campaign with there.

Other Campaigns use Locations 201, 301, and 401 as their starting points.

II) Place one Menhir model on the Starting Location and put a Dial in the slot under this Menhir. Turn the Dial so that it shows the following number: 8 (for 1 player), 7 (for 2 players), 6 (for 3 players) or 5 (for 4 players).

This important Dial shows how many days you have left before the Menhir goes dark (see: Menhirs and Wyrdness).



III) Build the starting section of the map. Check the four Direction Keys on the four edges of your Starting Location. Find the four Location cards with the corresponding Location numbers and attach each of them to their matching Direction Key.

Example: *In the Fall of Avalon campaign, you should attach Hunters' Grove (102) to the top edge of your Starting Location (101), Warriors' Fair (103) to its left edge, Charred Conclave (104) to its right edge, and Forlorn Swords (105) to its bottom edge.*



IV) Prepare the Encounter cards. Take all Encounters and sort them by color into four piles. Each pile should contain 31 cards, including a special Encounter marked as "Your First Encounter".
You will use these piles to build your Encounter decks in step IX.

V) Prepare the Secret and Item decks. Take all Item and Secret cards and place them in two piles next to the Encounters. You may want to sort the Secret cards by number in order to find them more easily during the game. Shuffle the Item deck.

VI) Take a fresh Save sheet.
You will use it to save your game and to mark Statuses that permanently change the way some locations and people respond to your group.

VII) Distribute Help cards. Each player should receive one Icon Guide card, and one Turn Order card with the Action list on the back. Leave the Combat / Diplomacy Help card on the table.

VIII) Optional: pick your Chronicler. Designating one player as a Chronicler helps to maintain the flow of the game and limits downtime. For the breakdown of a Chronicler's responsibilities, see the Chronicler frame.

IX) Set up the first Chapter. Find the Chapter I Setup card and follow its instructions, starting from the front side, to build the Event deck and Encounter decks.

Then, take all Random Event cards, shuffle them and place them on the side of your play space or in the box. The Event cards will sometimes ask you to put a certain number of these Random Events on top of the Event deck. When asked to draw an Event, you always draw from the deck, and never from the Random Event pile!

After you complete each Chapter of the game, you will be asked to follow a new Chapter Setup card to prepare you for another Chapter and modify your Encounter decks, phasing out easier cards and introducing harder ones.



X) The first day of your journey has started. Go to the "Playing the Game" section of this Rulebook and begin your journey!

Hint: *Exploring your home Location is a good first step that will let you check what options are available there.*

Hint: *For the first several in-game days, keep your Order of the Day Help card handy and perform the listed steps one by one. A new player can easily forget about important actions, such as reducing each Dial or revealing a new Event card at the start of each day.*

Chronicler (optional)

In cooperative games with 2-4 players, we suggest one player volunteer as the Chronicler. Apart from playing the game, the Chronicler becomes **Tainted Grail**'s equivalent of the Game Master and is responsible for:

- Reading (or re-telling) paragraphs of the Exploration Journal aloud to other players.
- Performing upkeep tasks, such as revealing new Event cards and reducing all Dials at the Start of the Day.
- Maintaining the Save Sheet, marking any Statuses gained by players, and checking the Statuses when asked.
- Adding new Location cards and removing Location cards no longer in a range of an Active Menhir.
- Dealing Item and Secret cards from their decks.
- Breaking ties and making the final decision in any conflicting situations.

While the Chronicler has no gameplay impact and having one is not mandatory, choosing a single person to perform this role will reduce the time spent on upkeep and will lead to fewer mistakes. Additionally, listening to what other Characters go though in their exploration helps to keep the rest of the group occupied and immersed!

PLAYING THE GAME

This section will teach you how to play Tainted Grail. Start by following the Order of the Day and then learn all the Basic Rules.

ORDER OF THE DAY

The day is the most important time unit in **Tainted Grail**, and represents a full turn of the game. **During the Day** (stage II), Characters spend to perform Actions until they have no more or decide to Pass. After that, players perform a short **End of the Day** (stage III) sequence, where Characters rest, recover, read Dreams, advance, and optimize their decks. Then, a new day begins, with the **Start of the Day** sequence (stage I) that includes some upkeep tasks and reveals a new Event card.

In short, as you play **Tainted Grail**, you will continuously go through three stages described below:

I) START OF THE DAY

Skip the Start of the Day sequence during the very first day of the Campaign.

1) Resolve Start of the Day effects. If Characters have any effects (on Items, Skill, etc.) that should be resolved at the Start of the Day, resolve all of them now, in any chosen order.

2) Remove expired Menhirs. If a Menhir has no Dial in the slot of its base, it becomes inactive and goes dark right now. Remove any such Menhirs from the table. Any Menhirs still on the table are referred to as "Active Menhirs."

3) Remove Locations out of the Menhir range. Each Location card in the game should be adjacent (in a straight line or diagonally) to a Location with an Active Menhir. If there are any Location cards that no longer touch a Location with an Active Menhir, discard them now (see: Menhirs and Wyrdness).

4) Reduce Menhir Dials. Reduce the Dial of each Active Menhir by 1. If a Dial was already at 1, and you can't reduce it further, remove it from under the Menhir. Please note: the Menhir itself won't disappear nor become inactive until the next Start of the Day!

5) Reduce Time Dials and remove Time Tokens. If there are any Dials with Time Tokens on them anywhere on the table, including on the Secret cards or next to the Characters, reduce them by 1. If a Dial can no longer be reduced, remove it from the game.

Remove one Time token from every Location card that has any.

Only Dials with Time Tokens should be reduced in this step. Dials with Quest Tokens move according to different rules. You also shouldn't remove any Quest Tokens from any Location.

6) Move Guardians. Guardians are special, roaming Encounters. If there are any Guardians on the table, roll the Direction die for each of them and move them according to the rules found in the Guardians section of the Basic Rules.

7) Reveal and read a new Event card. If it contains a Quest text and a red padlock symbol , you should move it to the Quest pile, next to the Event deck.

Unlike regular Events that stay active for one day, Events containing Quests remain on the table until the moment specified on their cards.

8) Discuss your plans. If you play coop, all players should take time to discuss their plans. You will win or lose together, so careful planning and logistics are necessary!

9) Equip for your journey. Make sure your Character doesn't have more than one Item with the same keyword (see: Items and Equipment) laying face-up. Flip any excess Items face down.

II) DURING THE DAY

When this stage begins, each player performs one Action, in any order the players agree on. If the players cannot decide on the order, then the Character with the lowest Character Number goes first. Each available Action in the game is marked with a special Action icon that also indicates the cost of this Action.



All Actions have this icon in front of them. X denotes the cost of the Action. Some actions may have or costs instead.

A group of two or more players sharing the same Location may agree to take the same Action together, at the same time, as a Party – see the Party rules **written in blue** next to each Action.

Once every player has performed one Action or taken part in one Party action, or Passed, the players may once again perform one Action each.

This continues until everyone Passes or has no more to spend. When this happens, go to stage III, End of the Day.

***Hint:** To reduce downtime, a player involved in an Encounter might resolve it while the other players perform their own Action. Additionally, the players should plan how to spend their Exp or how to modify their Combat and Diplomacy decks in advance, in order to reduce downtime during the End of the Day stage.*

The six most important Actions of the game can also be found on the Action side of the Help card. They are:

EXPLORE – costs 1. Every Location card in **Tainted Grail** contains plenty of lore, secrets, or tasks, and Exploration is your primary way of discovering them. Flip your current Location card and read the text on the back. Some cards are self-contained, but others point you to specific parts of the Exploration Journal for more decisions and options. Continue Exploration in the Journal until you reach "Exploration ends." Then, flip the Location card back and continue the game.

In a Party: If you Explore as a Party, the cost of Exploration scales to 1 per Party member. Most positive and negative effects will apply to every Character in the Party. On the other hand, most rewards will not scale and will have to be shared by the members of the Party. For more, see the "How to Use the Exploration Journal" section at the start of the Journal.

***Hint:** If flipping the card would be impractical because there are multiple models on it, go directly to the Exploration Journal! Every Location section in the Journal starts with the same text that is on the back of the card.*

IMPORTANT: Before using the Exploration Journal for the first time, be sure to read the "How to Use the Exploration Journal" chapter at the start of the Journal!

TRAVEL – costs 1. Move your Character model to any Location card connected to your current one (see: Locations). If two Locations are placed next to each other, but there are no Direction Keys connecting them, it means you can't Travel from one to the other (usually due to mountain ranges, walls, wide rivers, and other natural features).

As you arrive in a new Location, check whether your Travel revealed any new Location cards (see: Locations). Then, check whether your new Location has a lightning symbol () anywhere on its face. Anything marked with this symbol needs to be resolved as soon as you enter the Location.

***Example:** if the Location card has a lightning icon next to "Draw a gray Encounter" text, you must draw an Encounter from the gray deck immediately on arrival, before any other player has a chance to act.*

In a Party: If you Travel as a Party, any automatic Action or Guardian Encounter triggered by your new Location must be resolved as a Party as well! The cost of Traveling scales to 1 per Party member.

Right before triggering an Automatic Action or Guardian Encounter, other Characters in the same Location may join to form a Party, even though they did not start this Action as a Party.

Important: You can only move in straight lines. No diagonal Travel allowed!



***Example:** Going from Cuanacht Farmhold to Whitening will require two Travel Actions, as diagonal movement is not allowed. Additionally, when Characters arrive in the Whitening, they need to immediately resolve the section of the Whitening Location card marked with the lightning symbol.*

LOCATION ACTION – see the cost on the Location card. Most Location cards contain one Action, clearly visible on their front. Activating this Action is possible whenever a Character is present in this Location, and is not involved in some other Action.

Location-based Actions are important, as they often let you gather or exchange critical resources. Try to keep an eye on them and plan your Travels in advance!

Please note that some Location Actions are marked as "once per day". When you perform this Action, you may cover its icon with a Time Token to help you remember it was already used. Please keep in mind some locations track other rules with Time Tokens as well. It's best not to put these other Time Tokens on the Action, to avoid mixing them up.

In a Party: You may activate a Location Action as a Party. In this case, you pay the cost only once and receive the output of the Action once. However, players in the Party may help each other pay costs, splitting them any way they want, and if they trigger an Encounter, they resolve it as a Party too.

Example: *Two players use a Location Action that reads "(2) Hunt: gain 1* **Food***, then draw a green Encounter". They split the cost between themselves and pay 1 each. Then, they receive 1 unit of* **Food***, reveal an Encounter and fight it as a Party.*

CHARACTER ACTION – its fixed cost varies per Character. Every Character has a personal Action on their Character Tile. Activating this Action is only possible outside of Encounters and Exploration.

In a Party: only your Character can use your Character Action, but Party members may help pay the cost. However, the Character performing the Action must ALWAYS pay at least 1.

INSPECT A MENHIR – always free. If the Location you are in has a Menhir seal next to its name (see: Locations), it contains one of these ancient monuments. Inspecting the Menhir is free and will inform you which Resources or Secret cards you need to activate this Menhir. If you decide to do this, simply flip the Location card and read the Menhir section at the bottom. If you have the required resources and meet all other criteria, you may activate this Menhir right away.

Important: *please note all costs of Activating a Menhir scale up with the total number of players in the game (and not only in the Party!).*

Hint: *Always keep in mind which Menhir you plan to activate next and what are the Resources you need to do so!*

Hint: *If you don't want to flip the Location card, you may also find all Menhir information in the Exploration Journal of this Location.*

Hint: *Activating a Menhir requires the help of all players. Plan your logistics accordingly.*

PASS – free. Your Character decides to finish their day and rest. You may Pass even if you have unspent , but this decision is irreversible – once you've passed, you won't be able to take any more Actions until the next day!

There may be further Actions listed on your Character Tray, your Items, Skills or even Secret cards!

In short, During the Day, on your turn you may take one Action from the Action Help card, your Character Tile, or any other cards and boards currently available to your Character. Other Characters in your Location may join you. Then, players who haven't yet acted take one Action. Repeat this sequence until everyone has passed or ran out of .

III) End of the Day

The day Ends when all Characters have Passed or run out of . When this happens, perform the following steps for every Character:

1) Resolve End of the Day effects. If Characters have any effects (on Items, Skills, etc.) that should be resolved at the End of the Day, resolve all of them now, in any chosen order.

2) Rest. You may pay 1 **Food**. If you do, gain 1 and lose 1.

Remember that Characters in the same Location may trade **Food** *between them at any moment, as long as they are not currently involved in an Action or Encounter (see: Parties and Party Actions)!*

3) Restore your . Place the marker on your track back in the starting slot. If you're Exhausted (your marker is in one of the red slots), restore only 4 points of . Please remember that your marker limits your maximum - your marker can never be moved past your marker.

4) Advance your Character. If you have any **Exp** points, you may now spend them to raise your Attributes, gain new Skills or add new Combat & Diplomacy cards to your deck (see: Character Advancement.)

5) Build your Character decks. If you want to, you can customize your Combat and Diplomacy decks with any cards your Character gained from the Advancement Pool during the game. You can also remove some cards that don't fit your playstyle, but remember that each deck must have at least 15 cards!

6) Experience Dreams. If the Location you're in has a Dream icon, open its section of the Exploration Journal and read the Dream. If your marker is on one of the red slots (the "YOU ARE GOING INSANE" card is attached to your Character Tray), read the Nightmare instead of the Dream.

Important: *All Characters in the same Location resolve Dream as a Party, and all Characters Going Insane in the same Location resolve Nightmare as a Party.*

Hint: *Dreams often provide helpful tips or reveal more of the lore and story.*



BASIC RULES

Before you start your game, you should familiarize yourself with the key concepts of the Tainted Grail described in this section.

Survival Tracks

These three tracks on your Character Tray are especially important, because nearly everything you do in the game affects them.

ENERGY – your basic stamina that renews each day. Most in-game activities (see: During the Day) deplete your . Wounds and afflictions limit your too: when limping along half-dead, you won't be able to do as much as you would when healthy and rested (see:).

The last two slots of the track are red. If the marker reaches one of them, you become **Exhausted**. This will negatively influence your performance and make you regenerate less (see: End of the Day). Despite that, Exhausting yourself is sometimes necessary to avoid something even worse!

HEALTH – your physical condition. When your runs out, you start dying. To represent this, you will be asked to attach the "You Are Dying" card to your Character Tray and enable the additional rules found on this card.

You can never have more than (marker should never go past the T-shaped marker).

If you have more than (your marker is above the marker), then you Panic in Combat and Diplomacy.

The shape of the marker will remind you about these two crucial thresholds!

TERROR – mental trauma, stress, and insanity. If your marker reaches either of the two red slots at the top of the track, you start to go insane. To represent this, you will be asked to attach the "You Are Going Insane" card to your Character Tray and follow the additional rules found on this card.

Additionally, **if your is higher than your**, you **Panic** (this will negatively impact your performance in both Combat and Diplomacy).

Character Attributes

The six basic attributes, divided into three opposing pairs, are what define your Character. They are used during various Encounters and may open up different story events or solutions when Exploring Locations. After you raise any Attribute to 2, every subsequent point of this Attribute provides a special, useful Skill card that attaches to the side of your Character Tray, next to the Attribute (see: Character Advancement).

Aggression ——— Empathy

Courage ——— Caution

Practicality ——— Spirituality

Hint: *The Exp costs of raising the Attributes are determined separately for each of the three opposing Attribute pairs. This means, for example, the more points you have in , the more expensive your upgrades become!*

Resources

There are five spendable resources that Characters can gather and use throughout their travels.

There is a limit of 20 resources of each type (with the exception of **Experience**) that your Character can carry at any point in the game. All resources gained above this limit must be given to another Character in the same Location who still has space for them or be discarded immediately.

Food – at each End of the Day, your Character should eat one unit of **Food**. Without **Food**, you won't be able to regenerate (see: End of the Day).

Wealth – gold, gems and other riches that may help you buy life-saving Items and equipment.

Reputation (Rep) – your fame and glory; if you have many **Rep** points, people of the island will often go out of their way to help you!

Magic – supernatural power that might help you during Encounters, and is often required to enable Menhirs.

Experience (Exp) – spent on raising your Attributes and buying new Combat and Diplomacy cards that greatly increase your chances of survival.

Food and **Wealth** may be **traded** with Party members or any other Characters in the same Location who are not currently involved in an Action. **Rep**, **Exp**, and **Magic** can never be traded.

Locations



These oversized cards are the segments of the map of Avalon, depicting all places you will visit during your journey.

1. Location name

2. Location number – *refers to the corresponding section of the Exploration Journal.*

3. Legacy Location number – *the number of the previous version of this Location (some actions, events or circumstances may replace a specific Location with its modified version).*

4. Location Seals – each Location card may have up to three special Seals next to its name:

- MENHIR – *this Location contains a Menhir you can activate. During the game, the Activate Menhir Action can only be performed in Locations with this symbol!*
- DREAMS – *if you end your day in this Location, prophetic Dreams (or horrible Nightmares) will come to you in your sleep.*
- UNFRIENDLY SETTLEMENT – *this Location will trigger an Encounter as soon as you enter it (usually a Diplomatic one). Look for specific rules on the Location card.*
- FRIENDLY SETTLEMENT – *Unfortunately, they are quite rare...*

5. Location Action – *an Action that can be performed in this Location.*

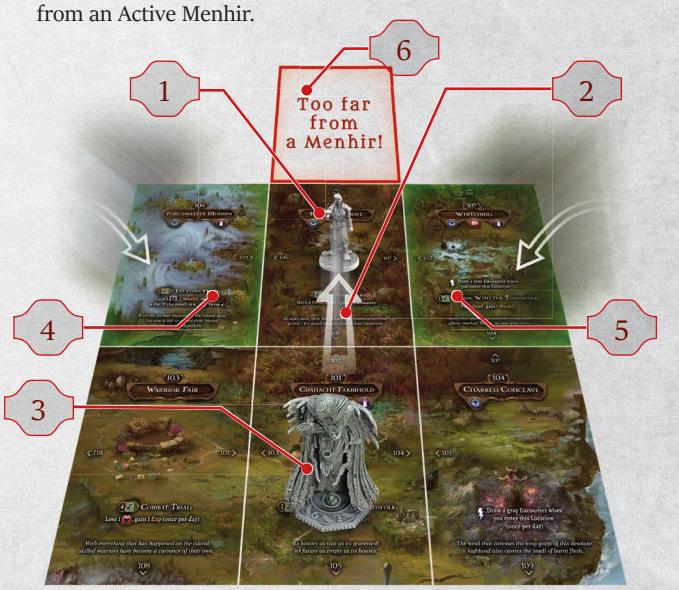
6. Direction Keys – *numbers that indicate the neighboring Locations.*

7. Location Description – *short description of the Location that will often give you hints on what to expect there.*

As you Travel (see: During the Day), you will reveal more and more Location cards. To Travel between two adjacent Location cards, both must be connected to each other with Direction Keys. If two Location cards are next to each other, but there are no Direction Keys on their adjacent edges, then this route is blocked (usually by natural features such as mountain ranges, coves or steep cliffs). You must find another way!

Whenever you arrive in a new Location, always follow the sequence below:

1) Reveal further Location cards. Find cards that match the Direction Keys on the edges of your new Location. Attach them to the corresponding Keys **IF** the Location card you are trying to attach is **no further than 1 card** away (including diagonally) from an Active Menhir.



1 – Your Character Model

2 – Your Travel

3 – Active Menhir

4 & 5 – Attach these Location cards as you arrive in your new Location (their Location Numbers match the Direction Keys on the edges of your Location card AND they are within the range of an Active Menhir).

6 – This Location card won't be attached! Its Location Number matches the Direction Key BUT it wouldn't be within the range of an Active Menhir.

2) Resolve any instant rules. If a rule on the card is marked with a Lightning symbol (⚡), you must resolve it now.

If a Guardian is present in the Location, resolve the Encounter before triggering the Location's instant rule.

***Important:** Players must resolve instant rules even if placed in Location through other means than Travel (such as being moved from a removed Location).*

Special movement

Some cards and effects ask you to move your Character to the "lowest-numbered revealed Location", "any connected Location", and so on. This special move does not count as Travel, costs no and is performed instantly. It does however reveal further Location cards and trigger any instant Actions and Guardian Encounters.

Legacy Location numbers

In **Tainted Grail**, many Locations are transformed by the player's Actions. Sometimes your exploits will switch an entire Location card for its new, altered version. When Location cards change, their number changes as well, since they receive a new section in the Exploration Journal. However, the original Location number can still be found on the card, and is called the Legacy Location number. Use it when connecting the Direction Keys!

***Example:** You enter Location that has a "190" Direction Key on its right edge. You look for Location 190, but it's not available in the game anymore. You check the Legacy Location numbers and discover that Location 195 has a Legacy Key 190. You place Location 195 right next to the "190" Direction Key.*



To sum up: when you visit any Location during the game, you will reveal additional, neighboring Locations, provided they are: a) connected with a matching Direction Key, b) within the Menhir range. If the Location card with a number indicated by the Direction Key is no longer available in game, check the Legacy Location number instead!

Menhirs and Wyrdness

In the land of Avalon, whenever a Menhir goes dark, parts of the land soon sink into the primal force of the wyrdness – except for small, isolated pockets of reality left around disabled Menhirs and other powerful relics. To represent this, at each Start of the Day, you will be asked to discard any Locations that are no longer in range of an Active Menhir.

All Characters present on any removed Location card immediately lose 2, gain 2 and are moved to the nearest remaining Location card (if there are several Locations the same distance away, choose the lowest-numbered one). This is not a Travel Action! All other components present on any removed Location card are discarded. This includes Guardians.

Activating Menhirs requires Characters to use the Action found on the back of the Location card or in the Exploration Journal of this location. Both the costs and the Menhir setup are covered by this Action's text. Please note that Activating Menhirs is only possible in Locations that have the Menhir seal next to their name. After Activating a Menhir, check all Locations containing Characters for any open Direction Keys leading to unrevealed Locations that are now within the Menhir Range. Reveal these Locations immediately.

Characters may also **extend the remaining duration of Menhirs** that are still Active by simply Activating them again. Any remaining "power" left on the Menhir Dial is lost at the moment of new Activation. When you extend a Menhir, do not add a new Menhir model in the Location!

If the **last Menhir** on the map goes out, do not remove the last remaining Location cards. The Characters may continue to play in these Locations, but they lose 2 and gain 2 at each Start of the Day– until they die or activate one of the Menhirs.

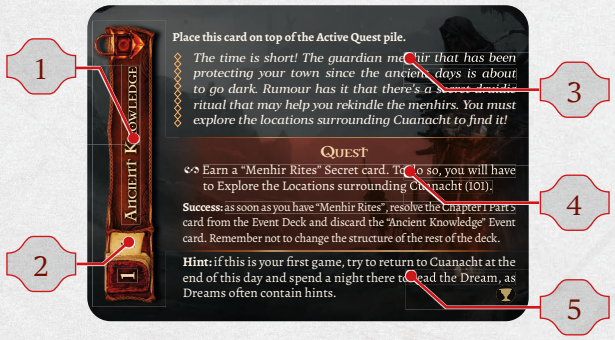
Events, Quests and Tasks

The Event card you reveal at the start of the game sets you out on your first **Quest**. In **Tainted Grail**, Quests are the main branches of the story – large, important missions that always lead to the end of the Chapter and let you progress through the Campaign.

Quests are always contained on either Event or Secret cards and are marked by their special layout (see illustration) and a symbol in the corner of their card. Whenever you draw a card containing a Quest, you should read it and place it in the Active Quests pile, next to the Event deck.

***Example:** The very first Event you draw during the game contains a Quest that reads "Gain the Menhir Rites Secret card". Place this Event next to the Event Deck, in the Quest pile. As soon as any Character has gained the Menhir Rites Secret card, follow the rules listed in the "Success" section of the Quest.*

***Hint:** if you're not sure where to go or what to do, always start by checking your Active Quests again.*



An example of a Story Event card with a Quest.

1. Title

2. Chapter and part – *they allow you to set up the Event deck correctly.*

3. Story description – *story introduction to the Event that tells you what is happening.*

4. Quest – *explains what you have to accomplish in order to progress the story further.*

5. Hint – *a tidbit of information that might help you to complete the Quest.*

IMPORTANT: Never remove any cards containing a Quest, unless you're clearly instructed to do so!

Apart from the main Quests, your Party will meet a multitude of **Tasks**. Those are small side missions or clues that you may choose to pursue. Following Tasks is often profitable and may expand your knowledge of the world, but it is technically possible to finish the game without completing any. Tasks have no separate cards and no defined end conditions. They are essentially road signs that point you toward interesting places and stories. Unlike Quests, they are not tied to the Chapter and may be completed at any point – at least until your actions permanently change the Location card they are contained in.

***Example:** When visiting Titan's Steps (Location 115) players discover that the hermits and beggars who used to inhabit the nearby caves are gone. The Exploration Journal for this Location contains a line: "New Task: discover the fate of the hermits". If players follow the clues, they will eventually find a dark secret behind this disappearance in one of the nearby Locations...*

IMPORTANT: You should consider taking notes whenever you get a new Task. While the game provides references concerning Quests (in the form of their cards), remembering each Task you have found might be difficult.

IMPORTANT: Whenever you want to push the Campaign forward, follow your Quests. Tasks are also important, and may be profitable, but they will not lead you to the end of your current Chapter.

IMPORTANT: Do not change the state of the game between chapters. Progressing to another chapter does not end your day, neither does it heal you (unless stated otherwise). Simply continue playing the game.

Quest Tokens

Many Quests and Tasks use Quest Tokens to track their progress. It is important to note that any Dials with Quest Tokens on them (called Quest Dials) are not reduced at the Start of the Day (see: Order of the Day). Only Time Dials are reduced automatically.

Parties and Party Actions

In **Tainted Grail**, players are free to group or split as they see fit! You may travel, fight and negotiate as a single Party, then go your separate ways, only for some of you to join back together to tackle a dangerous situation.

Whenever any Character takes any Action, other Characters in the same Location may decide to join them. If the Character performing the Action agrees, all Characters form a Party and take this Action together – the detailed rules depend on the Action.

All Characters in a Party are always referred to as Party Members.

In a Party: Party Members can trade **Food**, **Wealth**, Items and Secrets at any time, as long as the Party is not currently involved in an Encounter or an Action. Additionally, if you're in a Party with another Character, you may pay your or **Magic** instead of another Party member! You may even cover the entire cost of the Action for all the other Party members. There's only one exception: when performing the Character Action found on the Character Tray, the Active Character must always spend at least 1.

***Hint:** Traveling as a Party is safer, but when you're pressed for time, splitting might let you cover more ground, explore more and gain more rewards!*

IMPORTANT: Joining an Action is possible only before it begins. Once the Action begins, Characters can no longer form or disband a Party, unless specific cards or rules say otherwise.

Leaving or disbanding a Party

Each Party Action needs to be taken and approved by all Party members. Any Character that does not want to take a specific Action with the rest of the Party must leave the Party before the Action begins. You may not leave a Party in the middle of an Action. You may leave a Party anytime it is not resolving an Action.

The only exception is when a Character in a Party cannot pay the Action cost required for each Party member. In such a case, any Character who doesn't pay is dropped out of the Party. The remaining Characters proceed with the Action.

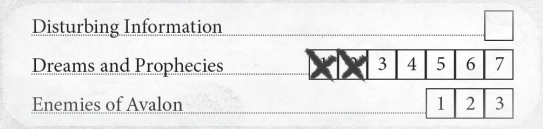
Example: *An entry in the Exploration Journal requires each Party member to pay 2 . Players A and B do so, while Player C cannot. Players A and B do not agree to cover the cost for Player C. Player C is dropped out of the Exploration immediately, while players A and B carry on together.*

Party Members may only leave during Combat and Diplomacy if they Escape (see: Escaping Combat / Diplomacy) from the Encounter or are removed due to the effect of the "You Are Dying" card.

Statuses and Save Sheet

As you Travel, complete Quests and solve Tasks, you will often be asked to mark or check a certain Status (or a numbered part of the Status) on the Save Sheet.

Statuses are story-triggers that represent your impact upon the world. They are not personal - a single status sheet is used for all Players. If there's a status marked on a Save Sheet, all Characters have it. Smaller, personal changes (like being sick or having a unique magic aura) are handled with personal Secret cards.



Exploration Journal

Most Exploration Actions will direct you to the Exploration Journal – a thick book full of stories and interactions necessary to progress through the game. Before using it for the first time, be sure to read the "How to Use the Exploration Journal" chapter at the start of the Journal!

Encounters

There are four types of Encounters found in the game:



The GREEN deck is mostly used in the wild and contains natural threats such as wild animals or legendary beasts. Many of these Encounters grant **Food** when defeated.

The GRAY deck contains dangers related to the world of men, such as brigands, rogue knights, or people driven to insanity. Many of these Encounters grant Items when defeated.

The PURPLE deck contains mysterious and supernatural threats. You will have to discover its significance yourself.

The BLUE deck is a special, non-combat deck. It is used mostly when you visit an unfriendly Settlement and it contains dangerous situations, as well as personal and diplomatic challenges.

Cards in each of these decks are divided into four difficulty levels, making the game harder as it progresses.

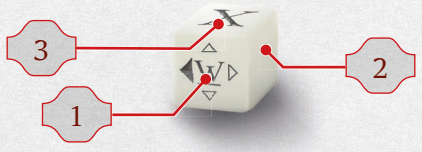
Drawing an Encounter immediately launches you and your Party into Combat or Diplomacy, depending on the Encounter card (see: Combat and Diplomacy sections of this Rulebook).

An Encounter Deck should always be shuffled after Players search through it (for example, if a rule asks them to look for a specific Encounter card instead of just drawing from the top), or when the deck's contents are modified (for example, when adding or removing cards between the Chapters).

Colorblind players can use the quarter-circles in the corners of the card backs to differentiate the decks: lower left - gray, lower right - green, upper right - purple, upper left - blue.

Guardians

These dangerous enemies will keep roaming the area even after you Escape (see: Escaping Combat). If you fail to defeat a Guardian Encounter, place its card on the Location where you have triggered it. At the start of each day, roll a Guardian die:



1. Cardinal direction – *move the Guardian accordingly.*
2. Nothing – *the Guardian does not move.*
3. Discard – *remove the Guardian from play, returning its card to the bottom of its Encounter deck.*

- If the Guardian should move to an unrevealed or unconnected Location, move it to the highest-numbered connected Location instead.
- If the Guardian stays in the same Location and there are any Characters present there, immediately start the Encounter (all Characters present in this Location have to fight together).
- If the Guardian enters a Location with any Character, it immediately triggers the Encounter. Once the Guardian is defeated, put its card on the bottom of its deck.
- If a Character or a Party enters a Location with a Guardian, immediately trigger the Encounter. If there's more than one Guardian there, players may choose which Encounter to trigger first.
- If a Character or a Party enters a Location with a Guardian and an instant Action (denoted by the lightning icon), trigger the Guardian Encounter first and then resolve the rules on the Location card.

The Monsters of Avalon expansion contains one unique, dedicated model for each Guardian Encounter. In very rare situations, there might be more Encounters of a certain type on the board than available models. In such case, use cards to represent any excess Encounters.

Items and Equipment

Some of the Item cards available in **Tainted Grail** bear one of the following keywords:

- **Weapon**
- **Armor**
- **Shield**
- **Companion**
- **Relic**

You can have any number of Items, but you may never use more than **one Item or Secret** with a single keyword at the same time. At the Start of the Day, if you have several Items or Secrets with a certain keyword, decide which one you use and turn the others face down. Do the same thing each time you get a new Item or Secret bearing the same keyword as another of your face up Items or Secrets. That way, you can only have one Weapon, one Shield, one Armor, one Companion and one Relic active at any given moment.

Some Items also contain a "**C**" symbol – these are the **Craftable** Items, the only ones that may be manufactured by player Characters. If a Crafting Action or an Encounter Reward asks you to "draw a Craftable Item", keep drawing cards from the Item deck until you find the first Item with the "C" sign. Take it and shuffle the rest of the Item deck. The same applies for drawing a "Companion Item", "Weapon Item" etc.

Characters may freely **trade Items** when they are in the same Location and they're not involved in an Action or Encounter. Any traded Items should be placed face down. Characters must wait for the Start of the Day to use them.

Flipping cards

Some Items ask you to **flip** their card in Combat or Diplomacy to indicate they have been used. When instructed to flip the card, simply turn it face-down. At the end of your Combat or Diplomacy, remember to flip the card back!

Secrets

Secrets are story related, numbered objects and powers that should never be a part of the standard Item deck. They **may never be lost or sold**, unless the rules specifically ask you to. They are also not affected by any rules that limit the number of Items (such as the "You Are Dying" card).

If an effect asks you to discard Item cards, omit any Secrets, even if they have an Item-specific keyword.

Example: *An Enemy discards two of your Items, and you have only one regular Item and one Secret card (that's also a Weapon). In that case, discard only the regular Item card.*

Players are free to **trade Secret cards** between their Characters whenever they are in the same Location and not involved in an Action. The only exceptions are the cards with the "**Personal**" keyword. They may never be transferred to another Character! You may also have multiple "Personal" Items in your possession.

"Global" keyword
If a Secret card has this keyword, its rules apply to each Character.

Character Advancement

Experience points (**Exp**) are the primary means of Character Advancement. You can spend them at each End of the Day to raise your Attributes, gain additional Combat or Diplomacy cards, or gain Skills.

Advancing Combat or Diplomacy Decks

Pay 2 **Exp**. Take three cards from the top of your Advancement Pool. Pick one of them and add it to your deck. Shuffle the two remaining cards back into your Advacement Pool.

Your Combat and Diplomacy decks should always contain at least 15 cards each.

You can swap cards you own in and out of your deck at each End of the Day. The cards that are not in your deck at the moment DO NOT return to the Advancement Pool. Place them next to your Character Tray or in the Save compartment of your Character.

Advancing Attributes

The cost of raising Attributes depends on the total value of the Attribute pair (for more on Attribute pairs, see Attributes).

2 Exp: 1st point in a pair of opposing Attributes.
4 Exp: 2nd point in a pair of opposing Attributes.
6 Exp: 3rd point in a pair of opposing Attributes.
8 Exp: 4th point in a pair of opposing Attributes.
10 Exp: 5th and any further points in a pair of opposing Attributes.

Example: *If your is 2 and your is 0, raising your to 1 is going to cost 6* **Exp** *(the total value of this Attribute pair would be 3). If your is 2 and your is 2, raising your to 3 is going to cost 10* **Exp** *(the total value of this Attribute pair would be 5.)*

Buying Skills

Whenever you earn a 3rd (or any subsequent) point in any single Attribute, find all Skill cards bearing this Attribute's icon. Then, pick one card and attach it to the appropriate edge of your Character Tray. Skill card are double-sided, containing two mutually exclusive Skills. Whenever you gain a Skill, you must choose one side and forfeit the other. All 72 skills in the game are unique, so be sure to discuss the Character advancements with other players to maximize your team's potential.

Remember that every Skill card has a point of its Attribute printed on its face. This means, if you have two markers in the slots of your Character Tray, and two Skill cards, your total is 4.

Death and Insanity

At Death's Door

If your falls to 0 at any point of the game, attach the "You Are Dying" card to your Character Tray, immediately Escape any current Encounter, and resolve all additional rules found on the "You are Dying" card. From now on, every Action might turn out to be your last! The "You Are Dying" status gives your Character additional time to recover, but at some point you will finally give up your ghost.

Death

In single-player mode, the game ends when your Character dies. That's why the single-player "You Are Dying" card is more lenient, giving you more chances to recover.

In cooperative mode, your death does not end the game. Instead, follow the steps below:

- If there's an unclaimed Character left in the box, you may claim this Character, perform standard Character Setup, then place their model in the lowest-numbered revealed Location.
- All Items that are left by the dead Character are placed on the Location where the Character has died. They may be picked up by any other players until the Location disappears. Picking up Items is considered a Location Action with cost of 0, which gains you all the Items left on that Location.

Important: *You cannot voluntarily leave Items on Location cards. It's only possible when a Character dies.*

- All Secrets belonging to the dead Character are split between the other Characters – in any way the owner of the dead Character wishes, with one exception. Some rare Secrets with a "Personal" keyword (see: Secrets) disappear forever when their owner is killed!

If all other Characters are either in use or dead when a Character dies, the game ends in failure, even for Characters who are still alive. This gives players an additional incentive to save each other at all costs!

If your game ends in failure, you can use the Allmother's Mercy described below to salvage it.

Insanity

If your reaches the two top red-colored slots of the track, attach the "You Are Going Insane" card to your Character Tray and follow its instructions. This will open the way for destructive Nightmares and makes Exploration or Travel harder and riskier.

Allmother's Mercy

If you and your Party perish and do not wish to start again, you may decide that the intervention of the Allmother herself saved you. In that case, mark status 'Saved by the Goddess' on your Save Sheet and go to Verse 500 in the Book of Secrets. This will restart you at the beginning of the Chapter with some pre-defined resources, but will let you continue your game.

IMPORTANT: Relying on higher powers to keep you alive is not an intended way to play! If you keep requesting the Allmother's Mercy, consider restarting the game using the Story Mode (see: Alternative Modes & Appendix).

Saving the Game

We recommend that you save your game and store it only after completing a Chapter, when the Journal or Event card gives you such an option. Otherwise, you may forget various details of the Quest or interaction you were in the middle of, and "once-per-day" Actions might refresh more often than planned. However, in emergency situations, you may save the game at any moment. To save the game, simply follow the instructions below:

I) Each player saves the state of their Character:

1) Pick one Character Tray diagram on the Save Sheet. Sign it with your Character's name. Then, use a pencil to mark your Attributes, the numbers of your Resources, and the state of your Survival Tracks on the diagram.

2) If you have any Skills, write their unique numbers next to the Attribute they attach to.

3) Write down any additional info you deem important, such as the state of the Quest Dials or Secret card Dials (if you have any).

4) Remove all markers from your Character Tray and store them in the box.

5) Put all your Items and Secrets in one of the four Save compartments in the box.

6) Stack all your Diplomacy cards with all your Combat cards. Put the "Advancement Pool" separator cards on top of your Combat and Diplomacy Advancement Pools and stack them together. Put both stacks in your Save compartment.

II) The Chronicler or all players save the state of the world:

1) Use your Save Sheet to note the current Location of all Character models, Guardian models, Menhir models, and special Dials, as well as the current value of each Dial.

2) Remove all models, Dials and tokens, and place them in the box.

3) Stack all revealed Locations into a pile and place the "Revealed Locations" separator card on top of them. Then, add the unrevealed Locations to the pile, facing the other way. Place all Location cards in the oversized cards compartment of the box.

IMPORTANT: make sure that any Locations you've removed from the game are stored separately, in the other, smaller compartment!

4) Store all four of your current Encounter decks in the box, behind the "Saved Encounters" separator card.

5) Store your Event deck and any Active Quests in the box, behind the "Saved Events" separator card.

6) Place any remaining cards (unused Secrets, Items, Encounters or Events) in the box.

To restore a saved game, reverse this process.

Adding or Removing Players

Every time you set up a new game session, you may add or remove players and Characters at will (within the 1-4 Characters limit).

Make sure you distribute any Secret cards in possession of any removed Characters to Characters who remain in the game. Secrets should never be removed from the Campaign in progress unless you are specifically asked to do this.

Place any fresh Characters in the same Location as one of the veteran Characters. They are the reinforcements you receive from Cuanacht and begin the game with their standard starting Resources and decks.

Discarding & Removing Cards from the Game

Most cards in Tainted Grail have no separate discard piles. Whenever you are asked to discard a Location, Random Event, Encounter, Secret or an Item card, put this card back at the bottom of its deck.

Combat and Diplomacy cards, discarded during the Encounters, should be shuffled back into your Combat or Diplomacy deck as soon as the Encounter ends.

However, the Event deck does have its own discard pile – it helps you track time and ensures a proper use of the deck.

Removing from the game

Sometimes, instead of discarding a card, you will be asked to remove it from the game. In such a case, put the card back in the game box, outside of Save Compartments. It is no longer a part of this Campaign and should not return to any deck, unless you're specifically asked to bring it back.

General Game Tips

- Explore around. Most valuable finds and many storylines are only available through Exploration. Sometimes you will need to explore the same place multiple times.
- Try to always keep enough **Food** and resources for the next couple of days.
- Inspect all Menhirs on revealed Locations, and prepare a plan to activate your next Menhir early. Any Encounter gone awry or a bad decision may set you back a day or two!
- Resolving Encounters or exploring dangerous Locations together can really boost your odds. On the other hand, the more of you there are, the quicker you need to move! Parting ways may sometimes be necessary to cover more ground.
- Remember that Characters in the same Location can assist each other, helping them pay any cost.

Combat

Refer to this section of the Rulebook whenever you enter a Combat Encounter. If you've never played Tainted Grail Combat before, you should start with one of the Encounter cards marked as "Your First Encounter". You can also learn Combat by watching the instructional video at: **www.taintedgrail.com/learn**

Basic Combat Overview

Combat in **Tainted Grail** is a turn-based confrontation between a Character (or a Party of Characters) and an enemy, represented by the Encounter card. Together, Characters build a long line (Sequence) of cards, with the aim of gaining enough markers in the Combat Pool to defeat the Encounter. These markers represent the total progress Characters make against their opponent, such as their tactical advantage, wounds they cause, and the opponent's exhaustion.

The detailed rules of Combat are described further down, but in general, most Combat Encounters play out like this:

- All Party members draw their initial hands of cards (see Starting Combat).
- Party members pick a Character who becomes Active and goes first (Combat Turn, phase I).
- The Active Character may play one Combat card, adding it to the end of the Sequence (Combat Turn, phase II, step 2).
- The Active Character may play as many additional Combat cards as allowed by the rules (Combat Turn, phase II, step 2).
- The enemy makes an attack against the Active Character (Combat Turn, phase II, step 3).
- If there are Characters who were not Active this Turn, one of them becomes Active (Combat Turn, phase II, step 4). If not, the Turn ends and a new Turn begins.

Hint: *you need to be careful when approaching various Encounters during your travels. Some of them might be particularly difficult for your Character. If that's the case, you may always Escape from an Encounter (see: Escaping Combat).*



Combat Sequence Example

A Sequence consists of Combat cards played during a Combat Encounter by all Party members. Every Character plays their Combat cards, adding them to one, shared Combat Sequence. Cards always form a single straight line. The bottom Keys always join together, and no Keys are ever obscured.

Escaping Combat

A player may Escape at any time during their Activation – they lose 1 and trigger the Opportunity attack listed on the Encounter card. Then, they place the Encounter card on the bottom of its deck, reshuffle their Combat deck and set it aside.

In a Party: if an Active Character decides to Escape from Combat, the Character triggers the Opportunity attack and leaves the Combat, as described above. The rest of the Party remains in the Encounter and proceed to step 4 – Check Readiness. The cards of Characters who Escape stay in the Sequence until the Encounter ends. When all players Escape, place the Encounter card on the bottom of its deck.

Run Away

Characters are not the only ones who may flee from Combat. Some Creatures have a special "Run Away" attack – when it triggers, immediately end the Encounter and put the Encounter card at the bottom of its deck. Characters receive no Loot or Reward. For the purpose of any rules, forcing the enemy to Run Away doesn't count as winning the Encounter.



Encounter Card

This card represents the enemy the Characters will face during the whole Combat Encounter. It consists of several parts:

1 – Encounter Difficulty. *Each Encounter falls into one of four difficulty categories.*

2 – Guardian icon. *See Guardian in the Combat Encounter Traits.*

3 – Encounter Value. *The resilience of this Encounter – to win, the number of markers in your Combat Pool needs to reach this number. If an Encounter has no Value, treat it as "0", if necessary.*

4 – Card Name.

5 – Flavor text.

6 – Enemy Traits. *Special modifiers that remain active throughout this Encounter (see: Enemy Traits).*

7 – Combat Table. *Determines which Attack the enemy will perform according to the number of markers in the Combat Pool.*

8 – Opportunity. *Describes what happens should the enemy use their Opportunity attack.*

9 – Reward & Loot. *What you get for defeating this enemy. Rewards apply to each Party member, and Loot needs to be shared between Party Members.*

10 – Attribute Keys. *Connecting these Keys grants various bonuses if you have the required level of an Attribute.*

Starting Combat

Combat in **Tainted Grail** starts whenever the game asks you to draw or pick a card from any of the following Encounter decks: gray, green, purple, and the card you draw has at least one open Key on its right edge.

After drawing an Encounter card, set it in the play area, ensuring you have plenty of space to the right - you will build your Sequence there.

If the enemy has any Trait, check it now, as some Traits can take effect during this step (see: Encounter Traits).

Then, all Party members make sure they're not using more than one Item with each of the following keywords: Weapon, Shield, Armor, Companion, Relic (see: Items and Secrets). Party members may also decide not to use some of their Items in this Encounter. Set these unused Items aside for the duration of this Combat. No Items may be added once you enter Combat!

After confirming their equipment, each Party Member draws a number of cards from their Combat deck:

- 3 cards if there are 1-3 Characters in Combat.
- 2 cards if there are 4 Characters in Combat.

If you don't like your starting hand, you can discard it and draw a new hand with one fewer card. You may repeat this until you only have one card left in your hand.

When all Party members have their starting cards, go to phase I of the Combat Turn, described on the next page.



Combat Card

This is an example of a Combat card.

1 – Attribute Keys. *Each of them is open and may connect to one Bonus Key on the next card in the Sequence. Icons in the Attribute Keys correspond to Attributes on the Character Tray. If you do not have the required level in a given Attribute, the Attribute Key won't connect!*

2 – Bonus Keys. *Each of these Keys may connect to one Attribute Key on the previous card in the Sequence.*

3 – Magic Key. *This Key connects if you join its left part with its right part AND pay 1 point of* **Magic**.

4 – Free Key. *This Key always connects for free and grants you a bonus, specified in the second part of the Key. Each Bonus is explained in detail in the "Combat Bonuses" frame. If the second part of this Key is empty, you don't receive anything.*

5 – Ability. *The text part of the card containing special rules, with various timings. Only Abilities that are visible (and are not covered by other cards in the Sequence) are considered active. Passive cards (see below) are never covered, so their Abilities remain in play throughout the Encounter.*

6 – Card Number. *To make sorting through cards and building decks easier, each Combat and Diplomacy card has a unique number. The letter next to the number identifies the card's deck and color* (**U** - blue, **G** - green, **B** - brown, **Y** - gray).



Passive Combat Cards

Unlike regular Combat cards, Passive Combat cards have their Ability always visible when in Sequence. To facilitate that, their Keys are on the opposite edges of the card.

Charges: Some cards instruct you to gain Charges – use universal markers and place them on the card. You can use "Pay x Charges" Abilities any time you want (unless their text restricts them to one of the phases). To Pay 1 Charge you must discard 1 universal marker from this card (sometimes the Charge cost can be 2 or more). If there are not enough Charges on this card, you are unable to use this Ability.

In a Party: only the Active Character can use Charges from cards, but the owner of the card must agree.

NOTE: If multiple effects are resolved at exactly the same time (such as Items and cards preventing Damage) players are free to choose the order they apply in. If they are mutually exclusive, players are free to choose which one to resolve.

Combat Turn

A Combat usually consists of several Combat Turns, with each Turn going through the following phases:

I. Pick the Active Character

The Party members decide who will be the next Active Character. They can select any Characters who have not been Activated this Combat Turn (they have no Time Token on their Character Tray). If the Party members can't reach an unanimous decision, the Character with the lowest Character Number becomes Active.

Place a Time Token on the Tray of the Character that became Active. It will remind you this Character cannot be Activated again until the next Turn.

Keep in mind that any gameplay effects (, gain, Ability penalties) that happen during the Character Activation apply only to the Active Character!



II. Character Activation

1. Delayed Abilities

Remove one Time Token from each Combat card in the Sequence that has any. If you've removed the last Time Token from a card, immediately resolve its Ability with the Time Token trigger (see: "Combat Card Triggers"). These abilities trigger only once!

Combat Card Triggers & Icons

Most Combat cards have an Ability. Abilities usually start with a Trigger icon that clearly indicates when you should resolve them.

On Placement – resolve this Ability after placing the card in the Sequence and connecting its Keys..

Delayed – put a Time Token on this card as you play it. The Ability is triggered after removing the very last Time Token from the card. The Ability does not trigger on subsequent Turns, and the Time Token does not return!

If you put another card on a card with a Time Token, and you cover the Ability, the Time Token is lost and the Ability won't trigger.

Note: *The Ability is applied to the Active player, not the owner of the card!*

On Enemy Attack – this Ability remains active throughout the entire step 3 of your Activation, usually modifying the enemy's Attack.

Damage – this icon means your Character has to lower their by the indicated amount. 'Unavoidable ' means that this cannot be prevented! Please note effects that completely cancel the Attack or Response may still cancel Unavoidable Damage.

Connected Attribute Key – this icon means the number of connected Attribute Keys of this specific type in the entire Sequence. When counting them, count all Keys of the appropriate type that physically join, regardless of the Character's Attribute level.

Connected Magic Key – this icon means the number of connected Magic Keys in the entire sequence. Only Magic keys marked as active count – see page 16.

2. Playing Cards

This is where you execute your plan, playing cards from your hand and adding them to the Sequence. If you fail to play even a single card, the enemy will benefit from your inaction (see: Opportunity). You may also be forced to play a card if you're affected by Panic (see: Panic).

To complete this step, follow the list below:

a) Play one Combat card. When playing the very first Combat card during your Activation, **you don't need to fulfill any special requirements!** This card doesn't have to connect any Keys. It just needs to line properly with the previous card in the Sequence (see: Combat Sequence Example), which will cause its bottom Key to join with the bottom Key of the previous card. After you play the card, resolve it in the following order:

- Check if any Attribute Keys connect to Bonus Keys. Apply these Bonuses. Remember that in order for them to connect, you need to have this specific Attribute level.
- If both parts of a Magic Key join, you may connect this Key by paying 1 **Magic** and gain its bonus.
- Connect the bottom, Free Key and gain its bonus.
- Check the Ability, and if it triggers now, resolve it (see Ability Triggers).

b) Play additional Combat cards. Each Turn, every Combat card you play after your first one **MUST connect with a Key**. If you have no cards that have this Bonus Key, or you can find no way to connect it, you may not play any additional cards! Resolve any cards you play just like above.

Please note: the icon must appear on the card you want to play (not the one before), and become connected.

c) Check for Opportunity attack. If you haven't played a single card this Activation, the enemy immediately makes an Opportunity attack and then you draw a card.

d) Perform the Victory Check. See the Victory Check frame for details.

Victory Check

Count the number of markers in the Combat Pool. If it's higher than or equal to the target Value printed on the Encounter card, you win! Receive any Rewards, share any Loot, and place the Encounter card on the bottom of its deck; reshuffle your Combat deck, including any played and discarded cards, and set it aside. Otherwise, go to the next step.

3. Enemy Attack

- Find the Attack on the Encounter card that matches the number of markers in the Combat Pool. Apply the result of this Attack to the Active Character in order from left to right.
- If the enemy's Attack removes any markers from the Combat Pool, and the Combat Pool doesn't have enough markers to cover the loss, see the Negative Combat Pool section.
- After modifying the Combat Pool, perform the Victory Check (see the Victory Check frame).

4. Check Readiness

- Check if all of the Party Members have been Activated during this Turn (and have Time Tokens on their Character Trays). If there are no Characters left to Activate, go to the End Turn phase (III).
- If there are still Characters who haven't been Activated, go back to "Pick the Active Character" phase (I).

III. End Turn

- **Discard.** Discard down to 3 cards in your hand. This is known as your base Hand Limit and may be modified by some effects.
- **Draw.** All Party members draw 1 card from their decks. Do not draw if your Character Panics (see: Panic). If there are no cards to draw, see: No Cards in Deck.



- **Clear Activations.** Remove all Time Tokens from the Character Trays. This does not affect any Time Tokens left on Combat cards!
- **Start new Turn.** Go back to the start of phase I (Pick the Active Character)!

Connected Keys

For any Key to be connected, both halves of the Key need to physically join. Additionally:

- Your Character must have the appropriate Attribute level.

- You must spend 1 point of **Magic** if you want to connect it. Place this point on the Magic Key to indicate it is active. If you have to discard a card with a Connected Magic Key, you discard the **Magic** point used to Connect this Key.

- Always connects! Free Keys often contain multipliers, making them even more potent!

Combat Bonuses

– Place that many markers in the Combat Pool.

– Draw a card.

– This Bonus Key allows you to play additional Combat cards during step 2 of your Activation (see: Playing Cards). Ignore this Key when playing your first Combat card in the Activation.

This Bonus does not multiply – if it's next to the multiplier, ignore the multiplier.

– Discard the last Combat card of your Sequence. Some cards contain "if ..." effects. When such card is discarded from the Sequence, the corresponding effect should be carried out.

– Multiplies the next icon.
For example, 2x + means you receive 2 markers.

– Voids the next icon.
For example, + means you don't draw.

Other Combat Rules

Panic

Panic takes place anytime your is higher than your current (marker is higher than the wings of the T-shaped limiter). When that happens:

- Instead of playing the first card of this Turn from your hand in step 2 of your Activation (Playing Cards), draw and immediately play a card from the top of your Combat deck. Then, you may play any additional cards from your hand, according to the standard rules.
- Do not draw a new card at the End of Turn. Any bonus or extra cards gained from Bonus Keys, Skills or Abilities are still drawn as normal.

No cards in deck

Whenever your Character has to draw any Combat cards and their Combat deck does not have the required number of cards, you are forced to Escape. Apply the standard Escape rules.

You Are Dying!

Whenever your Character's drops to 0, your Character gets a "You Are Dying" card. Among other rules, the card immediately removes your Character from the current Encounter – see its text for more details.

Discarding from an empty hand

Whenever you have to discard a card from your hand, but you don't have any cards, discard a card from the top of your Combat deck.

Negative Combat Pool

The Combat Pool can never become negative. Whenever an enemy Attack or another effect asks you to remove a marker from the Combat Pool, but there are not enough markers, the player controlling the Active Character discards a card from their hand for every excess point instead. If there are no cards to discard, see: "Discarding from an empty hand" above.

Example: *a player has 2 markers in their Combat Pool and one card in their hand. The Attack causes them to lose 4 markers. They discard two markers from the Combat Pool, one card from their hand and one card from the top of their deck.*

Combat Encounter Traits

Ambush –the first Character Activated in this Combat discards down to 1 card in hand at the start of their first Activation.

Rush – the first Character Activated in this Combat receives 2 at the start of their first Activation.

Defensive – each first Combat card played during step 2 of your Activation (Play Cards) adds 1 less marker to the Combat Pool.

Fast – each Character can play a maximum of 2 Combat cards per Activation.

Feint – any inflicted during step 3 (Enemy Attack) can't be prevented in any way.

Guardian – if not defeated, this Encounter will roam the map (see the Guardians section of the Basic Rules).

Horde – at the start of each Enemy Attack step, the Active Character discards 2 Combat cards from the top of their Combat deck.

Opportunist – if a Character doesn't play at least 2 Combat cards in step 2, trigger the Opportunity attack.

Rage – during this encounter, resolve step 3 (Enemy Attack) twice.

Robber – when all Party members drop to 1 or less during this Encounter, they lose all their **Wealth** and discard all their Items. Then, end the Encounter and place it on the bottom of its deck. This counts as a loss.

Shatter – at the end of the Encounter, all Party members discard any Items (not Secrets) bearing the Weapon keyword they were using during the Encounter.

Slow – at the start of Combat, each Party member draws an additional Combat card. During the End of Turn phase, each Party member draws an additional Combat card.

Combat Example

Beor draws a gray Encounter – it's a Vagabond. This enemy has the Fast Trait – it means the player can only play up to two Combat cards per turn.



Turn 1

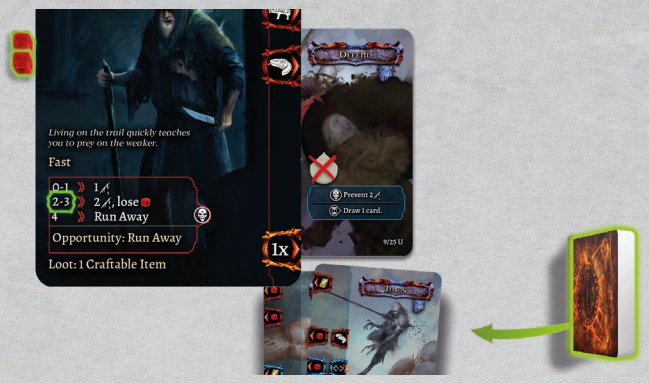
The player controlling Beor draws 3 cards from their Combat deck and plays an Attack card.

Beor has 2 points of , so the Key connects to a Bonus that adds 1 marker to the Combat Pool. The Free Key also connects – the player places another 1 marker in the Combat Pool.



Then, remembering they can play only two cards (due to the Fast Trait of the Vagabond), the player plays a Defend card and connects its Magic Key by paying 1 **Magic**. Connecting the Magic Key activates the Bonus ( ) required to play any additional cards.

There's also a symbol on the card, so the player places a Time Token there. Now, it's time for the enemy Attack.



The player looks at the Attack table of the Encounter card. The current value of the Combat Pool is 2. This means the enemy deals 2 and removes 1 marker from the Combat Pool. However, the Defend card modifies the Attack, reducing by 2. In the end, the Vagabond's Attack only removes 1 Combat Pool marker.

The player draws 1 card.

Turn 2

The player removes a from the Defend card and draws 1 card.

Then, the player plays a Throw card. It's the first card this Turn, so the player doesn't need the bonus.



The Key and Free Key connect (the player wants to save **Magic**, so they don't connect the Magic Key). The card adds a total of 3 markers to the Combat Pool – 1 from the Key and 2 from the Free Key (it has a x2 multiplier). The Ability of the card allows the player to throw Beor's weapon or shield, but Beor doesn't have one.



Then, the player plays an Enrage card, paying 1 **Magic** to connect the Magic Key – this Bonus was required for them to play the additional card. No other Keys connect. Due to the card's Ability that triggers on placement ( ), the player loses 1 and adds 1 marker to the Combat Pool for each connected key. There are 2 connected keys of this type in the entire Sequence, so the player places 2 more markers in the Combat Pool. There are now 6 markers in the Combat Pool – it exceeds the Value of the Encounter. Beor wins!

The player gains the Loot and Reward listed on the Encounter card and puts the card on the bottom of the gray Encounter deck. All Combat cards used or discarded during Combat are returned to the Combat deck. Then, the player shuffles the deck and places it back on the left of Beor's Character Tray.



DIPLOMACY

Refer to this section of the Rulebook whenever you enter a Diplomatic Encounter. If you've never played Tainted Grail Diplomacy before, you should start with one of the Encounter cards marked as "Your First Encounter". You can also learn Diplomacy by watching our instructional video at: **www.taintedgrail.com/learn**

In **Tainted Grail**, not all Encounters end in Combat. There is also a separate, blue Encounter deck for diplomatic challenges and social confrontations your Character might need to navigate. They play similarly to Combat, so if you're already familiar with it, learning Diplomacy should be easy.

Basic Diplomacy Overview

Diplomacy in **Tainted Grail** is a turn-based confrontation between a Character (or a Party of Characters) and an opponent, represented by the Encounter card. Together, Characters build a long line (Sequence) of cards, with the aim of pushing a marker on the Encounter card's Affinity track to the top. In the meantime, the opponent will push the marker in the opposite direction while performing various Responses.

The detailed rules of Diplomacy are described further down, but in general, most Diplomatic Encounters play out like this:

- All Party members draw their initial hands of cards (see Starting Diplomacy).
- The Party members pick a Character who becomes Active and goes first (Diplomacy Turn, step I).
- The Active Character may play one Diplomacy card, adding it to the end of the Sequence (Diplomacy Turn, step II).
- The Active Character may play as many additional Diplomacy cards as the rules allow (Diplomacy Turn, step II).
- The opponent Responds to the Active Character (Diplomacy Turn, step III).
- If there are Characters who were not Active this Turn, one of them becomes Active. If not, the Turn ends and a new Turn begins.

Some Diplomatic Encounters allow for two alternative approaches or have several numbered Stages, each of them requiring you to "win" the Affinity track mini-game a second (or even third) time in a row, under different conditions.

Example: *when surrounded by an enraged crowd that accuses you of murder, you might first be asked to calm them down using your* , *and then prove your innocence with your* .

Hint: *Apart from Escaping them, some Diplomatic Encounters give you an option to Avoid them altogether, provided you have enough* **Rep** *or Resources (see: Escaping or Avoiding Diplomacy).*



Diplomacy Sequence Example

A Sequence consists of Diplomacy cards played during a Diplomatic Encounter by all Party members. Every Character plays their cards, adding them to one, shared Sequence. Cards always form a straight line. The columns of Keys always align, so that no Key is obscured.

Escaping or Avoiding Diplomacy

A Party may Escape a Diplomatic Encounter at any point of the Encounter – simply apply the penalty listed in the "Failure" section of the card to each Party member.

If the card has an "Avoid" section at the bottom, you may use it to bypass the Encounter. You are allowed to Avoid only at the start of the Encounter, before drawing cards. In that case, you need to pay all costs and meet all requirements stated in the "Avoid" section. Then, put this Encounter card at the bottom of the Blue Encounter deck and continue the game.

You can only Avoid an Encounter before you start it! Once Diplomacy begins, you are no longer allowed to Avoid.

In a Party: When Avoiding, always check the highest **Rep** or Attribute levels (do not sum them up). The cost of Avoiding or Failure applies to each Party member separately. Avoiding or Failing a Diplomatic Encounter is a decision that applies to the Entire Party - Party always Avoids or Fails as a group. If an unanimous decision about Avoiding or Failing the Encounter can't be reached, the Party must resolve it.



Encounter Card

This card represents a typical Diplomatic Encounter. It consists of several parts:

1 – Card Name.

2 – Flavor text.

3 – Affinity Track. *Many effects can push a marker on this track up or down. Some Abilities also check whether the marker is currently on green or on red.*

4 – Encounter Difficulty. *Each Diplomatic Encounter belongs to one of the four difficulty categories, from the easiest to the hardest.*

5 – Avoid. *The cost and requirements of Avoiding the Encounter (see: Escaping or Avoiding Diplomacy).*

6 – Attribute Keys. *Connecting these Keys grants various bonuses, if you have the required level in a given Attribute.*

7 – Stages. *Each stage requires you to "win" the Affinity track tug-of-war, following different rules.*

8 – Diplomacy Table. *Use it to determine which Response the opponent performs during the Response step.*

9 – Failure. *The cost of losing the Encounter. Applies to each Party member.*

10 – Reward. *The reward for winning the Encounter. Each Party member gains the reward listed here (you don't need to share it).*

Starting Diplomacy

Diplomacy in **Tainted Grail** starts whenever the game asks you to draw or pick a card from the blue Encounter deck, and the card you draw has at least one open Key on its right edge.

After drawing an Encounter card, set it on the board, ensuring you have plenty of space to the right - you will build your Sequence there.

Then, all Party members make sure whether they're not using more than one Item with each of the following keywords: Weapon, Shield, Armor, Companion, Relic (see: Items and Secrets). Party members may also decide not to use some of their Items in this Encounter. Set these unused Items aside for the duration of this Encounter. No Items may be added once you enter Diplomacy!

After confirming their equipment, each Party Member draws a number of cards from their Diplomacy Deck:

- 3 cards if there are 1-3 Characters in the Encounter.
- 2 cards if there are 4 Characters in the Encounter.

If you don't like your starting hand, you can discard it and draw a new hand with one less card. You may repeat this until you only have one card left in your hand.

When all the Party members have their starting cards, Diplomacy begins - place a marker in the gray slot of the Affinity track and go to phase I of the Diplomacy Turn, described on the next page.



Diplomacy Card

This is an example of a Diplomacy card which you will use to defeat your opponent during a Diplomatic Encounter.

1 – Attribute Keys. *Each of them is open and may connect to one Bonus Key on the next card in the Sequence. Icons in the Attribute Keys correspond to Attributes on the Character Tray. If you do not have the required level in a given Attribute, the Attribute Key won't connect!*

2 – Bonus Keys. *Each of these Keys may connect to one Attribute Key on the previous card in the Sequence.*

3 – Magic Key. *This Key connects if you join its left part with its right part AND pay 1 point of* **Magic**.

4 – Free Key. *This Key always connects for free and grants you a bonus, specified in the second part of the Key. Each Bonus is explained in detail in the "Diplomacy Bonuses" frame. If the second part of this Key is empty, you don't receive anything.*

5 – Ability. *The text part of the card containing special rules, with various timings. Only Abilities that are visible (and not covered by other cards in the Sequence) are considered active. Passive cards (see below) are never covered, so their Abilities remain in play throughout the Encounter.*

6 – Card Number. *To make sorting through cards and building decks easier, each Combat and Diplomacy card has a unique number. The letter next to the number identifies the card's deck and color* (**U** - blue, **G** - green, **B** - brown, **Y** - gray).



Passive Diplomacy Cards

Unlike regular Diplomacy Cards, passive Diplomacy cards always have their Ability visible when in Sequence. To facilitate that, their Keys are on the opposite edges of the card.

Charges: Some cards instruct you to gain Charges – use universal markers and place them on the card. You can use "Pay x Charges" Abilities any time you want (unless their text restricts them to one of the phases). To Pay 1 Charge you must discard 1 universal marker from this card (sometimes the Charge cost can be 2 or more). If there are not enough Charges on this card, you are unable to use this Ability.

In a Party: Only the Active Character can use Charges from cards, but the owner of the card must agree.

Stages

Some Diplomatic Encounters have several numbered Stages, each of them requiring you to "win" the Affinity track minigame a second (or even a third) time in a row, under different conditions.

If there are multiple Stages of the same number (such as two "Stage I"), players must choose one of those Stages, right before starting it. The Stage then stays the same throughout the Encounter, until won or lost.

NOTE: If multiple effects are resolved at exactly the same time (such as Items and cards preventing Damage), players are free to choose the order. If they are mutually exclusive, players are free to choose which one to resolve.

Diplomacy Turn

A Diplomatic Encounter usually consists of several Turns, with each Turn going through the following phases:

I. Pick the Active Character

The Party members decide who will be the next Active Character. They can select from any Character who has not been Activated this Turn (they have no Time Token on their Character Tray). If players can't reach a unanimous decision, the Character with the lowest Character Number who was not Activated yet this Turn becomes Active.

Place a Time Token on the Tray of the Character who became Active. It will remind you this Character cannot be Activated again until the next Turn.

Keep in mind that any gameplay effects (, gain, Ability penalties) that happen during the Character Activation apply only to the Active Character!

II. Character Activation

1. Delayed Abilities

Remove one Time Token from each Diplomacy card in the Sequence that has any. If you've removed the last Time Token from a card, immediately resolve its Ability with the Time Token trigger (see: "Diplomacy Card Triggers" frame). These abilities trigger only once!

2. Playing Cards

This is where you execute your plan, playing cards from your hand and adding them to the Sequence. You may also be forced to play a card if you're affected by Panic (see: Panic).

To complete this step, follow the list below:

a) Play one Diplomacy card. When playing the very first card during your Activation, **you don't need to fulfill any special requirements!** This card doesn't have to connect to any Bonuses or Keys. It just needs to line properly with the previous card in the Sequence, which will cause its bottom Key to join with the bottom Key of the previous card. After you play the card, resolve it in the following order:

- Check if any Attribute Keys connect to Bonus Keys. Apply these Bonuses. Remember that in order for them to connect, you need to have the Attribute level specified by the Key.
- If both parts of a Magic Key join, you may connect this Key by paying 1 **Magic** and gain its Bonus.
- Connect the bottom, Free Key and gain its Bonus.
- Check the Ability. If it triggers now (see Ability Triggers), resolve it.

b) Play additional Diplomacy cards. Each Turn, every Diplomacy card you play after your first one MUST connect with a Key. If you have no cards that have this Bonus Key, or you can find no way to connect it, you may not play any additional cards! Resolve any cards you play just like above.

Please note: the icon must appear on the card you want to play (not the one before), to become connected.

c) Perform the Affinity Check. See the Affinity Check frame for details.

Affinity Check

Check the position of the marker on the Affinity track.

- **If it's on the lowest slot**, you lose the Encounter – apply the Failure rules to each Party member, and put the Encounter on the bottom of its deck. Then, reshuffle your Diplomacy deck.
- **If it's on the highest slot**, you win the current Stage of the Encounter. If this was the last Stage, you win the entire Encounter – receive Rewards, place the Encounter card on the bottom of its deck, then reshuffle your Diplomacy deck. If this wasn't the last Stage, begin the next Stage – move the marker to the gray slot on the Affinity track, place a marker on the completed Stage, and go to the Check Readiness step.

3. Opponent's Response

On the Encounter card, find the Response for the current Stage of this Encounter. Apply this response to the Active Character, in order from left to right.Then, perform the Affinity Check (see: "Affinity Check" frame).

4. Check Readiness

- Check if all of the Party Members have been Activated during this Turn (and have a Time Token on their Character Trays). If there are no Characters left to Activate, go to the End Turn phase (III).
- If there are still Characters who haven't been Activated, go back to "Pick the Active Character" phase (I).

III. End Turn

- **Discard**. Each party member discards down to 3 cards in their hand. This is known as your base Hand Limit and may be modified by some effects.
- **Draw.** All Party members draw 1 card from their decks. Do not draw if your Character Panics.
- **Clear Activations.** Remove all Time Tokens from the Character Trays. This does not affect any Time Tokens left on Combat cards!
- **Start new Turn.** Go back to the start of phase I (Pick the Active Character)!

Connected Keys

For any Key to be connected, both halves of the Key need to join. Additionally:

Your Character must have the appropriate Attribute level.

You must spend 1 point of **Magic** if you want to connect it. Place this point on the Magic Key to indicate it is active. If you have to discard a card with a Connected Magic Key, you discard the **Magic** point used to Connect this Key.

Always connects! Free Keys often connect with multipliers, making them even more potent!

Diplomacy Card Triggers & Icons

Most Diplomacy cards have an ability. Abilities usually start with a Trigger icon that clearly indicates when you should resolve them.

On Placement – resolve this Ability after placing the card in the Sequence. Resolve this Ability after placing the card in the Sequence and connecting its keys.

Delayed – put a Time Token on this card as you play it. The Ability is triggered after removing the very last Time Token from the card. The Ability does not trigger on subsequent Turns, and the Time Token does not return!

If you put another card on a card with a Time Token, and you cover the Ability, the Time Token is lost and the Ability won't trigger.

Note: *The Ability is applied to the Active player, not the owner of the card!*

On Opponent's Response – this Ability remains active throughout the entire step 3, usually modifying the opponent's Response.

Damage – this icon means your Character has to lower their by the indicated amount. 'Unavoidable ' means that this cannot be prevented! Please note effects that completely cancel the Attack or Response may still cancel Unavoidable Damage.

Connected Attribute Key – this icon means the number of connected Attribute Keys of this specific type in the entire Sequenc1e. When counting them, count all Keys of the appropriate type that physically join, regardless of the Character's Attribute level.

Connected Magic Key – this icon means the number of connected Magic Keys in the entire sequence. Only Magic keys marked as active count – see page 16.

Diplomacy Bonuses

/ – Move the marker up or down the Affinity track.

– This Bonus is determined by the Encounter card and the Attribute it attaches to. Go to the description of the current Stage on the Encounter card and see if it contains a rule corresponding to the Attribute this Bonus is connected with.

Example: *In a stage called Reveal a Forgery, Keys might move the track up.*

– Draw a card.

– This Bonus Key allows you to play additional Diplomacy cards during step 2 of your Activation (see: Playing Cards). Ignore this Key when playing your first Diplomacy card in the Activation.

This Bonus does not multiply – if it's next to the multiplier, ignore the multiplier.

– Discard the last Diplomacy card of the Sequence. Some cards contain "if ..." effects. When such card is discarded from the Sequence, the corresponding effect should be carried out.

– Multiplies the next icon.

For example, 2x + means you move the marker on the Affinity track twice.

– Voids the next icon.

For example, + means you don't move the marker on the Affinity track.

Other Diplomacy rules

Panic

Panic takes place anytime your is higher than your current (marker is higher than the wings of the T-shaped limiter). When that happens:

- Instead of playing the first card of this Turn from your hand in step 2 of your Activation (Playing Cards), draw and immediately play a card from the top of your Diplomacy deck. Then, you may play any additional cards from your hand, according to the standard rules.
- Do not draw a new card at the End of Turn. Any bonus or extra cards gained from Bonus Keys, Skills or Abilities are still drawn as normal.

No Cards in Deck

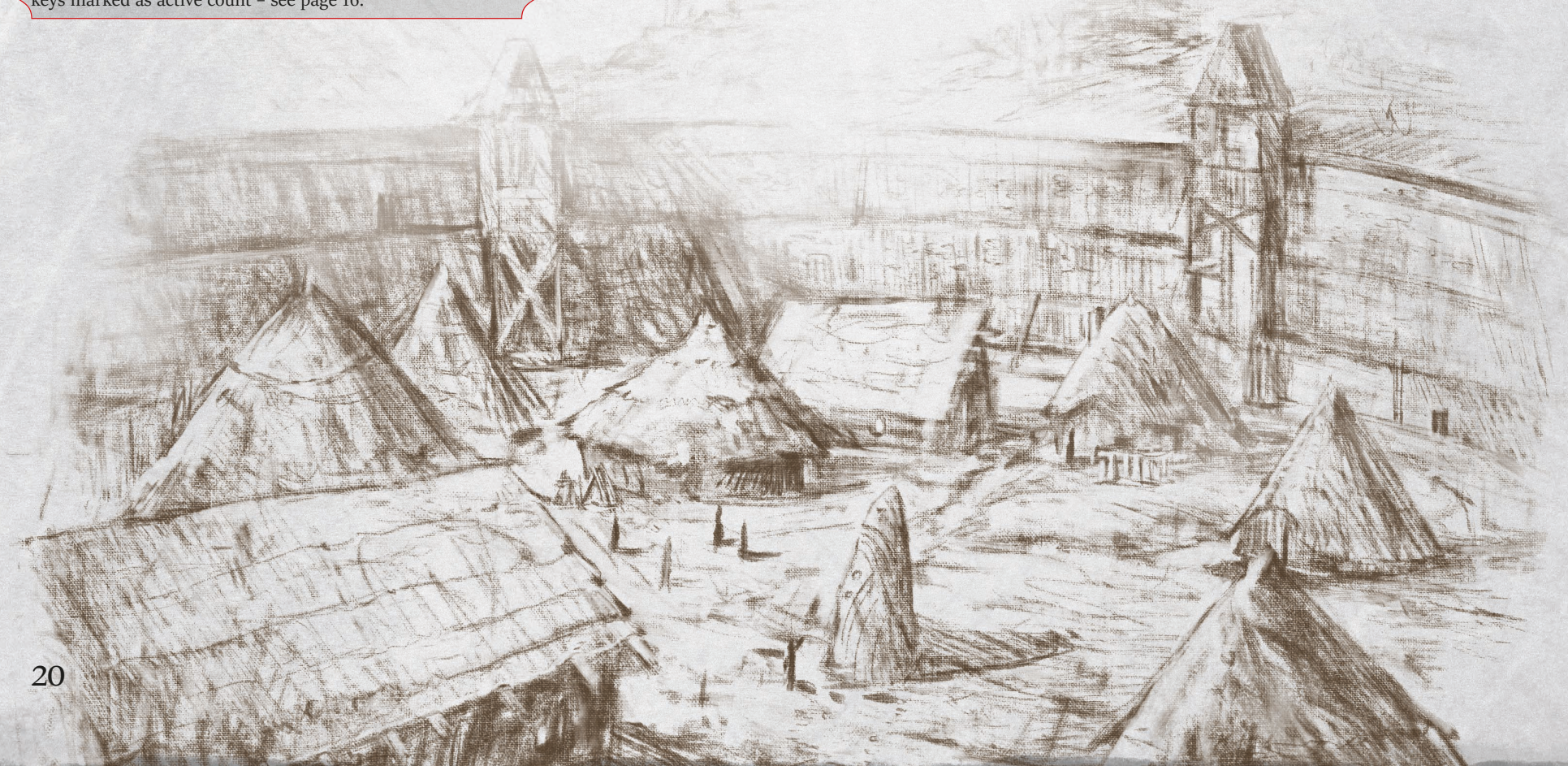
Whenever your Character has to draw any Diplomacy cards and their Diplomacy deck does not have the required number of cards, you Fail the Encounter. Apply the Fail rules from the Encounter card.

You Are Dying!

Whenever your drops to 0, your Character gets a "You Are Dying" card. Among other rules, the card immediately ends the current Encounter – see its text for more details.

Discarding From an Empty Hand

Whenever you have to discard a card from your hand, but you don't have any cards, discard a card from the top of your Diplomacy deck instead.



Diplomacy Example

Arev draws a Weeping Orphan blue Encounter. This Encounter has two Stages. The player has to complete Stage 1, and then Stage 2 in order to win. The player places a marker on the gray slot of the Affinity track.



Turn 1

It's the first round of the Encounter, so the player draws 3 cards from their Diplomacy deck. Then, the player plays a Simple Truth card. Arev has 1 point of , so he gains the bonus from the connected Key – it's a symbol.

The player checks the meaning of the symbol on the Encounter card – for Stage I, any connected with Key moves the Affinity marker two slots up on the track. The Free Key of the Simple Truth card also connects – it contains a symbol, so the player moves the marker another slot up.



The player doesn't have any cards with symbol, so they can't play anything more and end their Turn.

The marker is not on the last slot on the track, so it's time for the opponent's Response – it moves the marker 1 slot down. Arev also gains 1 point of .

The player draws 1 card.



Turn 2

The player plays a False Promise – they want to gain the bonus from the Magic Key, so they spend 1 point of **Magic**. The player additionally gains bonuses from connected and Free Keys. The player draws a card and moves the marker two slots up the Affinity track. It's the last slot on the track, so the player decides to end their Turn.

During the "Affinity Check", the player advances to the next Stage of the Encounter and moves the marker on the Affinity track back to the gray slot. The Turn has ended, so there is no Response.

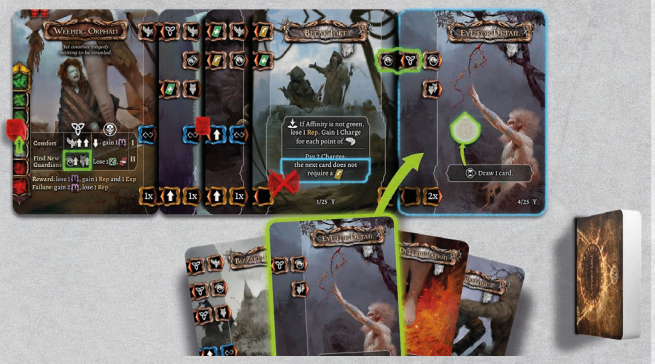
The player draws 1 card.



Turn 3

The player plays a Bleak Joke. It's the first played card, so the player ignores the symbol. Then, the player draws 1 card because of the connected Key. Finally, the player checks the . The Affinity is not green, so the player loses 1 **Rep**.

Then, the player places 2 Charges on the card, because Arev has 2 .



Now, the player spends 2 Charges from the Bleak Joke card to play an Eye for Detail card as if it was connected with . The Key connects, and it has the symbol. The player consults the table on the Encounter card, then moves the marker 1 slot up on the Affinity Track. Eye for Detail also has a Delayed Ability (the one with symbol). It means that a Time Token should be placed on this card. This Ability will trigger at the start of the next Character Activation, if the token is still on the card.



It's time for the opponent's Response. Arev loses 1 and discards the last card in the Sequence. The Eye for Detail card is discarded along with its Time Token. Now, the last card in the Sequence is the Bleak Joke card. The Encounter continues until Arev manages to push the marker to the top of the Affinity track and completes the Second stage.





Alternative Modes & Appendices

This section of the Rulebook contains non-standard game modes and additional player help.

Story Mode

Surviving Avalon isn't easy! If you or your friends want a more relaxed experience and would prefer to simply enjoy the story without the constant fear of failing, consider applying any of the following modifiers. You may decide to use all or only some of them.

Encounters Setup

Perform the setup of the Encounter decks at the start of all Chapters as if there were 1 Character fewer in the game.

Health Limiter

Remove the ♥ limiter plastic piece from the game and mark ♥ with a regular marker instead. Your ♥ no longer limits your ⚔ and you won't Panic in Combat or Diplomacy.

Menhirs Cost

Treat all Menhir Activation costs as if they had 1 chosen type of resource requirement less. (eg. instead of paying 2⚔ and 2 **Wealth** per player, pay either 2⚔ per player or 2 **Wealth** per player) – it may result in Activating Menhir for free. The special requirements listed by Menhirs (such as possesion of certain Secrets and all Characters being in the same Location) still apply.

Starting Items

During "V) Prepare the Secret and Items decks" of the World Setup on page 7, each Character draws and gains 1 random Craftable Item.

Challenge Mode

If your group wants an extra challenge and already knows the game well, you might want to increase the difficulty further. In that case, use the rule modifications listed below that lead to a more unforgiving and challenging experience. Remember: for an intermediate experience, you may decide to apply only some of these changes!

Setup

1) Each player should flip the ♥ **limiter** plastic piece **upside down** so that the top of the heart icon points to the bottom of the track.

This will make all players more susceptible to Panic and ⚔ loss caused by damage, making wounds even more realistic. It will also limit self-recovery, requiring better teamwork and risk management from the players.

2) Take **Secret card 42** at the start of the game.

People of the island distrust you, making all Diplomatic engagements harder.

Escaping Combat

You may try to Escape only once per your Character's Activation. To initiate an Escape, lose 1⚔. Then, receive an Opportunity attack and toss a Dial:

Skull: You remain in Combat!

Grail: You successfully Escape from Combat. If you were the last Character in Combat, place the Encounter card on the bottom of its deck, and reshuffle your Combat deck, including any discarded cards.

Menhirs & Events

1) When activated, all Menhirs have their duration reduced by 1 day.

You have less time to explore and gather resources!

2) When the game requires you to place any Random Event cards, place 1 less than instructed.

Negative consequences will come faster.

Rest

If you don't eat **Food** when Resting, place your ⚔ marker on 0. If it was already at 0, lose 1♥ instead.

Character Advancement

Instead of standard Experience costs, use the list below:

5 Exp: Combat or Diplomacy deck advancement (draw 2 cards and pick 1)
5 Exp: 1st point in a pair of opposing Attributes.
10 Exp: 2nd point in a pair of opposing Attributes.
15 Exp: 3rd point in a pair of opposing Attributes.
20 Exp: 4th point in a pair of opposing Attributes.
25 Exp: 5th point in a pair of opposing Attributes.
30 Exp: 6th point in a pair of opposing Attributes.

Any further point in a pair of opposing Attributes costs 5 Exp more than the last one.

Items

You can carry up to 5 Items (Secrets do not count towards that limit).

Allmother's Mercy

There's no mercy in the Challenge mode! If you die, the campaign ends in failure.

Free Play

At the start of the game, each player may place any Character tile in any Character Tray – including characters that would be unavailable in the current campaign. Then, each player picks any color of Combat & Diplomacy decks.

This leads to many new exciting combinations and deck building strategies.

IMPORTANT: Players who pick a Character from a different time period / campaign will not be able to progress through this Character's personal story! Additionally, special Abilities of Characters designed for a specific campaign might make some parts of other campaigns they were not designed for easier than intended.

Example: When playing the Fall of Avalon story, Duana's "Empowering Ritual" makes the first crucial Chapters easier, as access to the potent "Terror Heal" near the starting Location reduces the risk of using this Ability.

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RULES SUMMARY

Order of the Day

I) Start of the Day

- Remove expired Menhirs.

If a Menhir has no Dial, remove it now.

- Remove Locations out of Menhir range.

Menhirs have a range of 1 Location card. That means you remove each Location not adjacent (in a straight line or diagonally) to a Location with an Active Menhir.

- Reduce Menhir Dials by 1.

If the Dial was already at 1, remove the Dial instead (do not remove the Menhir!)

- Reduce Time Dials and remove .

If the Dial was already at 1, remove the Dial instead.
Remove 1 from every Location card that has any.
Do not decrease any of the Dials with Quest Tokens!

- Reveal and read a new Event card.
- Move Guardians.

Roll the Guardian die for each Guardian present on the board and move it according to the Guardian rules.

- Discuss your plans.

It's a cooperative adventure after all!

- Equip for your journey.

II) During the Day

Each player performs one Action, in any order. After all players have performed one Action, they may once again perform one Action each. A group of Characters in the same Location may decide to take an Action together, as a Party. Actions continue until all players Pass or have no more to spend.

III) End of the Day

- Rest.

You may pay 1 **Food**. If you do, gain 1 and lose 1.

- Restore your to full.

If you are Exhausted, restore 4 points of instead.

If you are not Exhausted, place the marker in the starting slot of the track, as long as this marker does not go past the marker.

- Advance your Character.

If you have any Experience points, you may now spend them.

- Build your Character decks.

You can now add or remove cards from your Combat / Diplomacy deck (minimum deck size: 15).

- Dream

If the Location you are in has a , open the and read the Dream.

If "You Are Going Insane", read the Nightmare instead of the Dream.

Guardians

These dangerous enemies will keep roaming the area even after you Escape (see: Escaping Combat). If you Escaped from a Guardian Encounter, place its card on the Location where you have triggered it. At the start of each day, roll a Guardian die, and move the Guardian accordingly.

- If the Guardian should move to an unrevealed or unconnected Location, move it to the highest-numbered connected Location instead.
- If the Guardian stays in the same Location and there are any Characters present there, immediately start the Encounter (all Characters present in this Location have to fight together).
- If the Guardian enters a Location with any Character, it immediately triggers the Encounter.
- If a Character or a Party enters a Location with a Guardian, immediately trigger the Encounter. If there's more than one Guardian there, players may choose which Encounter to trigger first.
- If a Character or a Party enters a Location with a Guardian and an instant Action (denoted by the), trigger the Guardian Encounter first and only then resolve the rules on the Location card.

Once the Guardian is defeated, put its card on the bottom of its deck.

Combat/Diplomacy

Starting Combat/Diplomacy

- Draw an Encounter card.
- Check the Traits of this Encounter.
- Check your equipment.
- Draw 3 cards from Combat/Diplomacy deck (1-3 Characters in Party) OR draw 2 cards from Combat/Diplomacy deck (4 Characters in Party). Then, you may discard your cards and draw new hand with 1 less card.

Combat / Diplomacy Turn

- Pick the Active Character

Place a on this Character's Tile to remember they were Activated this Turn.

Character Activation

- Delayed Abilities

Remove 1 from each Combat / Diplomacy card in the Sequence. If it was the last on the card, resolve the Ability with the trigger.

Abilities are resolved from the first card in the Sequence (left) to the last card (right).

Playing Cards

- Play one Combat / Diplomacy card.
- You may play additional Combat / Diplomacy cards after the first one, but they MUST connect with a Key.
- If in Combat, check for the Opportunity attack.
- Perform Victory / Affinity Check.

Enemy Attack / Opponent's Response

Apply an appropriate (depending on your Combat Pool / Diplomatic Encounter Stage). Perform Victory / Affinity Check.

Check Readiness

- Check if all Characters have been Activated (they have a on their Character Trays).
- If all Characters have been Activated, go to the "End Turn" phase.
- If there are any Characters who haven't been Activated yet, go to the "Pick the Active Character" phase.

End Turn

- **Discard.** Discard down to 3 cards in your hand.
- **Draw.** All Party members draw 1 card from their decks. Do not draw if your Character Panics (see: Panic). If there are no cards to draw, see: No Cards in Deck.
- **Clear Activations.** Remove all of the from the Character Trays. This does not affect any left on Combat cards!

Victory Check (Combat)

Count the number of markers in the Combat Pool. If it's higher than or equal to the target Value printed on the Encounter card, you win! Receive any Rewards, share any Loot, and place the Encounter card on the bottom of its deck; reshuffle your Combat deck, including any discarded or played cards.

Affinity Check (Diplomacy)

- Check the position of the marker on the Affinity track.
- If it's on the lowest slot, you lose the Encounter – apply the Failure rules to each Party member, and put the Encounter on the bottom of its deck. Then, reshuffle your Diplomacy deck, including any discarded or played cards.
- If the marker is on the highest slot of the Affinity track, you win the current Stage of the Encounter.
- If this was the last Stage, you win the entire Encounter – receive Reward, place the Encounter card on the bottom of its deck, then reshuffle your Diplomacy deck, including any discarded or played cards.
- If this wasn't the last Stage of the Encounter, begin the next Stage – move the marker to the gray slot on the Affinity track, place a marker on the completed Stage, and go to the Check Readiness step.

Panic

Panic takes place anytime your is higher than your current (marker on the track is above the wings of the T-shaped limiter). When that happens:

- Instead of playing a card from your hand in step 2 (Playing Cards), play a card from the top of your Diplomacy / Combat deck. Then, you may play additional cards from your hand, according to the standard rules.
- Do not draw a new card at the End of Turn. Any bonus or extra cards gained from Bonus Keys, Skills or Abilities are still drawn as normal.

No Cards in Deck

Whenever your Character has to draw cards and their Combat / Diplomacy deck does not have the required number of cards, you are forced to Escape (Combat) or you fail the Encounter (Diplomacy).

You Are Dying!

Whenever your drops to 0, attach the "You Are Dying" card to your Character tray. Among other rules, the card immediately removes you from your current Encounter – see its text for more details.

Discarding From an Empty Hand

Whenever you have to discard a card from your hand, but you don't have any cards, discard a card from the top of your Combat / Diplomacy deck instead.

Negative Combat Pool

Whenever you should remove a marker from the Combat Pool, but there are not enough markers, discards a card from your hand for every excess point.