

# Life BYTES

**BIMONTHLY EDITION**

**TABLETOP GAMING SPECIAL  
SEPTEMBER 2024**







## Foreword

Since its inception, LifeBytes Magazine has been a very eclectic magazine. In order to make sure that our readers can easily find what they're interested in, we've been categorizing our articles in different 'Bits' from the very beginning. This has been met with great enthusiasm from our readership, but there has been a somewhat unexpected boon as well: we're uniquely able to measure which Bits do better than any others.

The results are interesting as we've found that most of our readers read through each entire issue, even though we first assumed they'd go whatever section they like best and wouldn't spend too much time reading the other Bits. It's a great compliment, but even so, we know some Bits still outshine the other ones... and GameBits has been in our top 5 sections from Issue 1 until now, about one year and a half on, next to TravelBits, FoodBits, and FashionBits. It only made sense, then, that we would consecrate an entire Special to tabletop gaming, in-between our full issues and more gastronomy- and travel-related LifeBits.

So here we are, publishing another whacky 80-pager, this time entirely consecrated to tabletop game reviews, just a few days before Essen Spieltagen 2024 hits. The largest tabletop game convention in the world will be attracting yet another record number of customers - the organization is projecting 200,000 visitors - and for the first ever, all of the halls will be entirely filled, with no blank exhibitor space remaining; figures that tell a lot about the popularity of gaming and thus most probably also about the popularity of our LifeBits section.

All of the games reviewed were either sent to us over the last year or picked up at some of the best tabletop conventions in Europe, including Essen Spiel 2023, Dragonmeet 2023, and UKGE 2024. We had a lot of fun unboxing, playing, and reviewing them, and we definitely hope you'll have at least just as much fun reading about them! Although given to us as review copies, none of the publishers pressured us to write a positive review, and none of them paid us for a review. Here's to all of you publishers and distributors, we'll be seeing most of you during the Essen Spiel weekend!

*Dirk Vandereyken*

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# BOARD GAME REVIEW: AMONG CULTISTS

## SOCIALLY DEDUCING WHAT THE FUCK IS UP

In the crowded field of social deduction games, *Among Cultists* offers a unique twist with its blend of dark thematic elements and cooperative gameplay. Published by Godot Games, *Among Cultists* is a semi-cooperative hidden role board game where players work together to uncover traitors within their ranks—cultists trying to complete their rituals. With its mysterious setting, clever mechanics, and high replayability, this game quickly captured the attention of board gamers who love deduction with a touch of horror.

**Among Cultists**  
**Semi-Cooperative Board Game**  
**Box - Godot Games**

**Overall:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### The Setting

The game immerses players in a grim Lovecraftian atmosphere. You are part of a research team investigating strange occurrences in a secluded university, but hidden among you are dangerous cultists, followers of ancient, malevolent gods. As you explore different rooms and gather clues, a sense of dread builds. The dark corridors and mysterious shadows create an unsettling feeling that something sinister lurks just out of sight. The art and components enhance the theme, with beautifully illustrated cards and a dark, moody board that perfectly captures the ominous setting. The cultists blend in seamlessly with the investigators, adding to the growing paranoia.

### The Game System

The mechanics of *Among Cultists* strike a balance between cooperative investigation and betrayal. The game supports 4 to 8 players, and each player is assigned a secret role, either as an investigator or a cultist. Investigators work together to solve the mystery by completing tasks and revealing cultists, while cultists secretly sabotage the team's efforts, aiming to complete their dark rituals undetected.



The turn structure involves players moving to different rooms on the board and performing actions, which can include gathering clues, completing objectives, or confronting other players. The hidden role aspect shines as cultists try to sow distrust while maintaining their cover. A standout mechanic is the ability to "perform a task" that mimics the social deduction games like *Among Us*, where certain tasks give you plausible alibis, but you never know if someone nearby is secretly undermining the group.

The tension in *Among Cultists* is palpable, especially as players begin to suspect each other, accusing allies of being enemies. Decisions must be made quickly, and every action is fraught with suspicion. Adding depth, certain roles have unique abilities, such as the Guardian, who can protect teammates, or the Occultist, who gains strength as rituals are completed. The mix of roles ensures that no two games feel alike, bringing you closer to safety—or doom. Players must carefully plan their moves, as the wrong step can lead to a swift, brutal end.

### Design & Artwork

The visual presentation of *Among Cultists* plays a significant role in enhancing the overall experience. The game's art direction,





led by graphic designer Ossi Hiekkala, successfully captures the unsettling atmosphere of its setting. The board, featuring dimly lit hallways and shadowy rooms, is minimalist but evocative, drawing players into the claustrophobic environment of a haunted university. Every room feels like a foreboding space where danger might lurk, contributing to the growing paranoia as the game progresses.

The character art is equally impressive, with investigators and cultists alike rendered in a style that balances realism with an eerie, almost otherworldly quality. The use of muted colors, heavy shadows, and subtle details brings the Lovecraftian theme to life without overwhelming the mechanics. Each character card has a distinct personality, from the cautious researcher to the suspiciously calm professor, adding to the immersive storytelling.

The game's components, including tokens, cards, and player boards, are of high quality, with a polished, professional feel. The thick, durable materials ensure longevity, while the iconography is clean and easy to read, streamlining gameplay. The subtle hieroglyphics and occult symbols woven throughout the design reinforce the idea that something ancient and sinister is at play.

Special attention has been given to the cultists' designs, which are understated yet ominous. The ambiguity of their appearance—human, yet not quite right—feeds into

the core tension of the game. Their simple, robed forms evoke classic cult imagery, making it easy for players to project their own suspicions onto their fellow players.

Overall, Among Cultists excels in both design and artwork, creating an aesthetic that not only supports the gameplay but enhances it by pulling players deeper into its dark, mysterious world.

## Conclusion

Among Cultists is a fresh take on social deduction, weaving together an immersive setting, engaging gameplay, and tense strategic elements. While it can be nerve-wracking to play as an investigator trying to sniff out cultists among your friends, it's equally thrilling to deceive and outwit your fellow players as a hidden cultist. The game rewards clever manipulation, but also demands sharp observation and teamwork from its investigators. With its strong thematic design and replayability, Among Cultists is a fantastic addition to any board gamer's collection, especially for fans of mystery and hidden role games.

**More info:** [www.among-cultists.com](http://www.among-cultists.com)

Dirk Vandereyken



# BOARD GAME EXPANSION REVIEW:

## AMONG CULTISTS - DOWN INTO THE ABYSS

### DESCENDING FURTHER INTO MADNESS

**Down Into the Abyss is the first major expansion for Among Cultists, offering players deeper layers of mystery, new mechanics, and added replayability. Building on the successful formula of the base game, this expansion introduces more roles, unique abilities, and a chilling new setting that ramps up the tension and complexity.**

**Among Cultists - Down Into the Abyss**  
**Semi-Cooperative Board Game Expansion**  
**Box - Godot Games**

**Overall:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



### The Setting

As the title suggests, Down Into the Abyss takes players even further into the depths of horror. The new setting, an abandoned subterranean facility, exudes a more claustrophobic and menacing atmosphere than the haunted university from the base game. The dark, cramped corridors and flickering lights add to the sense of dread, with each step feeling more dangerous as the investigators inch closer to uncovering ancient, forbidden secrets. The Lovecraftian themes are turned up a notch, with new rooms that seem to breathe with malevolent energy.

### The Game System

The expansion adds several new roles to shake up the social deduction mechanics, offering new abilities and strategies for both investigators and cultists. Players can now choose from a broader range of unique characters, each with specialized skills—like the Seeker, who can sense occult energies, or the Renegade, who walks a fine line between ally and enemy.

A major new feature is the introduction of “Abyssal Events,” triggered as players delve deeper into the facility. These events can alter the course of the game by changing room conditions, affecting player abilities, or introducing unforeseen dangers. This keeps everyone on edge, as even the most well-laid plans can be upended by a sudden, malevolent force. Cultists also gain more covert tools to manipulate their surroundings, creating an even greater sense of paranoia and urgency for investigators.

### Design & Artwork

The visual presentation of Among Cultists plays a significant role in enhancing the overall experience. The game’s art direction, led by The artwork in Down Into the Abyss continues the high standard set by the base game but takes on a darker tone. The setting is vividly brought to life with detailed underground chambers, eerie relics, and oppressive shadows that enhance the horror elements. The new character designs fit seamlessly into the world, with an even greater emphasis on ambiguity and menace. The expansion’s components are equally high quality, with new tokens, event cards, and boards that match the original game’s aesthetic perfectly.

### Conclusion

Down Into the Abyss enriches Among Cultists with new roles, unpredictable events, and a deeply atmospheric new setting. It heightens the game’s tension, offering players more ways to deceive, strategize, and survive. For those who loved the paranoia and intrigue of the base game, this expansion adds a wealth of new content while maintaining the core gameplay that makes Among Cultists so captivating.

**More info:** [www.among-cultists.com](http://www.among-cultists.com)

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# BOARD GAME EXPANSION REVIEW:

## AMONG CULTISTS - MOUNTAINS OF CHAOS

### DESCENDING FURTHER INTO MADNESS

**Mountains of Chaos, the latest expansion for Among Cultists, takes players to a remote and treacherous location, adding a frigid, survivalist twist to the original game's tense social deduction mechanics, this time set in a desolate, snow-covered mountain range.**

**Among Cultists - Mountains of Chaos**  
**Semi-Cooperative Board Game Expansion**  
**Box - Godot Games**

**Overall:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



### The Setting

The frozen, isolated peaks of the Mountains of Chaos are a dramatic departure from the shadowy halls of the base game. Here, players must contend with the deadly cold and the unforgiving terrain as they seek to uncover cultist plots. The mountains, remote and perilous, feel like another antagonist in the game, with avalanches, freezing winds, and strange occurrences adding layers of tension. The Lovecraftian dread is alive and well, but now with the additional threat of nature itself pushing investigators.

### The Game System

Mountains of Chaos introduces a new survival element that changes the dynamic of the game. In addition to managing trust and deduction, players must now monitor their supplies and shelter against the cold, creating a new urgency. The expansion adds a resource management system where players gather and spend supplies to avoid exposure to the harsh elements. These mechanics force collaboration even among suspicious players, increasing the difficulty of detecting cultists who could sabotage resources. New roles, such as the Pathfinder, who excels in navigating the icy terrain, and the Saboteur, who can secretly destroy supplies, add more depth and complexity to the hidden roles. Players also encounter treacherous environmental events, such as avalanches or mysterious, chaotic storms, which can damage resources or disrupt player movements, adding an extra layer of unpredictability. The expansion includes new objectives that require both survival and investigation. While the original game focused on completing tasks and uncovering traitors, Mountains of Chaos balances this with the additional goal of escaping the mountains alive—a task easier said than done when cultists are among you.

### Design & Artwork

The artwork of Mountains of Chaos masterfully captures the isolation and harsh beauty of its setting. The snow-covered peaks, icy ridges, and frozen ruins all feel vast and threatening, reinforcing the desolation of the environment. The characters' designs reflect their struggle against the cold, with heavy furs and worn gear that highlight the survivalist theme. The game components, including supply tokens and event cards, are well-crafted, with crisp, clean designs that are easy to follow yet immerse players deeper into the world. The event cards feature stunning illustrations of natural disasters, strange lights in the sky, and more.

### Conclusion

Mountains of Chaos is a brilliant expansion that brings both the cold and chaos to Among Cultists. By introducing environmental hazards, resource management, and new survival-focused objectives, this expansion significantly enhances the game's strategy and challenge. The new setting and mechanics create an even more immersive and dynamic experience, where every move matters—and the dangers come not just from cultists but the brutal wilderness itself. Fans of the base game will find Mountains of Chaos to be a chilling and exciting addition to the Among Cultists universe.

**More info:** [www.among-cultists.com](http://www.among-cultists.com)

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# BOARD GAME REVIEW: FINAL GIRL - SERIES 1: CARNAGE AT THE CARNIVAL

## ANOTHER EPISODE ADDED TO ONE OF THE BEST SOLO HORROR TTRPGS OUT THERE

**Final Girl: Carnage at the Carnival** is one of the exciting expansions in the Final Girl Season 1 series by Van Ryder Games. Building on the solo, horror-filled survival mechanics of the core Final Girl game, this expansion pits players against a horrifying new killer, Gepetto the Puppetmaster, in a setting ripe for chaos—a dark and deadly carnival. As with other installments in the Final Girl series, Carnage at the Carnival captures the suspense and terror of classic slasher films, offering players a nail-biting, strategic solo experience. Whether you're navigating the creepy funhouse, running through the maze of attractions, or facing off with the puppet-wielding killer, the expansion ramps up the intensity and unpredictability.

**Final Girl - Series 1: Carnage at the Carnival**  
Solo Board Game  
VHS Video Format - Van Ryder Games

**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story:                        0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork:      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### The Setting

The carnival setting of this expansion adds a whole new flavor to the horror, playing into the eerie and unsettling atmosphere of a run-down amusement park. Imagine a carnival abandoned by day but filled with twisted horrors at night, where the smell of cotton candy is tainted by blood, and the bright lights only serve to cast longer shadows. The carnival theme is inherently unsettling, and Carnage at the Carnival amplifies this by setting you loose in a labyrinth of eerie attractions.







thematic connection to the carnival adds a creepy, almost magical element to the game. The puppets can turn seemingly safe areas into dangerous traps, and managing their presence while trying to rescue victims creates a constant feeling of unease.

As with all Final Girl scenarios, the game maintains a strong balance between strategy and horror, with each decision potentially bringing you closer to safety—or doom. Players must carefully plan their moves, as the wrong step can lead to a swift, brutal end.

### Design & Artwork

The visual design of Carnage at the Carnival is both vibrant and disturbing, capturing the twisted essence of a nightmarish amusement park. The art is bold, colorful, and slightly grotesque, perfectly reflecting the setting's mix of fun and fear. From the eerie rides to Gepetto's terrifying puppets, the artwork works to pull players into the grim world of Final Girl, enhancing the immersion and thematic tension of the gameplay.

The graphic design remains intuitive and clean, as with other Final Girl releases, ensuring that the game is easy to navigate during tense moments. The layout of the player boards, item cards, and Terror deck allows players to focus on the gameplay while still appreciating the high-quality design and artwork.

The modular nature of the Final Girl system means that you can mix and match killers and locations across expansions, and the carnival art fits seamlessly with the broader aesthetic of the Final Girl universe.

### Conclusion

Final Girl: Carnage at the Carnival is a standout expansion in the Final Girl series, offering a fresh and terrifying setting with a uniquely sinister killer. The carnival environment adds layers of atmosphere and tension, making each playthrough feel like a descent into madness as you race to outwit Gepetto and his deadly puppet creations. The strategic depth of managing both the killer and his puppets, combined with the randomness of the dice and cards, ensures a thrilling and often nerve-wracking experience.

For fans of solo games and horror, Carnage at the Carnival provides a rich, immersive, and horrifying journey through the twisted world of Final Girl. Its blend of theme, strategy, and unpredictability makes it a must-play for anyone looking to experience the full terror of being the last one standing in a horror film.

Whether you're a seasoned Final Girl player or new to the series, this expansion delivers everything you could want from a solo survival horror game.

**More info:** [www.vandyergames.com/collections/all/products/final-girl-carnage-at-the-carnival](http://www.vandyergames.com/collections/all/products/final-girl-carnage-at-the-carnival)

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Players must navigate the Ferris wheel, bumper cars, and the dreaded funhouse while trying to rescue victims from Gepetto, the Puppetmaster, whose mechanical horrors lurk around every corner. The combination of these carnival attractions and the deadly traps they hide makes for a tense and claustrophobic environment where every step could be your last. The carnival, with its garish colors and dark corners, serves as a constant reminder that danger is just a heartbeat away.

### The Game System

Carnage at the Carnival uses the same core mechanics as the Final Girl base game but introduces unique elements specific to this expansion. The gameplay revolves around the card-driven action system where players use cards to perform actions such as moving, searching, and attacking, while also managing time—a crucial resource. Dice rolls determine the success or failure of these actions, and the ever-present randomness forces players to adapt their strategy on the fly.

Gepetto, the Puppetmaster, brings a new twist to the killer mechanics. His puppet minions add an additional layer of strategy as players must contend with more than just the killer; they must also deal with the puppets, which can trap or ambush them. Gepetto's unique abilities and Terror cards make him a cunning and unpredictable foe, and his



# BOARD GAME REVIEW:

## FINAL GIRL - SERIES 1: HAUNTING AT CREECH MANOR

### SOLO CHILLS IN A MANOR

**Final Girl: Haunting of Creech Manor** is part of the **Final Girl Series 1** from **Van Ryder Games**. As a solo, horror-themed board game, **Final Girl** delivers an immersive experience where players embody the classic "final girl" archetype, striving to survive against a relentless killer. In **Haunting of Creech Manor**, the horror shifts from slasher to supernatural, setting players against a malevolent Poltergeist in an eerie manor brimming with dark secrets.

**Final Girl - Series 1: Haunting at Creech Manor**  
**Solo Board Game**  
**VHS Video Format - Van Ryder Games**

**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story:                         0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:             0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork:       0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### The Setting

Creech Manor is the quintessential haunted house, filled with all the tropes horror fans love—creaking floorboards, dark corners, and a history shrouded in mystery. The story revolves around a vengeful Poltergeist that terrorizes both the player and innocent victims trapped within the manor. As the final girl, you must explore the haunted house, uncovering key items, rescuing trapped victims, and ultimately facing the Poltergeist in a showdown for survival.

Creech Manor itself is a claustrophobic setting, full of narrow hallways, dusty rooms, and unsettling encounters. The theme is immersive, conjuring the feeling of being stalked by an unseen force that can strike at any moment. Whether you're searching for a sacred artifact to defend yourself or running from the creeping danger, the haunted manor constantly presses you with tension, dread, and escalating fear. The chilling atmosphere of the house builds as the game progresses, making every turn feel like a gamble with your life.





you on your toes, while the randomness of the dice means no strategy is foolproof, adding to the thrill.

## Design & Artwork

The visual design of Haunting of Creech Manor is stellar, perfectly complementing the game's haunted house theme. The artwork captures the creepy, decayed look of an old mansion, with dimly lit rooms, shadowy corners, and sinister atmosphere. The Poltergeist itself is depicted as an unsettling, spectral presence, lurking within the manor and haunting the players throughout their game. The overall color palette—dark, muted tones punctuated by ghostly whites and eerie greens—enhances the immersive experience, drawing players deeper into the horror.

Component quality is high, as with all Final Girl expansions. The modular nature of the game means that the pieces are designed to work seamlessly with other expansions, allowing for endless combinations of killers, final girls, and locations. The terror deck, item cards, and player boards are all laid out clearly, making the game easy to navigate even in its most frantic moments.

## Conclusion

Final Girl: Haunting of Creech Manor offers an exhilarating and deeply thematic solo horror experience. The shift from traditional slasher-style killers to a more supernatural, haunted house theme is executed brilliantly, adding variety to the Final Girl series. The combination of strategic card play, dice rolling, and the unpredictable AI-driven Poltergeist ensures that each playthrough is full of tension and suspense.

For fans of haunted house stories and solo board gaming, Haunting of Creech Manor is a must-play. The atmosphere, combined with the game's well-crafted mechanics, makes it a thrilling addition to the Final Girl series. Whether you're new to the game or a seasoned veteran, this expansion offers enough new content and challenges to keep you coming back to the haunted halls of Creech Manor again and again.

**More info:** [www.vanrydergames.com/collections/all/products/final-girl-haunting-of-creech-manor](http://www.vanrydergames.com/collections/all/products/final-girl-haunting-of-creech-manor)

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## The Game System

Haunting of Creech Manor follows the core system used throughout the Final Girl series. At its heart, the game is a card-driven, solo experience where players perform actions, manage resources, and roll dice to resolve tense encounters with the Poltergeist. The game begins with the setup of the manor, the placement of victims, and the lurking threat of the Poltergeist, who grows in strength as victims fall prey to its malevolent powers.

Key mechanics include:

**Action Cards:** Players use cards to perform essential actions like moving, searching for items, or attacking the Poltergeist. Each action consumes time, which is a limited resource in the game. Running out of time leaves you vulnerable to the Poltergeist's attacks.  
**Dice Rolls:** Many actions are determined by dice rolls, which adds a layer of tension and unpredictability. Success or failure in key moments can change the outcome of a game in a split second.

**Poltergeist Behavior:** The killer, in this case, the Poltergeist, operates based on a deck of Terror cards that dictates its movements and actions. The Poltergeist becomes stronger as it claims more victims, and its unpredictability makes the game feel like a constant struggle for survival.  
**Items and Events:** Items found in Creech Manor, such as sacred relics, can turn the tide in your favor, while events throw twists and obstacles in your path, enhancing the cinematic feel of the game. The combination of strategy, dice-driven tension, and thematic elements works exceptionally well, making each playthrough feel unique, dynamic, and filled with cinematic moments. The shifting behavior of the Poltergeist keeps





# BOARD GAME REVIEW - PYRAMIDICE

## A CARD & DICE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GAME

**"Pyramidice," designed by Luigi Ferrini, is a strategic dice and resource management game set in Ancient Egypt, focusing on pyramid construction and the influence of the gods. Players must skillfully balance dice rolls, manage resources like workers and sacred cats, and leverage special god abilities to build pyramids and earn Fame points. Released by Ares Games, the game offers a unique blend of dice and card mechanics with deep strategic elements, making it a noteworthy entry in the euro-style board game genre.**

**PYAMIDICE**  
**Card & Dice Game Hybrid**  
**Box - Ares Games**

**Overall:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Game System:

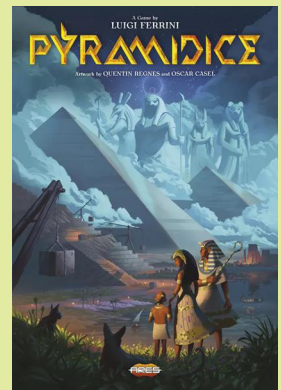
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7



### The Setting

The game transports players to the heart of Ancient Egypt, where they assume the roles of architects tasked with constructing the pyramids on the Giza plateau. The iconic pyramids of Cheops, Chephren, and Mykerinos serve as the focal points of the gameplay, each presenting unique challenges and rewards. The historical theme is reinforced by god cards, representing various deities from the Egyptian pantheon, whose powers players can invoke to gain advantages. The game's thematic integration of Ancient Egyptian architecture and mythology adds depth and atmosphere to the gameplay, bringing a sense of purpose to each move as players vie to immortalize their legacies alongside the pyramids.

### The Game System

At its core, Pyramidice is a medium-weight eurogame that revolves around dice manipulation and resource management. Players alternate between "work" and "rest" phases, using white dice (representing stone blocks) to construct pyramids or trigger actions like acquiring god cards or activating powers. The beige and sandy orange dice, representing prayer, are used to manipulate outcomes and enhance decision-making.

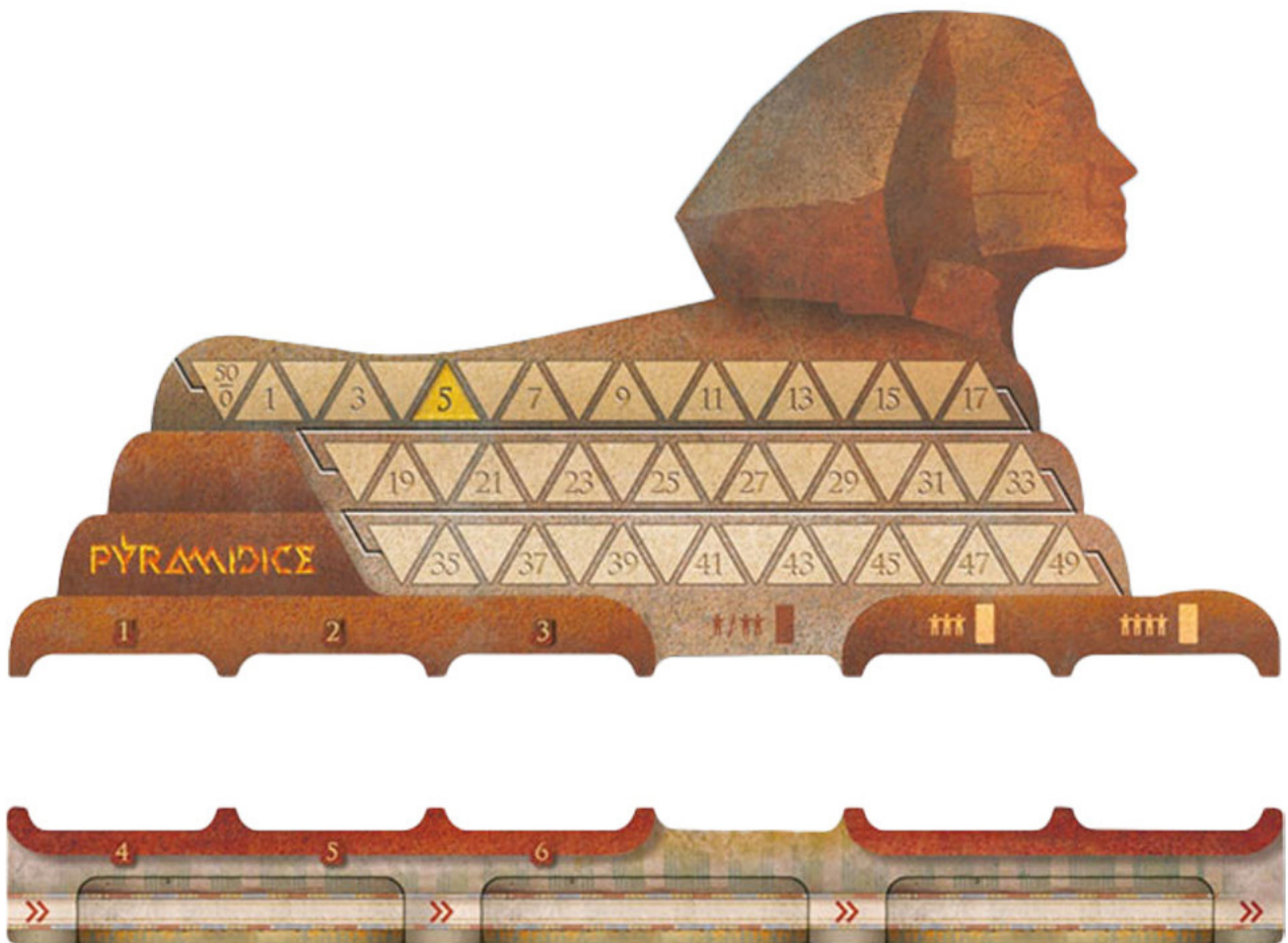
Each player has a "Scarab card" that provides an asymmetric power, influencing their strategy throughout the game. Additionally, players receive a hidden "Project card" that offers bonus points based on the arrangement of dice numbers on the pyramid, introducing a layer of puzzle-like thinking. Players must carefully balance their resources (workers, cats, and stone dice) while managing the risks and rewards of dice rolls. Timing and foresight are essential, as mismanagement of resources or dice can inadvertently benefit an opponent.

The game includes a solo mode where players compete against four historical architects of Egypt, further adding to its replayability. Pyramidice ends when either the god deck is depleted or the stone dice supply runs out, pushing players to maximize their Fame points before the game concludes.

### Design & Artwork

The visual presentation of Pyramidice is both functional and immersive. The dice are well-crafted and come in colors that evoke the materials of pyramid construction—subtle yet effective in drawing players into the theme. The small yet detailed worker and





cat meeples add charm to the game, especially the Egyptian-styled workers that evoke a sense of cultural specificity.

Artistically, the game's god cards, designed by Quentin Regnes and Oscar Casel, stand out with their vivid depictions of deities, each bringing unique abilities into the gameplay. The graphic design is intuitive, with clear iconography that helps players easily follow the game's mechanics, reducing any potential friction in understanding complex interactions. However, there are some noted drawbacks with the game's physical components, such as the awkward fit of certain pieces in the box and the less-than-smooth integration of some visual elements on the table, which can detract slightly from the overall experience.

## Conclusion

Pyramidice strikes a delicate balance between dice randomness and strategic resource management, providing a satisfying yet occasionally uneven experience. The game shines in its thematic integration, deep strategic options, and high-quality components. While its dice manipulation mechanics offer tactical depth, the game may not be thrilling enough for players seeking high-stakes, push-your-luck excitement. Pyramidice excels in its design and offers replayability with its unique combinations of powers and objectives, but it may not captivate all audiences as a long-term staple. Nevertheless, for fans of Ancient Egypt or those seeking a refined eurogame with dice elements, Pyramidice

delivers a thoughtful and enjoyable gameplay experience.

**More info:** [www.aresgames.eu/games/euro-games/pyramidice](http://www.aresgames.eu/games/euro-games/pyramidice)

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UKGE 2024



# CARD GAME GAME REVIEW: SHADOWRUN - EDGE ZONE: MAGIC

## FIRST OF A DOUBLE CYBER FANTASY WHAMMY

When you think of Shadowrun, cyberpunk dystopia and magic-infused megacorporate battles come to mind. With Shadowrun: Edge Zone – Magic, fans of the franchise are treated to a fast-paced card game experience that distills the essence of the Shadowrun world into a compact, strategic format. It's not just about slinging spells, but rather mastering the careful balance of tech and magic in a world where both can be your greatest weapon—or your undoing. But does this deckbuilder capture the gritty feel of the Shadowrun universe? Let's delve in.

**Shadowrun: Edge Zone - Magic**  
**Card Game**  
**Box - Catalyst Game Labs**

**Overall:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### The Setting

Set in the grimy, neon-lit streets of a futuristic Seattle, Edge Zone – Magic plunges players into the Sixth World, where hackers (or "deckers"), street samurai, and powerful spellcasters co-exist in a world of corporate espionage and ancient magic. The thematic heart of the game lies in its ability to transport players into this hybrid world of tech and mysticism. Every card is dripping with Shadowrun lore, whether it's a totemic shaman summoning spirits or a mega-corp mage manipulating reality for a corporate agenda. The balance between magic and technology is essential, and Edge Zone – Magic embraces this duality.

### The Game System

At its core, Shadowrun: Edge Zone – Magic is a competitive deck-building game with strong resource management elements. Players construct their decks with a mix of magic spells, cyber-enhancements, and weapons, vying for dominance in a series of tactical engagements. The game leans heavily on strategic planning: will you rely on raw magical power, or will you enhance your deck with cyber-augments to tip the scales in your favor? Combat revolves around turn-based encounters where players take turns casting spells, summoning spirits, or unleashing cyber-enhanced attacks. The mechanics of Magic cards introduce new layers to gameplay, allowing for everything from elemental spellcasting to potent rituals that shape the battlefield. The unique aspect of magical energy management (draining and recharging mana pools) creates high-stakes decision-making as players must carefully balance offense with defense.

### Design & Artwork

The visual design of Edge Zone – Magic is a definite highlight. Each card is intricately illustrated, capturing the gritty, urban-fantasy aesthetic Shadowrun is known for. Characters are depicted with a mix of arcane robes and cybernetic limbs, representing the game's iconic fusion of mysticism and futuristic tech. The layout is clear and functional, with easy-to-read icons that make tracking spells, augments, and combat stats a breeze. The rulebook does an admirable job of explaining the game's complex systems, though it might benefit from a more streamlined tutorial to onboard new players. The high-quality cardstock and tokens are durable and lend the game a premium feel, but the box organization could have been more intuitive for quicker setup.

### Conclusion

Shadowrun: Edge Zone – Magic is a deeply strategic and thematically rich card game that will delight fans of the Shadowrun universe. While it has a learning curve and requires players to juggle many mechanics, those willing to invest the time will find a rewarding blend of magic, tech, and tactical gameplay. Whether you're a seasoned shadowrunner or new to the series, this expansion offers a fresh and magical twist to the Edge Zone formula. Just be prepared for an intense challenge—and remember, in the Sixth World, nothing comes without a cost.

**More info:** [www.store.catalystgamelabs.com/collections/tabletop/products/shadowrun-edgezone-magic](http://www.store.catalystgamelabs.com/collections/tabletop/products/shadowrun-edgezone-magic)

**Dirk Vandereyken**



# CARD GAME GAME REVIEW: SHADOWRUN - EDGE ZONE: MAYHEM

## FIRST OF A DOUBLE CYBER FANTASY WHAMMY

Following the arcane intensity of Shadowrun: Edge Zone – Magic, we now plunge into the chaotic, high-octane world of Shadowrun: Edge Zone – Mayhem, an expansion that brings fast-paced, destructive combat and unpredictability to the forefront. This new installment amps up the adrenaline by introducing destructive abilities, explosive combat mechanics, and chaotic battlefield conditions. If you're looking to embrace the wild, unpredictable nature of the Shadowrun universe, then Mayhem might be the ride you're seeking.

**Shadowrun - Edge Zone: Mayhem**  
**Card Game**  
**Box - Catalyst Game Labs**

**Overall:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### The Setting

While Magic focuses on the mystical undercurrent of the Shadowrun world, Mayhem zooms in on the chaotic, often anarchic conflicts of street-level combat. This expansion draws players deeper into the underbelly of the Sixth World, where gangs, mercenaries, and rogue corporate agents duke it out in the shadowy alleys of Seattle or in the lawless sprawl of corporate warzones. It's not about delicate spells or subtle manipulation—it's about high-powered weapons, destructive tech, and turning the streets into a battlefield. The cards in this set feature gritty imagery, highlighting everything from street gangs wielding homemade explosives to specialized cyberware designed purely for carnage.

### The Game System

Shadowrun: Edge Zone – Mayhem changes the pace of the game significantly, focusing on dynamic, explosive encounters. The game introduces "Mayhem Actions"—a new type of card ability that triggers unpredictable effects, causing collateral damage, battlefield changes, or massive area attacks. These actions are designed to throw a wrench into your opponent's strategy, making combat more unpredictable and volatile. A key mechanic here is the "Chaos Meter." As players use Mayhem Actions or unleash devastating attacks, the Chaos Meter builds up, affecting all players and introducing game-altering effects. The higher the meter goes, the more unstable the game becomes, meaning no strategy is ever truly safe. One moment you're in control of the battlefield, and the next, a chain reaction of explosions leaves everyone scrambling to recover. Combat is still turn-based, but Mayhem introduces more aggressive tactics. Decks lean heavily into offensive strategies, with powerful weapons, grenades, and destructive spells taking center stage.

### Design & Artwork

The design of Mayhem is as explosive as its gameplay. Cards are filled with frenetic, action-packed artwork, showcasing gunfights, fiery explosions, and intense melee brawls. The art direction here is bold, with chaotic energy flowing through every card, truly selling the expansion's theme of unpredictable violence.

### Conclusion

Shadowrun: Edge Zone – Mayhem is a thrilling, explosive expansion that pushes the game into fast-paced, chaotic territory. It's a perfect fit for players who enjoy unpredictability and raw combat, embracing the gritty street-level warfare of Shadowrun. While it may lack the precision and depth of its sister expansion Magic, it more than makes up for it with sheer excitement and high-stakes action. If you're ready to embrace the chaos, Mayhem will provide hours of destructive fun—but be prepared to adapt quickly, because in this version of the Sixth World, control is fleeting.

**More info:** [www.store.catalystgamelabs.com/collections/tabletop/products/shadowrun-edgezone-mayhem](http://www.store.catalystgamelabs.com/collections/tabletop/products/shadowrun-edgezone-mayhem)

Dirk Vandereyken

# MINIATURE BATTLE GAME REVIEW: DUNGEON SAGA ORIGINS

## AN ENTRY-LEVEL DUNGEON CRAWLER FROM VETERANS MANTIC GAMES

There have been quite a lot of 'dungeon crawl'-style board games using miniatures over the years - although one could argue the genre is even more popular within the fantasy tabletop roleplaying game world, courtesy of the often widely-illogical *Dungeons & Dragons* campaigns and adventures. However, one might argue that almost all of those games pay homage in some way or another to the iconic *HeroQuest*, which has gone through a multitude of iterations without ever changing the rules or even the layout of the board all too much. Enter *Dungeon Saga Origins*, a new dungeon crawler by veteran company Mantic Games that is meant to be a beginner-friendly, rules-light genre game... but does it succeed in making us forget about the venerable classic?

### DUNGEON SAGA ORIGINS Miniature Board Game Box - Mantic Games

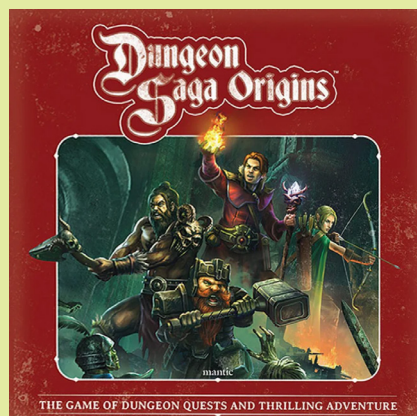
**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Story:                        0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Game System:            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Design & Artwork:      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Replayability:            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7



At first glance, *Dungeon Saga Origins* has all the familiar trappings that call back to its predecessors—miniatures, modular dungeon tiles, and straightforward, approachable gameplay. There's something comforting in that, especially for players who cut their teeth on *HeroQuest* or its spiritual successors like *Descent*. The question is whether *Dungeon Saga Origins* manages to be more than just a love letter to older games, or if it offers something fresh that might carve out a new niche in an already crowded genre.

### The Setting: Mantica

The setting of *Dungeon Saga Origins* takes players deep into the dark and dangerous world of Mantica, a land fraught with peril and ancient evils. In this world, the balance between good and evil teeters on a knife's edge, with malevolent necromancers, vicious orcs, and terrifying undead armies lurking in the shadows, threatening to engulf all in darkness. The story begins with the once-glorious city of Dolgarth, now in ruins and overrun by undead forces, as the heroes are called upon to explore these forsaken dungeons and thwart the plans of the vile necromancer

Mortibris. As they journey through the game's perilous labyrinths, players uncover long-lost secrets, forgotten relics, and remnants of ancient civilizations that once ruled Mantica. The background oozes with classic fantasy themes, evoking a timeless battle between light and dark, where heroic adventurers must rise to confront evil's resurgence and prevent a looming apocalypse.

### Components & Presentation

The first thing that strikes you about *Dungeon Saga Origins* is the quality of its components. Mantic Games has built a reputation for crafting solid, detailed miniatures, and this game is no exception. The miniatures—heroes, villains, and monsters alike—are well-sculpted, with enough detail to appeal to hobby painters, but not so intricate that they're intimidating for beginners. The dungeon tiles are modular, meaning no two games will have the same layout, a feature that adds replayability and keeps things visually interesting as you explore.

The rulebook is well-designed, featuring clear diagrams and straightforward instructions—important for a game that bills itself as beginner-friendly. However, there's a certain tension here: the desire to keep things light and accessible while still providing enough depth for seasoned players. In this, *Dungeon Saga Origins* straddles the line, but not always perfectly.





## The Game System

The rules of *Dungeon Saga Origins* are noticeably streamlined compared to more complex dungeon crawlers like *Gloomhaven* or *Descent*. Each player controls a hero with a unique set of abilities, and turns are divided into phases where heroes move, fight, and interact with the environment. Combat is resolved through a simple dice-rolling mechanic that keeps the pace brisk, but perhaps a little too brisk for players craving more tactical depth. The simplicity is ideal for newcomers or younger players, but veterans of the genre might find themselves longing for more complex interactions or the opportunity to get truly creative with their actions.

That said, there's a certain charm to *Dungeon Saga Origins*' minimalism. The game doesn't bog itself down in overwrought mechanics or layers of abilities, which makes it an excellent gateway for players looking to ease themselves into the dungeon crawl genre without the weight of heavy rulesets. In this sense, Mantic Games achieves what it set out to do: create an accessible, fast-paced adventure that doesn't intimidate new players.

## Familiarity vs. Innovation

While *Dungeon Saga Origins* is billed as beginner-friendly, one can't help but notice the heavy influence of classic *HeroQuest* DNA running through its veins. The game board, while modular, feels like a modern homage to that 1989 classic, and the mechanics, while streamlined, don't offer much in the way of true innovation. There's a definite sense of nostalgia at play here, which is a double-edged sword. For those who grew up with *HeroQuest*, it's like slipping into a pair of well-worn boots—comfortable and familiar. But for players looking for something to break new ground, *Dungeon Saga Origins* may feel like it's clinging too tightly to the past.

That's not to say the game doesn't have its moments. There are clever elements, like how the heroes' abilities synergize, and the modular board allows for plenty of dungeon-building creativity. But overall, *Dungeon Saga Origins* feels like it's playing it safe. It excels at being a solid introduction to dungeon crawlers but doesn't push the boundaries of what the genre could be.

## Conclusion

In the end, *Dungeon Saga Origins* isn't likely to dethrone *HeroQuest* or even other modern dungeon crawlers like *Descent: Legends of the Dark*. But that's not necessarily its goal. What Mantic Games has delivered is a game that's perfect for newcomers and families, a rules-light experience that brings the classic dungeon crawl feel to the table without overwhelming its players with complexity. It's an ideal entry point for those who are new to the genre or for veterans who want something they can pick up and play without a lengthy setup or rules explanation. For seasoned players, though, *Dungeon Saga Origins* may feel like a well-executed, if safe, throwback. It won't necessarily scratch that itch for a deeper, more complex adventure, but if you're after something that evokes the charm of classic dungeon crawls with a modern touch of accessibility, this could be the game for you. Ultimately, it's a question of what you're looking for: If you want nostalgia in a modern package with a low barrier to entry, *Dungeon Saga Origins* delivers in spades. But if you're seeking fresh innovation in the dungeon crawl genre, you may find it falls just a bit short of the mark.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** <https://www.manticgames.com/dungeon-saga-origins/core-game/>

# MINIATURE BATTLE GAME REVIEW: MUTANT: YEAR ZERO - ZONE WARS

## A MINIATURES BATTLE GAME IN THE POST-APOCALYPTIC MUTANT: YEAR ZERO SETTING

In the crowded landscape of tabletop miniature games, *Mutant: Year Zero - Zone Wars*, by Free League Publishing, manages to carve its own unique niche. Drawing upon the rich lore of the *Mutant: Year Zero* RPG universe, *Zone Wars* combines tactical skirmish combat with storytelling, creating a game that invites players into the irradiated, chaotic remnants of a world devastated by catastrophe. But does it succeed in melding narrative depth with fast-paced, miniatures-based gameplay? Let's dive into the details.

### MUTANT: YEAR ZERO - ZONE WARS Post-Apocalyptic Miniature Battle Game Box - Free League Publishing

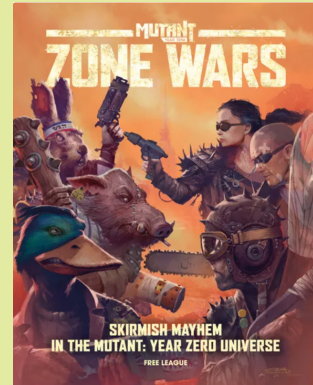
Overall: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### Setting

*Mutant Year Zero: Zone Wars* is set in a post-apocalyptic future where the world has been ravaged by environmental collapse, nuclear warfare, and societal decay. Humanity's remnants live as mutated scavengers and survivors in the wastelands, known as "The Zone." This setting is steeped in dystopian themes, where mutants and survivors scabble to survive in a harsh, unforgiving world filled with radioactive zones, dangerous creatures, and derelict ruins of a once-great civilization.

In *Zone Wars*, players take command of a small warband of characters who inhabit this dangerous environment. These warbands could be mutants with bizarre powers, human survivors clinging to the remnants of old-world technology, or even animal-mutants known as Stalkers. The game revolves around fierce skirmishes for territory, resources, and survival, with factions vying for dominance amid the chaos of the Zone. This gritty, desperate setting is full of narrative potential, giving each game session a strong sense of place and immersion.



### Components & Presentation

Free League Publishing is known for their stunning production quality, and *Mutant Year Zero: Zone Wars* is no exception. The components are nothing short of fantastic. The miniatures are intricately detailed, bringing the unique character designs of mutants, stalkers, and survivors to life. From mutated creatures with grotesque features to survivors donning patchwork armor and scavenged gear, the figures ooze personality.

The game's board tiles, which represent the sprawling, hazardous environment of the Zone, are well-designed, featuring crumbling ruins, toxic wastelands, and overgrown foliage that enhance the grim aesthetic. Card decks are sturdy and visually cohesive, maintaining the game's post-apocalyptic theme with every detail. The rulebook itself is a high-quality, full-color guide packed with atmospheric artwork and intuitive layout, making it easy for players to immerse themselves in the world of *Zone Wars*.





Characters can mutate further as they gain experience, though mutations can be both a blessing and a curse, adding a layer of unpredictability to each session.

A standout feature of Zone Wars is its campaign system. While individual skirmishes are enjoyable, the game really shines when played as part of a larger narrative. Players can develop their warbands over the course of multiple sessions, gaining resources, uncovering ancient artifacts, and mutating in strange and dangerous ways. This gives the game a strong sense of progression and storytelling that many skirmish games lack.

### Conclusion

Mutant Year Zero: Zone Wars is a compelling mix of tactical skirmish gameplay and narrative storytelling, set in an evocative, richly detailed post-apocalyptic world. Its accessible mechanics, combined with Free League Publishing's top-tier component quality, make it an excellent entry point for players new to miniatures games, while still offering enough tactical depth to satisfy veterans of the genre. While the base set's content may feel a bit limited for some, the potential for expansion and the rewarding campaign system more than make up for it.

For fans of post-apocalyptic settings, skirmish games, or those already invested in the Mutant Year Zero universe, Zone Wars is a must-try. Its blend of narrative and tactical play offers a unique experience, proving that Free League Publishing has crafted another hit in their impressive lineup.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.freeleaguepublishing.com/games/zone-wars](http://www.freeleaguepublishing.com/games/zone-wars)

The only minor downside here is that while the components are generally top-notch, some players might feel that the number of miniatures and terrain pieces in the base game could be more extensive, especially for those accustomed to large-scale skirmish games. However, expansions are available to bolster your warband and increase the game's scope.

### Game Mechanics

The mechanics of Mutant Year Zero: Zone Wars strike a balance between accessibility and tactical depth. At its core, it's a skirmish-based miniature game where players control warbands of mutants and survivors in scenarios that revolve around objectives like gathering resources, surviving ambushes, or controlling territory. Each warband is composed of distinct characters with different abilities, mutations, and equipment, giving players a wide range of tactical options.

Movement and combat are handled through a combination of dice rolling and resource management, with players needing to think ahead about how to best use their abilities and items. Each character has a unique set of mutations or skills that can drastically affect the flow of combat. For example, mutants may be able to sprout additional limbs or breathe fire, while humans may have specialized technology or scavenged weapons that turn the tide of battle.

The game also emphasizes the brutal nature of the setting, where death is a constant threat. Permanent injuries, mutations, and the ever-present danger of the Zone make each encounter a tense, high-stakes affair.



# MINIATURE BOARD GAME REVIEW: BATTLE OF GODS

## DUKIN' IT OUT IN THE NORSE PANTHEON

**Battle of Gods from Mood Publishing is an epic strategy game where players take on the roles of ancient deities battling for supremacy. Drawing from mythology and lore, this game blends tactical combat, resource management, and strategic alliances in a thrilling, competitive experience. With its highly detailed miniatures, immersive gameplay, and rich thematic depth, Battle of Gods offers a perfect mix of mythological warfare and high-stakes decision-making for both casual and hardcore gamers alike.**

### BATTLE OF GODS Arena Miniature Battle Game Box - Mood Publishing

Overall:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Story:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Game System:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Design & Artwork:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Replayability:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### Setting

The world of Battle of Gods is steeped in mythological grandeur. Players assume the roles of gods from various pantheons—whether from Greek, Egyptian, Norse, or other ancient mythologies—each vying for dominion over a fantastical land. The game’s map features diverse terrains, from sacred temples and towering mountains to dense forests and perilous seas, all ripe for conquest. The rich thematic backdrop of gods waging war over mortal realms creates a sense of scale and stakes that enhances the experience. As players gather worshippers, summon powerful mythical creatures, and shape the fate of the world, every turn feels like a chapter in an epic saga.

### Game Mechanics

The core mechanics of Battle of Gods revolve around strategic area control, resource management, and tactical combat. Each god has unique abilities and powers reflective of their mythology, allowing for varied playstyles. For example, the Greek god Zeus might command thunderous strikes and favor aggressive tactics, while the Egyptian goddess Isis excels in healing and support, aiding her armies through divine intervention.

The game is played over several rounds, with players competing for territory, summoning mythical creatures, and building up their armies of followers. Players must balance their resources—faith, power, and control points—while forging alliances or betraying their opponents at key moments. The tension builds as each player seeks to gather the most worshippers while vanquishing the armies of rival gods. The game also features dynamic combat, where special god powers and creature abilities add a layer of unpredictability to each skirmish.

In addition, Battle of Gods introduces the concept of divine artifacts, powerful relics that can turn the tide of battle or grant deities unique advantages. Acquiring these artifacts becomes a critical part of long-term strategy, requiring players to carefully plan their movements while outmaneuvering opponents.

### Components & Presentation

Battle of Gods is a visual masterpiece. The miniatures of the gods, mythical creatures, and armies are intricately detailed, bringing these legendary figures to life in stunning fashion. Each god is designed to reflect their mythology, with striking, dynamic poses and elaborate features that make them feel truly divine. The mythical creatures, from towering giants to majestic phoenixes, are equally impressive, adding both tactical diversity and visual appeal to the game.

The game board itself is beautifully illustrated, depicting a world filled with ancient ruins, magical forests, and dramatic landscapes. The artwork on the player boards, cards, and tokens is rich with cultural and mythological symbols, immersing players deeper into the lore. The color palette is vibrant but well-balanced, ensuring that important game information is clear while maintaining the grandeur of the mythological setting.





### Conclusion

Battle of Gods is a fantastic addition to the realm of strategy board games, offering players a deeply engaging and immersive experience as they step into the role of powerful deities. With its diverse pantheons, tactical depth, and stunning artwork, it delivers an exciting blend of strategy, combat, and mythology that will keep players coming back for more. Whether you're a fan of mythological lore or enjoy

complex, competitive games, Battle of Gods promises hours of epic fun, where alliances are fragile, power is fleeting, and only the strongest god will emerge victorious.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.moodpublishing.com/collections/battle-of-godswars](http://www.moodpublishing.com/collections/battle-of-godswars)

## MINIATURE BOARD GAME EXPANSION REVIEW: BATTLE OF GODS - ODIN THE ALLFATHER JOINS THE FRAY

The Odin expansion for Battle of Gods by Mood Publishing introduces the all-powerful Norse god Odin to the mythological warfare. With a singular focus on the Allfather, this expansion brings new abilities, creatures, and mechanics that add to the strategic complexity of the base game. Odin's unique powers, combined with the introduction of the Norse mythos, allow players to explore new depths of strategy as they lead their deity to victory in the divine struggle for domination.

**BATTLE OF GODS - ODIN**  
Arena Miniature Battle Game Expansion  
Box - Mood Publishing

**Overall:** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Game System: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8





## The Setting

In this expansion, the setting draws deeply from Norse mythology. As Odin, the player steps into a rugged, war-torn land filled with the echoes of Viking sagas. The expansion shifts focus to the mythic realms surrounding Yggdrasil, the World Tree, and its influence across the nine worlds. This bleak and icy setting, paired with the harsh realities of Norse warfare, brings a fresh atmosphere to the Battle of Gods experience. The thematic depth of Viking legends, where destiny, sacrifice, and valor are paramount, permeates every part of this expansion, adding weight to Odin's battles.

## Game System

The Odin expansion primarily revolves around a single deity, Odin, and introduces mechanics that allow players to fully embrace his role as a god of wisdom, war, and prophecy. Odin's unique ability to influence fate plays a central role in this expansion. Players can gain and use "Fate Tokens" to manipulate battle outcomes, predict enemy moves, and tilt the game in their favor—just as Odin foresees and shapes the future in Norse legend. This mechanic adds a deeper level of strategic planning, forcing opponents to think twice before making bold moves.

Additionally, Odin can summon iconic creatures from Norse mythology such as ravens, wolves, and other entities that reflect his all-seeing nature and command over the battlefield. These mythological beings serve as powerful reinforcements, adding new layers of tactical options without overwhelming the base game's mechanics. The inclusion of these creatures gives players both thematic and practical tools to leverage Odin's power effectively.

## Components & Presentation

The Odin expansion features beautifully crafted components that reflect the power and mystery of the Allfather. The Odin miniature is a standout, sculpted with incredible detail, capturing the regal and warlike essence of the god. His figure is draped in a cloak with his ravens, Huginn and Muninn, perched on his shoulders, symbolizing his ability to gather knowledge and oversee the battlefield.

The design of the cards and tokens leans heavily into Nordic motifs, with runic symbols, icy landscapes, and stark illustrations of Odin's legendary items, such as his spear Gungnir. The overall visual presentation of the expansion is cohesive with the base game while adding a distinct Norse flavor. The color palette shifts towards cold blues and grays, emphasizing the frozen realms of Norse myth and the weight of Odin's decisions in the great battle of the gods.

## Conclusion

The Odin expansion for Battle of Gods elevates the base game by introducing one of mythology's most iconic deities in a way that feels both powerful and balanced. Odin's ability to manipulate fate brings a unique strategic layer to the gameplay, making each move feel significant and thought-provoking. Whether you're a fan of Norse mythology or simply looking to add more depth and variety to your Battle of Gods sessions, this expansion delivers a compelling and immersive experience centered around the wisdom and might of the Allfather.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.moodpublishing.com/collections/battle-of-godswars](http://www.moodpublishing.com/collections/battle-of-godswars)



# MINIATURE BOARD GAME REVIEW: BATTLE OF GODS - HEL

## DESCENDING INTO THE NORSE UNDERWORLD

The HEL expansion for Battle of Gods by Mood Publishing adds a chilling new element to the game with the introduction of Hel, the Norse goddess of death. This single-champion expansion brings a focus on life, death, and resurrection, enriching the core mechanics of Battle of Gods while introducing new strategic possibilities. Whether you're already a fan of the base game or seeking a fresh challenge, the HEL expansion offers a unique twist on mythological warfare that promises darker, more complex gameplay.

### BATTLE OF GODS - HEL Arena Miniature Battle Game Expansion Box - Mood Publishing

Overall:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Story:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Game System:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Design & Artwork:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Replayability:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### Setting

In this expansion, players step into the icy, shadowy realm of Niflheim, Hel's kingdom in Norse mythology. Hel herself is a striking figure, embodying both beauty and decay as the ruler of the underworld. The expansion leans heavily into its grim, death-centric theme, creating a brooding atmosphere where every battle is steeped in the duality of life and death. The desolate, frozen landscape of Niflheim serves as a grim reminder of Hel's dominion, as she commands the souls of the dead and influences the battlefield in unique ways.

### Game Mechanics

The HEL expansion introduces Hel as a powerful champion, with her own set of nine unique champion cards that reflect her necromantic abilities. These cards allow her to influence the flow of the game by manipulating life and death—she can raise fallen warriors, boost her own abilities, and attack rivals with devastating precision. Hel's power in the game is thematic and strategic, focusing on death's inevitability and the eerie control she has over the battlefield. Hel's abilities are tied to death mechanics, making her a formidable opponent. Players controlling her can use her champion cards to manipulate both their own forces and their enemies, keeping the game fresh and unpredictable. The expansion does not add complicated new systems but instead enhances the existing ruleset with Hel's death-oriented gameplay, making it easy to integrate into the core game.

### Components & Presentation

The design of the HEL expansion is striking, with a beautifully sculpted miniature of Hel that captures her dual nature—half of her body is decayed and skeletal, while the other half remains youthful and regal. This visually represents her power over both life and death. The artwork on the champion cards follows a similarly dark aesthetic, featuring cold tones and intricate illustrations that bring Hel's underworld to life. The components are designed to fit seamlessly with the core game, and the attention to detail is clear. The color palette is predominantly icy blues and ghostly grays, which reinforce the expansion's chilling theme. This makes Hel's presence not just felt through gameplay but also through the visual experience.

### Conclusion

The HEL expansion for Battle of Gods offers a darker, more thematic twist on the base game's mythological battles. Hel's unique mechanics around life and death create new tactical opportunities, adding depth without overwhelming players with overly complex rules. The stunning design and thematic richness of the expansion make it an excellent addition for those looking to explore a more macabre side of the game. Whether you're commanding armies of the dead or battling for control of the underworld, HEL delivers an unforgettable experience that will appeal to both veteran and new players.

Dirk Vandereyken

More info: [www.moodpublishing.com/collections/battle-of-godswars](http://www.moodpublishing.com/collections/battle-of-godswars)

# MINIATURE BOARD GAME REVIEW:

## DEEP ROCK GALACTIC - THE BOARD GAME

### ADAPTING A COMPUTER GAME FAVORITE

**Deep Rock Galactic: The Board Game** is an exciting co-op board game adaptation of the popular video game developed by Ghost Ship Games. Designed by Ole Steiness and published by MOOD Publishing, the game brings the frenetic action and camaraderie of space dwarves mining in alien caves to the tabletop. Players must band together to explore hostile underground environments, mine valuable minerals, and fend off waves of monstrous creatures. The game, for 1-4 players, promises a tactical, fast-paced experience full of teamwork, strategic thinking, and epic battles.

**DEEP ROCK GALACTIC: THE BOARDGAME**  
**Miniature Battle Game**  
**Box - Mood Publishing**

**Overall:** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Game System: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



#### Setting

The game's setting is the dangerous, dark planet of Hoxxes IV, where players assume the roles of dwarven miners sent deep underground by a mining corporation. As in the video game, the board game features a hostile environment full of treacherous caverns and swarms of alien monsters known as Glyphids. The mission is simple: mine precious resources and return to the surface alive. The immersive sci-fi setting is enhanced by the board's modular design, which allows for a variety of mission setups, keeping each playthrough fresh and challenging. From hazardous cave-ins to alien ambushes, the game successfully captures the perilous nature of deep-space mining operations.

#### Game Mechanics

Deep Rock Galactic: The Board Game is a fully cooperative experience, where players must rely on each other's unique abilities to survive and succeed. Each player takes on one of four distinct roles: the Gunner, Driller, Scout, or Engineer, each with specialized tools and skills. The gameplay revolves around exploring the cave system, mining minerals, and dealing with waves of increasingly dangerous enemies.

One of the game's core mechanics is its action economy. Players take turns managing movement, mining, fighting, and building defenses. Combat is fast-paced, requiring players to carefully plan how to use their limited actions each round. The cooperative nature of the game is crucial, as success depends heavily on players complementing each other's strengths. As missions progress, swarms of enemies—ranging from small bugs to massive boss creatures—become a constant threat, forcing players to make quick, tactical decisions. The game also features a variety of mission objectives, providing diversity and replayability. The unpredictability of monster attacks, combined with the ever-shifting cave environment, adds tension and excitement to every session.

#### Components & Presentation

The physical components of Deep Rock Galactic: The Board Game are impressive and extensive. The game comes in a large box packed with beautifully detailed miniatures of dwarves, aliens, and other essential pieces. The miniatures enhance the visual appeal and immersion of the game, with each dwarf and enemy model meticulously designed to resemble their video game counterparts. The modular board tiles are sturdy and allow for customizable cave setups, keeping the terrain dynamic and varied.

While the components are highly praised for their quality, some players may find the number of pieces and the complexity of setup a bit overwhelming at first. The rulebook provides thorough explanations, but navigating the sheer volume of tokens, dice, and cards can be intimidating for beginners.





The game's visual design leans heavily into the video game's aesthetic, with dark, moody cave environments and vibrant, colorful dwarven characters. The design of the player boards is functional and thematic, allowing players to track their actions, health, and inventory easily. However, some feedback indicates that organizing the components post-game could benefit from clearer labeling for the miniatures.

### Conclusion

Deep Rock Galactic: The Board Game offers a thrilling cooperative experience that fans of the original video game and tabletop gamers alike will enjoy. The blend of tactical action, teamwork, and resource management ensures each playthrough feels tense and rewarding.

With a rich, immersive setting, high-quality components, and varied missions, the game delivers an exciting and challenging experience. While the complexity and component-heavy nature might be daunting for some, once players dive into the game, they'll find a deep, cooperative adventure that captures the spirit of space dwarves braving hostile alien caverns. For fans of sci-fi, co-op, and tactical strategy games, Deep Rock Galactic is a solid addition to the tabletop gaming world.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.moodpublishing.com/products/deep-rock-galactic-big-box](http://www.moodpublishing.com/products/deep-rock-galactic-big-box)

# MINIATURE BOARD GAME REVIEW: WAR OF THE RING SECOND EDITION

## RECREATING THE BATTLES OF MIDDLE-EARTH

**War of the Ring: Second Edition, by Ares Games, is an epic strategy board game that immerses players into the rich lore of J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. In this asymmetrical game, two to four players assume the roles of either the Free Peoples of Middle-earth or the Shadow Armies of Sauron. Each side aims for victory through military conquest or, more uniquely, by either destroying or claiming the One Ring. With a combination of deep strategy, thematic richness, and high replayability, this game delivers a sweeping experience for both Tolkien fans and strategy enthusiasts alike.**

### War of the Ring Second Edition Miniature Wargame Box - Ares Games

#### Overall:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

#### Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

#### Game System:

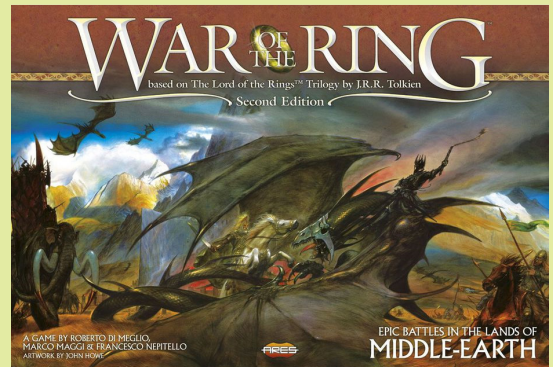
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

#### Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

#### Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



### The Setting

Middle-earth serves as the grand stage for the war between light and darkness. The game is set during the final stages of the Third Age, when the armies of Sauron are massing to crush the free nations, and the Fellowship of the Ring embarks on its perilous quest to destroy the One Ring in the fires of Mount Doom. The richly illustrated board depicts the lands of Gondor, Rohan, Mordor, and beyond, featuring cities, strongholds, and natural landmarks like the Misty Mountains. Every aspect of the setting feels lovingly crafted, allowing players to immerse themselves in the epic struggle between good and evil.

The game features a sprawling map of Middle-earth, divided into regions where armies can march, fortify, or clash. As the Free Peoples, you'll rally your forces in Minas Tirith, Helm's Deep, or Rivendell, while the Shadow player assembles massive armies from Mordor, Isengard, and Harad to sweep across the continent. The backdrop of the world is rich with narrative tension—each move on the board is a reflection of the story's larger stakes, and every battle feels like a critical chapter in the history of Middle-earth.

### The Game System

War of the Ring shines in its ability to marry complex strategy with thematic storytelling. At its core, the game is asymmetric: the Shadow and the Free Peoples play fundamentally different games, each with distinct advantages and challenges.

### Action Dice System

The game uses an innovative action dice system, which drives the flow of each round. At the start of a turn, players roll their action dice, which dictate the types of actions available that round. The dice have six faces, offering options like:

- Character Actions: Move or activate characters, whether it's guiding the Fellowship closer to Mount Doom or moving the Nazgûl to hunt them down.
- Army Actions: Maneuver armies or launch assaults on enemy positions, essential for both sides to achieve their military goals.
- Event Actions: Draw or play powerful event cards, which represent pivotal moments from the books and give players access to game-altering abilities.
- Muster Actions: Raise troops or advance the political track to bring reluctant nations into the war.

This action dice system adds a layer of unpredictability and strategic flexibility. Each side must adapt to their dice rolls while still pursuing long-term objectives. The choices you make during each round feel weighty and consequential, reinforcing the game's epic scope.





### **Asymmetric Gameplay**

The two sides play radically different roles in the game. The Shadow Player commands overwhelming military forces from the outset, controlling the armies of Sauron, Saruman, and the Southrons and Easterlings. Their primary objective is to conquer key strongholds of the Free Peoples, and they can pour endless reinforcements onto the map, capturing territories with ruthless efficiency. The Shadow player's strength lies in their military power, with vast armies capable of overrunning the defenses of Gondor and Rohan.

Meanwhile, the Free Peoples Player must carefully balance military defense with the secretive movement of the Fellowship. Their armies are smaller and more fragile, and many of the Free Peoples nations, such as Rohan and Gondor, begin the game politically inactive. The Free Peoples player must work to activate these nations and prepare them for war, all while protecting their borders from Sauron's forces. Victory for the Free Peoples can come through either military resistance—holding out long enough to frustrate Sauron's plans—or by successfully guiding Frodo and the Fellowship to Mount Doom to destroy the One Ring.

### **The Fellowship of the Ring**

The journey of the Fellowship is central to the Free Peoples' strategy and is handled through a hidden movement mechanic. The Fellowship is represented by a single figure on the map, but its exact location is kept secret from the Shadow player. As the Fellowship moves towards Mordor, the Shadow attempts to locate and corrupt Frodo, using

Nazgûl, military forces, and event cards to hunt them down. Each move increases the chance of detection, and every reveal of the Fellowship's location can push Frodo closer to corruption, represented by a corruption track. If Frodo becomes too corrupted, the game is lost, so the Free Peoples must manage his progress carefully while still advancing the quest to destroy the Ring.

The Fellowship's companions—such as Aragorn, Legolas, and Gandalf—can leave Frodo's side to lead armies or perform special tasks, adding another strategic layer to the game. Players must decide when and how to break the Fellowship, as doing so can shift the balance of power on the battlefield but leaves Frodo more vulnerable to the Shadow's pursuit.

### **Political Track**

In addition to military and Fellowship mechanics, the game features a political track that determines the involvement of various nations in the war. The Free Peoples start with their nations largely unwilling to fight, and must work to activate them and bring them into the war effort. For example, Rohan and Gondor cannot be fully mobilized until they are under immediate threat, forcing the Free Peoples player to balance defense with political maneuvers. Meanwhile, the Shadow seeks to crush nations before they can join the war, creating a race against time for both sides.

### **Event Cards**

Event cards add yet another dimension to the gameplay, representing key moments from the narrative.





Each player has a deck of event cards that can be drawn and played during the game. These cards allow players to recruit special characters, trigger powerful abilities, or influence the course of battles. The cards are divided into Character and Strategy decks, giving players the flexibility to focus on hero-based events or military strategies. Timing the use of these cards can create dramatic turning points, making them essential tools in both tactical maneuvers and storytelling.

### **Victory Conditions**

Victory in War of the Ring can be achieved in multiple ways, adding strategic depth to the game. The Shadow Player can win by either corrupting the Ring-bearer, preventing the destruction of the Ring, or by capturing a set number of Free Peoples strongholds. The Free Peoples Player can win either by successfully destroying the One Ring in Mount Doom or by capturing specific Shadow strongholds and surviving the military onslaught long enough to outlast the Shadow's offensive.

This dual victory condition system forces both sides to pursue their objectives carefully, constantly balancing military and narrative elements. The tension of whether to focus on destroying the Ring or defending strongholds creates an ever-present sense of urgency.

### **Design & Artwork**

Ares Games has done a remarkable job with the production quality of War of the Ring. The game board is a beautifully detailed map of Middle-earth, featuring lush artwork that

evokes the varied landscapes of Tolkien's world. The miniatures are finely sculpted, with distinct armies for the Free Peoples and the Shadow, and iconic characters like Gandalf, Aragorn, and the Witch-king are represented by highly detailed figures. The game components—dice, cards, and player boards—are all of high quality, enhancing the tactile experience of the game. The design helps reinforce the thematic elements, making players feel fully immersed in the epic conflict. The attention to detail in the miniatures and the map elevates the gameplay experience, capturing the grandeur and tension of the War of the Ring.

### **Conclusion**

War of the Ring Second Edition is a masterpiece of thematic and strategic board gaming. Its blend of deep, asymmetric mechanics and immersive storytelling makes it one of the most engaging and challenging games on the market. While the rules are complex and may take some time to fully grasp, the experience is immensely rewarding for those willing to invest in it. With its rich strategic layers, detailed components, and faithful adherence to Tolkien's world, War of the Ring offers an unparalleled gaming experience. Whether you're leading the charge at Helm's Deep or guiding Frodo through the perils of Mordor, every moment feels like a critical piece of a grand saga. This game is a must-have for any fan of epic wargames or Tolkien's timeless story.

**More info:** [www.aresgames.eu/games/war-of-the-ring-line/war-of-the-ring-second-edition](http://www.aresgames.eu/games/war-of-the-ring-line/war-of-the-ring-second-edition)

Dirk Vandereyken



# MINIATURE BOARD GAME SUPPLEMENT REVIEW:

## WAR OF THE RING SECOND EDITION - KINGS OF MIDDLE-EARTH

### ROYALS REIGN OVER THE BATTLEFIELD

**War of the Ring: Kings of Middle-Earth**, the latest expansion to the acclaimed War of the Ring series, brings a fresh dynamic to the classic strategy game. Known for its grand scale, deep strategic play, and immersive lore, War of the Ring is often regarded as one of the best Middle-Earth adaptations in board gaming. This expansion focuses on the leadership and choices of the rulers of Gondor, Rohan, and other factions, providing new layers of strategic and thematic depth. Let's take a closer look.

#### War of the Ring Second Edition - Kings of Middle-Earth Miniature Wargame Box - Ares Games

##### Overall:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

##### Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

##### Game System:

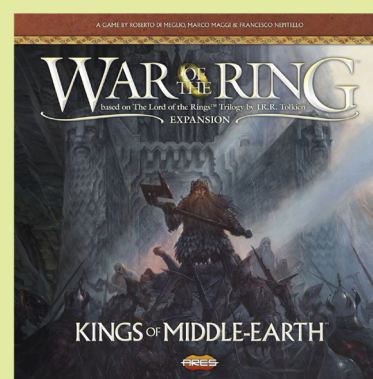
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

##### Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

##### Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### The Setting

Kings of Middle-Earth shines a spotlight on the rulers and lords who shaped the fate of the Free Peoples during the War of the Ring. This expansion dives deeper into the political and leadership struggles faced by Middle-Earth's greatest kings, such as Théoden of Rohan, Denethor of Gondor, and other pivotal figures.

### The Game System

The heart of War of the Ring: Kings of Middle-Earth lies in its introduction of new leader mechanics, representing the rulers of the Free Peoples. Each of these leaders, including major figures like Théoden, Denethor, and others, brings unique abilities to their faction. However, these abilities come at a cost, as the kings' decisions often mirror the personal struggles they face in the lore. For example, Denethor's leadership can be both a blessing and a curse, as his descent into madness might weaken the resolve of Gondor in critical moments.

One of the major features of the expansion is the Burden of Leadership mechanic, which introduces a dynamic where rulers can become ineffective or even detrimental under extreme pressure. Players must manage their leaders carefully, weighing their strengths against their potential downfall. This creates compelling tension, as overly relying on any single leader might backfire at key moments in the game. The expansion also deepens the game's strategic depth by incorporating new event cards and political maneuvers that highlight the political struggles within the Free Peoples. The use of diplomacy becomes more critical as the kings seek to rally their allies or forestall the tide of Sauron's armies, adding some cool complexity to the decision-making.

### Design & Artwork

Visually, Kings of Middle-Earth continues the high standards set by previous War of the Ring expansions. The new leader miniatures are beautifully sculpted, capturing the regal yet battle-worn nature of these rulers. The detailed designs of Théoden, Denethor, and other characters reflect their inner turmoil and the burdens they bear in the fight against Sauron.

### Conclusion

War of the Ring: Kings of Middle-Earth is a worthy and exciting expansion that enriches the base game with new layers of strategy and thematic storytelling. By focusing on the leadership struggles of the Free Peoples, the expansion adds a fresh narrative and mechanical depth that will challenge even veteran players. The Burden of Leadership mechanic, in particular, is a standout feature, requiring careful decision-making and adding more weight to the roles of rulers in the game.

**More info:** [www.aresgames.eu/games/war-of-the-ring-line/kings-of-middle-earth](http://www.aresgames.eu/games/war-of-the-ring-line/kings-of-middle-earth)

Dirk Vandereyken

# MINIATURE BOARD GAME SUPPLEMENT REVIEW:

## WAR OF THE RING SECOND EDITION - LORDS OF MIDDLE-EARTH

### BRINGING THE TRUE MASTERS OF MIDDLE-EARTH TO THE TABLE

**Lords of Middle-Earth is the first expansion for War of the Ring Second Edition by Ares Games, and it enriches the core game by adding some of the most powerful and influential characters from Tolkien's lore. With a focus on the Elves, Dwarves, Istari, and even the Ringwraiths, this expansion delves deeper into the mystical and political powerhouses that shaped the outcome of the War of the Ring. While the core game already offers a dynamic experience, Lords of Middle-Earth brings new characters, mechanics, and event cards to the table.**

**War of the Ring Second Edition - Lords of Middle-Earth**  
**Miniature Wargame**  
**Box - Ares Games**


**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:                            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:                0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:         0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:               0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



#### The Setting

Lords of Middle-Earth emphasizes the roles of the great leaders and mystical figures whose influence was felt even if they didn't lead armies or embark on dangerous quests. It brings to life figures like Elrond, Galadriel, and Sauron's most feared lieutenant, the Witch-king, giving them tangible, game-altering roles. With these new characters comes an expanded sense of narrative and strategic possibility, representing not just brute military force but the more subtle influences of wisdom, magic, and fear. The expansion also touches on the unseen figures behind the war, including the enigmatic Saruman the White and the mysterious powers of the Elven Rings of Power, deepening the players' immersion into the lore.

#### The Game System

Lords of Middle-Earth enhances the gameplay by introducing new versions of key characters, alternate game rules for the Ring-bearers, and mechanics involving the fate of the Elven Rings and other artifacts of power. These additions create new layers of tactical complexity, allowing players to experience the War of the Ring in ways that feel both familiar and refreshingly different.

#### Alternate Characters

One of the most significant features of Lords of Middle-Earth is the introduction of alternate versions of key characters. The Free Peoples can now choose between two versions of Gandalf: Gandalf the Grey or Gandalf the White, each with unique abilities that significantly alter the course of the game. For instance, Gandalf the White is a more powerful version of the wizard, but unlocking him means sacrificing Gandalf the Grey and ensuring he is removed from play at the right moment. This forces the Free Peoples player to make a critical strategic decision: when to elevate Gandalf to his White form for the greater good, knowing that the timing could be the difference between victory and defeat.

The Shadow player also gains access to an alternate version of the Witch-king, the Black Captain, who can influence the game in different ways compared to the standard Witch-king. These alternate versions of key characters provide more flexibility and replayability, as players can experiment with new strategies based on the characters they choose to emphasize.

#### New Rules for the Ring-bearers

The expansion introduces alternative paths for the Ring-bearers, allowing for Frodo and Sam to be played in different ways. For example, players now have the option to use either the traditional Frodo as the Ring-bearer or use alternate mechanics involving other key characters like Boromir or even Aragorn. These variations on the Fellowship's journey offer the Free Peoples new strategic choices while heightening the tension of how the Ring is transported.

With these new Ring-bearer rules, players can choose to balance the Ring's corruption differently, shifting the focus on how far Frodo can travel before the ring begins to corrupt him.



This element enhances the depth of the Fellowship's journey, as there are more risks and benefits to weigh when deciding who will bear the responsibility of carrying the Ring.

### **Elven Rings of Power**

One of the more subtle but intriguing mechanics Lords of Middle-Earth adds involves the Elven Rings of Power. These mighty artifacts can now be used more dynamically in the game, giving the Free Peoples access to powerful but risky abilities. Elrond and Galadriel, both new playable characters, have unique roles in influencing the use of these rings.

For example, the Elven Rings can help the Free Peoples mitigate bad dice rolls, but their use comes at a cost. If these rings are used too freely, the Shadow player gains greater opportunities to influence the war, adding a significant risk-reward dynamic. The rings thus become more than just symbolic artifacts; they are active tools in the players' strategies, allowing for creative and high-stakes play.

### **The Lords of Middle-earth in Action**

The expansion gives the Free Peoples more ways to activate their political and military efforts through the wisdom of Elrond and Galadriel. Both of these powerful lords can influence the political track, helping the Free Peoples nations become active in the war more quickly, which is a crucial factor in their ability to survive the early Shadow onslaught.

Galadriel's wisdom can be used to bolster the defenses of Lothlórien or help guide the Fellowship, while Elrond's role is more politically focused, helping to bring the Elves into the fight sooner.

For the Shadow player, the Witch-king's alternate form as the Black Captain offers a new military advantage, providing a fearsome leader who can dominate the battlefield and push the Shadow's military conquest forward with even greater force. The expansion also introduces new event cards that allow the Shadow to tap into deeper reserves of power, whether by unleashing more of Sauron's will or by corrupting key Free Peoples leaders.

### **Event Cards and Replayability**

Lords of Middle-Earth comes with a host of new event cards, tailored specifically to the new characters and abilities introduced in the expansion. These cards allow players to recreate some of the most iconic moments from the books, such as Galadriel's resistance to Sauron's influence or the



Witch-king's growing dominance over the battlefield. The new event cards add variety to the game and ensure that each playthrough feels different, as players can mix and match these new cards with those from the base game to create unique scenarios and strategies.

The combination of new event cards, alternate characters, and expanded mechanics for the Ring-bearers means that Lords of Middle-Earth dramatically increases the replayability of War of the Ring. Players will find themselves experimenting with new character combinations and strategic approaches in every game, leading to endless possibilities and hours of engaging gameplay.

### **Design & Artwork**

Visually, Kings of Middle-Earth continues the high standards set by previous War of the Ring expansions. The new leader miniatures are beautifully sculpted, capturing the regal yet battle-worn nature of these rulers. The detailed designs of Théoden, Denethor, and other characters reflect their inner turmoil and the burdens they bear in the fight against Sauron.

### **Conclusion**

War of the Ring: Kings of Middle-Earth is a worthy and exciting expansion that enriches the base game with new layers of strategy and thematic storytelling. By focusing on the leadership struggles of the Free Peoples, the expansion adds a fresh narrative and mechanical depth that will challenge even veteran players. The Burden of Leadership mechanic, in particular, is a standout feature, requiring careful decision-making and adding more weight to the roles of rulers in the game.

**More info:** [www.aresgames.eu/games/war-of-the-ring-line/lords-of-middle-earth](http://www.aresgames.eu/games/war-of-the-ring-line/lords-of-middle-earth)

Dirk Vandereyken

# MINIATURE BOARD GAME SUPPLEMENT REVIEW -

## WAR OF THE RING SECOND EDITION: WARRIORS OF MIDDLE-EARTH

### SPOTLIGHTING THE TRUE FIGHTERS OF MIDDLE-EARTH

**War of the Ring: Warriors of Middle-Earth** is an expansion for the Second Edition of the iconic War of the Ring board game, adding new dimensions of strategy and excitement to an already beloved experience. While the base game focuses on the grand armies and the iconic Fellowship's journey, this expansion introduces the unsung heroes and creatures of Middle-Earth: the Ents, the Dead Men of Dunharrow, the Great Eagles, and more. With these new factions and their unique abilities, Warriors of Middle-Earth breathes fresh life into the game.

**War of the Ring Second Edition: Lords of Middle-Earth**  
**Miniature Wargame**  
**Box - Ares Games**


**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:                            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:                0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:         0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:               0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



#### The Setting

In the epic world of Middle-Earth, battles are not fought by armies alone. Many forces, from the wild creatures of the land to ancient and mystical beings, play a crucial role in the fate of the world. Warriors of Middle-Earth highlights the contributions of these often overlooked but vital allies of both the Free Peoples and the Shadow.

#### The Game System

The most significant change that Warriors of Middle-Earth introduces is the inclusion of new factions that previously existed only as minor or thematic elements in the base game. These factions—Ents, Dead Men of Dunharrow, Great Eagles, Corsairs of Umbar, Wild Hillmen, and Spiders—bring entirely new abilities and strategies to both the Free Peoples and the Shadow. The mechanics for summoning and using these warriors revolve around a new set of faction dice and cards. Players must earn the allegiance of these factions, which adds a new layer of strategy. For example, the Free Peoples may summon the Great Eagles to swoop in and turn the tide of battle, while the Shadow can call upon the Spiders to disrupt enemy plans with poison and ambush tactics. These warriors are not part of the traditional armies but instead represent powerful forces that can change the course of the game in unique ways. The introduction of these factions creates more asymmetry in gameplay, offering distinct strategies depending on the chosen faction. The Ents, for instance, can be devastating to the Shadow's armies when unleashed, but they require careful timing and coordination to be effective. Meanwhile, the Dead Men of Dunharrow provide a critical advantage in certain areas but are limited in scope. On the Shadow side, the Corsairs and Wild Hillmen offer guerrilla-style tactics, allowing for more flexibility.

#### Design & Artwork

Ares Games continues their tradition of outstanding production quality with Warriors of Middle-Earth. The new miniatures for the Eagles, Ents, and other factions are beautifully sculpted, each capturing the essence of their respective groups. The Ents, for example, are imposing and majestic, while the Dead Men of Dunharrow carry an eerie, spectral presence. The level of detail in these miniatures is consistent with the base game, ensuring that they feel like an integrated part of the world of Middle-Earth.

#### Conclusion

War of the Ring: Kings of Middle-Earth is a worthy and exciting expansion that enriches the base game with new layers of strategy and thematic storytelling. By focusing on the leadership struggles of the Free Peoples, the expansion adds a fresh narrative and mechanical depth that will challenge even veteran players. The Burden of Leadership mechanic, in particular, is a standout feature, requiring careful decision-making and adding more weight to the roles of rulers in the game.

**More info:** [www.aresgames.eu/games/war-of-the-ring-line/kings-of-middle-earth](http://www.aresgames.eu/games/war-of-the-ring-line/kings-of-middle-earth)

Dirk Vandereyken



# MINIATURE WARGAME REVIEW - CONQUEST: THE LAST ARGUMENT OF KINGS

## NORDS VS CITY STATES TWO PLAYER STARTER SET

### EPIC BATTLES IN A MYTHICAL FANTASY WORLD

**Conquest: The Last Argument of Kings Nords vs City States Two Player Starter Set by Para Bellum Wargames is a fantastic entry point into the world of Conquest. Set in a rich, mythologically inspired universe, this starter set offers everything two players need to dive into the epic battles between the warlike Nords and the disciplined City States. With highly detailed miniatures, an elegant rules system, and a compelling narrative, this two-player starter set is perfect for both new players and veterans of tabletop wargames.**

**Conquest: The Last Argument of Kings  
Nords vs City States Two Player Starter Set  
Miniature Wargame  
Box - Para Bellum Games**

**Overall:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



This box brings to life the savage, raiding culture of the Nords as they clash against the methodical and structured armies of the City States, drawing on both Norse and Greco-Roman themes. The game stands out for its tactical depth, beautiful miniatures, and streamlined gameplay, making it an excellent way to experience the larger Conquest system.

### The Setting

Conquest: The Last Argument of Kings is set in a world filled with ancient myths, gods, and civilizations locked in eternal conflict. The Nords represent a savage, war-driven culture inspired by Norse mythology, with raiders, giants, and monsters making up their ranks. They are fiercely independent and thrive on battle, raiding weaker foes to fuel their desire for glory and survival. Their way of life is harsh, and their armies reflect their brutal culture, relying on ferocity and strength to overwhelm their enemies.

Opposing them in this set are the City States, a faction that embodies the discipline and intellectual prowess of ancient Greco-Roman societies. Their armies are made up of highly trained warriors, supported by sophisticated war machines and constructs powered by ancient knowledge. The City States' philosophy of balance between body and mind is reflected in their armies, which strike a balance between brute force and tactical precision. This setting provides a rich backdrop for the skirmishes and battles that unfold on the tabletop, making every confrontation feel like a clash of civilizations.

### The Game System

The Nords vs City States starter set features the same core mechanics found in the larger Conquest system, making it a great introduction to the rules for new players. At the heart of Conquest is a rank-and-file system, where players command large regiments of troops arranged in ranks, much like traditional mass battle wargames. However, the game distinguishes itself with its unique activation system and streamlined gameplay that keeps battles engaging and dynamic.

### Dynamic Activation System

One of the most notable mechanics of Conquest is its alternating activation system, where players secretly plan the activation order of their units by placing command cards facedown. When it's time for a unit to activate, the top card is revealed, and the corresponding unit takes its turn. This creates a layer of tactical depth, as players must anticipate their opponent's moves and plan their own actions accordingly.

This system adds tension and excitement to each round, as no two turns play out the same. The order in which units activate can be the difference between a well-executed charge or a devastating counter-attack, giving players room to bluff, strategize, and react to their opponent's decisions.

### Regiment and Unit Mechanics

The starter set includes detailed regiments for both the Nords and the City States, allowing players to explore the strengths and weaknesses of each faction. The Nords focus on aggressive, hard-hitting units that excel in close combat, such as the Blooded—a fierce leader who can inspire nearby troops to fight harder—and Stalkers, swift and deadly raiders who can flank and harass the enemy.

In contrast, the City States rely on their disciplined infantry and powerful constructs to hold the line and counter-attack with precision. Their Hoplites are heavily armed and armored warriors who excel in defensive formations, while the Phalangites can form deadly pike walls, making it difficult for enemies to engage them head-on. The City States also employ Minotaurs, massive and imposing constructs that combine brute strength with tactical versatility, acting as both powerful frontline fighters and support units.

Each faction plays distinctly, and the starter set does an excellent job of showcasing the strengths of both armies. Players must learn to use the Nords' aggression and mobility to overwhelm the City States before their disciplined formations and constructs can take control of the battlefield.

### Command and Control

The command and control mechanics in Conquest are both intuitive and strategic. Each army has a leader, such as the Nords' Blooded or the City States' Polemarch, and these leaders play a crucial role in determining how efficiently units operate on the battlefield. Leaders can issue commands that enhance the performance of nearby units or even turn the tide of battle by inspiring troops to fight beyond their normal limits.

The importance of leaders also introduces tactical considerations about their placement and use. Losing a leader can severely impact an army's ability to function at full efficiency, making them prime targets for enemy assaults. On the other hand, keeping them too far from the action limits their effectiveness. This balance adds an extra layer of strategy to the game.

### Design & Artwork

Para Bellum Wargames is known for producing high-quality miniatures, and the Nords vs City States starter set is no exception. The miniatures are beautifully sculpted, with intricate details that capture the unique flavor of each faction.



The Nords' units, from their fierce raiders to the towering Ugr, feel savage and primal, while the City States' hoplites and minotaurs exude strength and discipline.

The starter set includes everything needed to get started, including:

- High-quality miniatures for both factions
- Command cards and markers for the activation system
- A condensed rulebook for quick learning
- A set of dice and measuring tools

The attention to detail in both the sculpting and the overall presentation is impressive, giving players miniatures they can be proud to paint and display. The visual distinction between the Nords' wild, barbaric forces and the City States' orderly, regimented soldiers further enhances the thematic experience.

### Conclusion

One of the key strengths of this starter set is its balance. While the two factions play very differently, the matchups feel fair, allowing both sides to showcase their strengths. The Nords' ability to launch fast, brutal attacks can catch the City States off guard, but the latter's disciplined formations and powerful constructs can turn the tide if they can hold the line. This balance of power makes each game exciting and tense, with the outcome always hanging in the balance.

The box also provides a perfect learning curve for players new to Conquest. With enough units to explore different tactics without overwhelming newcomers, it's an ideal starting point that offers plenty of depth and replayability.

**More info:** [www.https://www.para-bellum.com](https://www.para-bellum.com)

Dirk Vandereyken



# MINIATURE WARGAME REVIEW - CONQUEST: SORCERER KINGS

## FIRST BLOOD WAR BAND

### WIELDING MAGIC INTO BATTLE

The world of Conquest continues to expand, and with the release of Sorcerer Kings: First Blood Warband, Para Bellum Games dives deeper into the dark, mystical realms of their ever-growing universe. As an expansion for the acclaimed skirmish wargame First Blood, this set introduces players to the enigmatic Sorcerer Kings, a faction defined by arcane power, ruthless ambition, and a thirst for domination. But does this addition truly stand out in an already rich lineup of factions? Let's delve into the details and find out.

**Conquest: Sorcerer Kings First Blood Warband**  
**Miniature Wargame**  
**Box - Para Bellum Games**


**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:                            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:                0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:        0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Replayability:               0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



#### The Setting

The Sorcerer Kings are a faction steeped in arcane knowledge and dark ambition, hailing from a mysterious and ancient realm where magic is both a tool of power and a dangerous obsession. Once noble rulers of powerful kingdoms, the Sorcerer Kings delved too deep into the forbidden arts, seeking immortality and absolute control over life and death. Their desire for arcane mastery led them down a path of corruption, as their kingdoms fell under the shadow of their dark experiments, and their once-loyal subjects became twisted manifestations of their masters' power.

In the world of Conquest, the Sorcerer Kings operate as both scholars and tyrants, their ambitions extending far beyond mortal understanding. They have unlocked secrets of the cosmos that allow them to bend reality, harnessing powers that few can comprehend. Each Sorcerer King is a master of a different school of magic, from necromancy to elemental manipulation, making them versatile and dangerous adversaries. Their rule is absolute within their realms, where they command armies of loyal followers, magical constructs, and monstrous creatures born from their experiments.

The kingdoms they once ruled are now desolate and warped, shaped by their unnatural magic. Where once stood lush fields and thriving cities, there are now barren wastelands, twisted forests, and dark citadels filled with strange energies. It is said that even time flows differently in the lands of the Sorcerer Kings, as their meddling with the natural order has disrupted the very fabric of reality.

The Sorcerer Kings' ambitions do not stop at their borders. United by a shared desire for domination, they now turn their attention outward, seeking to expand their influence across the known world. In battle, they are not mere warlords; they are tacticians who shape the battlefield to their will, summoning arcane storms, raising the dead, and conjuring eldritch horrors to strike terror into their enemies. Their presence on the battlefield signals a war not just of armies, but of reality itself bending to their will.

At the heart of their power is their insatiable hunger for more. Each Sorcerer King vies to ascend to even greater heights, seeking out ancient relics and forbidden knowledge to further their strength. Their rivalry with one another is as intense as their desire to conquer the world. Ultimately, they are united only by their shared understanding that power is the ultimate currency, and there is no price too high in their quest to wield it.

In the world of Conquest, the Sorcerer Kings represent the dangerous allure of power unchecked by morality. Their armies march not just to claim land, but to reshape the world in their image, turning all who oppose them into fuel for their dark sorceries. Wherever they go, chaos follows, and those who stand in their way face a fate far worse than death.

#### The Game System

The First Blood Warband format focuses on fast-paced, small-scale skirmishes, and Sorcerer Kings seamlessly integrates



with this model. At the heart of the expansion lies a new approach to magic and leadership. The Sorcerer Kings are masters of ancient and powerful spells, giving them a distinct advantage in battlefield control. Their abilities focus on manipulating terrain, summoning eldritch entities, and bolstering their warbands with powerful magical effects, making them a faction for players who enjoy strategic depth and arcane tactics.

The warband's units are a mix of elite sorcerers and mystical creatures, each with unique skills. Spells are not just an additional feature but a cornerstone of gameplay for this faction. The rules governing magic have been refined to ensure balance—casting spells requires resources and positioning, adding a layer of tactical forethought. A player's choice of spells can dramatically shift the tide of battle, which emphasizes their role as battlefield manipulators rather than brute force fighters.

Additionally, the Sorcerer Kings feature leaders that can dynamically shift between offensive and support roles, enhancing the flexibility of their warband. These leaders also excel in leveraging synergies between units, making them rewarding for experienced players who appreciate a faction that rewards cunning over direct confrontation.

### Design & Artwork

Para Bellum Games has always excelled at crafting visually striking miniatures, and Sorcerer Kings: First Blood Warband is no exception. The aesthetic of the Sorcerer Kings strikes a balance between regal and menacing, with intricate robes and armor combined with eerie arcane elements. The models' designs reflect a twisted nobility, as if their power and knowledge have led them down a dark path of hubris.

Particularly notable are the spell effects integrated into some of the miniatures, giving them an active, dynamic look that suggests they're always in the midst of casting ancient sorceries. From swirling tendrils of magic to arcane symbols etched into their armor, the miniatures stand out in both detail and theme. For hobbyists who love to paint, the Sorcerer Kings offer endless possibilities, with a range of textures and designs that will encourage creativity.

Terrain interaction is also a major design highlight. Para Bellum has crafted specific spells and units that alter the battlefield, summoning arcane constructs or twisting the landscape itself, which adds an additional dimension to the physical presentation of the game.

### Conclusion

Sorcerer Kings: First Blood Warband is an exciting addition to the Conquest universe, offering a fresh take on skirmish wargaming with a heavy focus on magic and battlefield control. The faction's intricate mechanics reward players who enjoy strategic depth and manipulation, making them a compelling choice for those who relish tactical play over raw power. Visually, the miniatures are outstanding, with designs that capture the dark grandeur of arcane mastery. For veteran players of Conquest: First Blood, this warband will provide new and challenging ways to approach the game, while for newcomers, it may be an intriguing, albeit complex, introduction to the deeper aspects of Para Bellum's ever-expanding wargaming world. Overall, Sorcerer Kings is a triumph for those seeking both a tactical and aesthetic masterpiece on the tabletop.

**More info:** [www.https://www.para-bellum.com](https://www.para-bellum.com)

Dirk Vandereyken



# MINIATURE WARGAME MODEL REVIEW - CONQUEST: ARTISAN SERIES

## NORDS: MOUNTAIN JOTNAR

### GIANT MAYHEM

The Conquest: Artisan Series by Para Bellum Wargames is renowned for its impressive attention to detail and ambitious sculpts, and the Nords: Mountain Jotnar continues that tradition. As a centerpiece model for the Nords faction, the Mountain Jotnar is a towering, awe-inspiring miniature that combines sheer size with intricate craftsmanship. But does this massive beast live up to the expectations set by the rest of the Artisan Series? Let's take a closer look.

#### Conquest: Artisan Series - Nords: Mountain Jotnar Miniature Wargame Box - Para Bellum Games

##### Overall:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

##### Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

##### Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

##### Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

##### Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### The Setting

The Jotnar are legendary frost giants from the icy wastes, an iconic feature of the Nords faction in Conquest: The Last Argument of Kings. The Mountain Jotnar embodies the primal fury and raw power of these mythical creatures, standing as a literal giant on the battlefield, ready to crush any foe underfoot. For the Nords, this behemoth represents the strength of the wilderness and the relentless might of nature, perfectly aligning with the faction's lore and playstyle.

### The Game System

In-game, the Mountain Jotnar functions as a titan-class unit for the Nords faction, designed to dominate combat through sheer power and resilience. Its high hit points, devastating melee attacks, and ability to absorb damage make it a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield. As a large, slow-moving giant, it serves as a powerful anchor for your army, drawing enemy attention while smaller units maneuver around it. One of the most interesting mechanics tied to the Jotnar is its "Frost Rage" ability, which allows it to deal increasing amounts of damage as it takes hits. This creates a tactical dilemma for opponents: leave the Jotnar to wreak havoc, or risk feeding its rage by focusing fire on it. The model also comes with various customization options for its weapon loadout, allowing players to tailor its combat style to fit their strategy. Whether you want to wield a massive, rune-inscribed axe or a crushing stone club, the Jotnar is adaptable to different combat roles.

### Design & Artwork

The design of the Mountain Jotnar is simply breathtaking. Standing significantly taller than standard units, the model is an imposing presence, making it an instant eye-catcher on the tabletop. The sculpt captures the essence of a frost giant with impressive details: thick, frostbitten skin, jagged ice and stone armor, and a face full of grim determination. Its weapons—an enormous axe or club—are intricately carved with runes, adding to the mythological feel of the model. The dynamic pose gives the impression of movement and weight, as if the Jotnar is in the midst of charging forward or about to bring its weapon down in a crushing blow. The fur-lined clothing and environmental details, like icicles and jagged stones, add texture to the model, offering a canvas for painters to experiment with different techniques. Assembly is straightforward, with large pieces that fit together well, though the sheer size of the model means that some patience is required.

### Conclusion

The Mountain Jotnar is a triumph of miniature design, both as a visually stunning model and as a powerful force in gameplay. It perfectly captures the mythic essence of the Nords faction while offering a solid strategic role in any Conquest army.

**More info:** [www.https://www.para-bellum.com](https://www.para-bellum.com)


Dirk Vandereyken

# MINIATURE WARGAME REVIEW: KINGS OF WAR - THE CHILL OF TWILIGHT

## 2-PLAYER AMBUSH STARTER SET

### A MINIATURES BATTLE GAME THAT REFERENCES ICONIC PREDECESSORS

Mantic Games has once again made waves in the tabletop gaming world with its latest release, the **Kings of War: Chill of Twilight 2 Player Ambush Starter Set**. Known for producing affordable yet deeply tactical wargames, Mantic's Kings of War series has earned a devoted following thanks to its fast-paced, easy-to-learn, and hard-to-master gameplay. With **Chill of Twilight**, the company aims to introduce new players to the exciting world of Pannithor, offering a streamlined experience while maintaining the strategic depth that veterans of the series appreciate. This set delivers two distinct factions, the Twilight Kin and the Northern Alliance, allowing players to engage in brutal skirmishes while also laying the groundwork for larger battles down the road.

<b>Kings of War - The Chill of Twilight 2-Player Ambush Starter Set</b> <b>Miniature Wargame</b> <b>Mantic Games</b>		
<b>Overall:</b>	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Story:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	
Rules System:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	
Design & Artwork:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	
Replayability:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	

#### Setting

The world of Pannithor, where Kings of War is set, is a vibrant, sprawling realm filled with a variety of factions, each with their own lore, cultures, and ambitions. In **Chill of Twilight**, two diametrically opposed forces meet in conflict: the enigmatic Twilight Kin and the rugged Northern Alliance. The setting paints a stark contrast between light and darkness, survival and destruction, with the frozen wilderness of the Northern Wastes serving as the stage for this clash.

The Northern Alliance is a coalition of hardy survivors and refugees who have banded together in the frozen reaches of the north. They are tough, resilient, and fiercely protective of their lands, fending off raiders and supernatural threats alike. The Twilight Kin, on the other hand, are a dark offshoot of the Elf race, having turned their backs on the light to embrace shadowy magic and malevolent ambition. They are masters of subterfuge, striking from the shadows with deadly precision.

This narrative backdrop adds depth to the battles you'll fight in **Chill of Twilight**. Every skirmish feels like a small part of a larger conflict, with the frozen wasteland of Pannithor as a character in its own right, influencing the strategies and outcomes of the engagements.

#### Game Mechanics

The Kings of War system has always been celebrated for its elegant simplicity, and **Chill of Twilight** distills those core mechanics into the Ambush format—tailored for smaller, quicker skirmishes. Whether you're a newcomer to tabletop wargaming or a veteran of larger-scale battles, the streamlined ruleset here is both inviting and tactically engaging.

At its core, Kings of War relies on alternating turns. Each player commands their forces in distinct phases: Movement, Shooting, Melee, and Nerve (leadership) testing. Units are grouped into "regiments," and each one acts as a single entity—allowing for faster gameplay compared to more complex systems where individual models move and act separately. This focus on regiments also lends Kings of War its distinctive visual appeal, as blocks of troops march, maneuver, and engage in sweeping battlefield maneuvers.

#### **Here's a breakdown of the game's phases in more detail:**

- **Movement Phase:** Players move their units across the battlefield, making tactical decisions about positioning, charging into combat, or setting up flanking maneuvers. In **Chill of Twilight**, movement is critical, especially given the fast-paced nature of the Ambush rules. Units can pivot, reform, or charge enemy forces, with terrain and obstacles influencing strategy.
- **Shooting Phase:** After movement, ranged units can fire at their enemies. Ranged attacks are resolved using a D6 mechanic, where players roll to hit based on a unit's ranged attack value. The results are then compared to the target's defense, determining if wounds are inflicted.





- **Melee Phase:** Close combat is where the game truly shines. Charging into melee can be decisive, and units can either break their enemies or be caught in a devastating counter-attack. Much like the shooting phase, melee is resolved with a roll-to-hit mechanic, and once wounds are inflicted, the opposing unit's Nerve value is tested. Unlike many wargames, units aren't removed piece by piece—instead, whole regiments stand until their Nerve is broken, leading to dramatic moments where a single morale check can turn the tide of battle.
- **Nerve Phase:** After wounds are tallied, units must take Nerve tests to see if they stand firm or flee. A unit's Nerve rating represents its morale, and once a unit takes enough damage, it risks breaking and being removed from the game entirely. This mechanic encourages players to consider not just damage output but how to apply pressure on their opponent's morale over time.

The Ambush format trims down the complexity of larger battles, focusing on fewer units and quicker decision-making. The rules remain fluid and easy to grasp, while still offering a depth of strategy that keeps each game engaging and varied.

Factions and Miniatures

The Chill of Twilight starter set includes two fully playable factions: the Northern Alliance and the Twilight Kin. Each faction comes with a well-rounded assortment of miniatures,

representing the core units needed for a skirmish-scale battle. Let's take a closer look at what each faction brings to the table.

**Northern Alliance:** Known for their durability and strength in cold environments, the Northern Alliance's units are built for survival and strength. The set includes a range of infantry and specialized units, like the Huscarls, elite warriors of the Northern Alliance, and the Ice Kin Hunters, archers adept at picking off enemies from afar. These models are rugged and imposing, reflecting the harsh conditions of their homeland. Their playstyle rewards careful positioning and attrition, using ranged units to weaken foes before delivering crushing blows with their infantry.

**Twilight Kin:** These sinister elves are the polar opposite of the Northern Alliance, both in appearance and tactics. Twilight Kin units are sleek, fast, and lethal, favoring ambush tactics and dark magic. In the box, you'll find Shadowstalkers, stealthy warriors who can disappear into the shadows, and Dusksabers, agile infantry wielding blades imbued with dark magic.

The Twilight Kin rely on speed and precision, often outmaneuvering slower armies and striking at vulnerable points. They can also bring arcane firepower to the battlefield, using spells to sow chaos and disrupt enemy formations.



The miniatures themselves, while affordable, are impressively detailed. The Northern Alliance figures are adorned with furs and heavy armor, while the Twilight Kin boast sleek, menacing designs. The models are easy to assemble, though some of the finer details may challenge newer hobbyists. Mantic continues to strike a balance between quality and affordability, and while these miniatures may not rival the highest-end options on the market, they offer excellent value for the price.

### Design & Artwork

The overall design of the Chill of Twilight set is focused on accessibility, but it doesn't sacrifice immersion. The included rulebook is concise but packed with everything you need to get started, from unit stats to narrative scenarios. It's clear that Mantic has put thought into making this an easy-to-use starter set without bogging down players with extraneous detail.

The miniatures are well-cast and come with dynamic poses, particularly in the Twilight Kin faction, whose sleek, shadowy designs will appeal to players who enjoy stealth and dark magic themes.

The Northern Alliance, with their bulky, armored warriors, are equally compelling, offering a visual contrast that adds to the thematic richness of the battles.

Terrain pieces are minimal but functional, and while they aren't particularly elaborate, they set the stage well for the skirmishes you'll wage across the frozen wastes.

### Conclusion

The Kings of War: Chill of Twilight 2 Player Ambush Starter Set is an excellent entry point into the Kings of War universe. Mantic Games has struck a fine balance between accessibility and depth, making this set a perfect introduction for new players while still offering enough tactical nuance to satisfy veterans. The simplified Ambush rules keep the game fast and focused, without sacrificing the strategic depth that makes Kings of War so enjoyable.

The included miniatures are of solid quality, with each faction bringing a unique playstyle to the table. Whether you're drawn to the ferocity of the Northern Alliance or the dark elegance of the Twilight Kin, Chill of Twilight offers plenty of variety and replayability. For anyone looking to dip their toes into the world of miniature wargaming or expand their Kings of War collection, this set is a must-have.

**More info:** [www.manticgames.com/kings-of-war/getting-started/chill-of-twilight-2-player-ambush-starter-set/](http://www.manticgames.com/kings-of-war/getting-started/chill-of-twilight-2-player-ambush-starter-set/)

Dirk Vandereyken



# TABLETOP GAME ACCESSORY REVIEW: BATTLE MAP BOARD GRID & HEX

## INTRODUCING A BASIC BUT VERY VERSATILE ACCESSORY

The Battle Map Board Grid & Hex by Loke Battle Mats has quickly become a staple accessory for tabletop gamers, offering versatility and convenience. Whether you're commanding armies in a hex-based strategy game or crawling through dungeons on a grid system, this map board is designed to meet the demands of various settings. This review will take you through how this product performs across different areas, from setting compatibility to its design, to help you decide if it's the right addition to your tabletop arsenal.

**Battle Map Board Grid & Hex**  
**Tabletop Accessory**  
**Loke Battle Mats**


**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:                            0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Rules System:                0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:         0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Replayability:               0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



AGE 14+

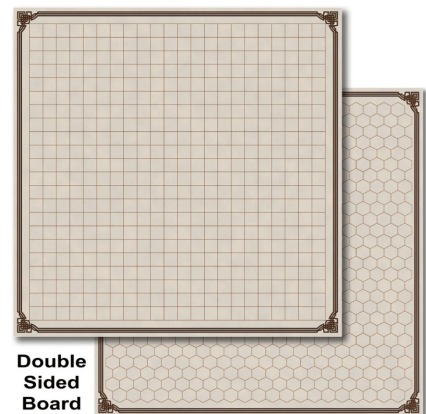
Fold Out 24" x 24" Double Sided Wipe Clean Board

### Versatility

One of the major advantages of the Battle Map Board Grid & Hex is its adaptability to a wide range of game systems. Whether you're playing a traditional Dungeons & Dragons campaign or diving into a more specialized hex-based wargame, this board provides both square and hex grids, making it perfect for tactical skirmishes or expansive explorations alike. The dual-sided nature allows for quick transitions between different environments, meaning one session can easily switch from city streets to a sprawling battlefield or dungeon labyrinth.

### Game Mechanics

The precise markings on the board allow for clear visualization of positioning, distance, and movement, enhancing the tactical depth of any game. For RPG systems that require frequent shifting between different terrain types, such as underground dungeons, outdoor wilderness, or tight urban environments, this map allows for seamless integration into mechanics without having to improvise or redraw a layout mid-game. The erasable surface also lends itself well to impromptu creativity, letting you mark key areas like traps, cover zones, or obstacles with ease.



### Design & Artwork

In terms of design, the Battle Map Board Grid & Hex stays relatively neutral, allowing it to work across different game systems without distracting from the narrative. The grids are clear and easy to read without overpowering the landscape or setup you have on the board. The material is sturdy yet portable, with a foldable design that makes transportation simple for GMs on the go. While the board is minimalist in its art, this works to its advantage by serving as a blank canvas for a variety of environments. Its durability is another highlight – the surface can handle dry-erase and wet-erase markers, allowing for quick customization.

### Conclusion

The Battle Map Board Grid & Hex by Loke Battle Mats excels in versatility and practical design, making it a valuable tool for both GMs and players. Its ability to switch between square and hex grids is ideal for diverse gaming groups, and the erasable surface adds convenience during dynamic sessions. While it may lack the ornate artwork that other specialized mats might offer, its minimalist aesthetic ensures that it can adapt to any game setting.

**More info:** [www.lokebattlemats.store/collections/battle-map-boards/products/battle-map-board-grid-hex-preorder](http://www.lokebattlemats.store/collections/battle-map-boards/products/battle-map-board-grid-hex-preorder)

Dirk Vandereyken

# TABLETOP GAME ACCESSORY REVIEW: THE VEILED DUNGEON - AN RPG TOOLBOX MORE THAN JUST D&D

The Veiled Dungeon from Loke Battle Mats delivers a robust, modular toolbox designed for GMs and players who love customizable adventures. Packed with versatile content, this set offers a mix of maps, monsters, encounters, and even an adventure specifically tailored for Dungeons & Dragons 5E. The modular nature of the components makes it an invaluable asset whether you're running a pre-written campaign or crafting your own dungeon encounters on the fly.

## The Veiled Dungeon - An RPG Toolbox Tabletop Accessory Loke Battle Mats

### Overall:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

### Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

### Rules System:

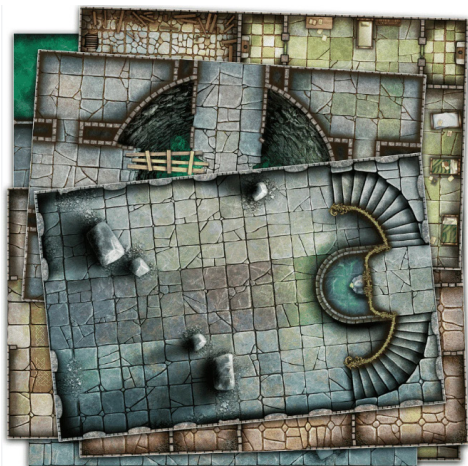
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

### Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

### Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



## Versatility

This toolbox is ideal for GMs looking to create or enhance dungeon-based adventures across a variety of settings. Its 20 double-sided, dry-erase maps provide endless possibilities for building anything from abandoned ruins to subterranean lairs. The accompanying reference book, filled with over 100 random encounters, adventure generators, and monster descriptions, ensures that The Veiled Dungeon can seamlessly fit into any fantasy RPG setting, whether you're running a 5E campaign or adapting it for other systems. Its adaptability makes it perfect for on-the-go customization or more detailed pre-planned adventures.

## Game Mechanics

From a mechanics standpoint, The Veiled Dungeon shines with its balance of simplicity and depth. The modular maps can be arranged in various combinations, allowing GMs to continuously alter the dungeon environment as the players explore. The 40 monster cards provide an immediate pool of foes for the party to face, each tailored to the specific encounters detailed in the reference book.

## Design & Artwork

Loke Battle Mats are known for their high-quality artwork, and The Veiled Dungeon does not disappoint. The maps are richly detailed, with immersive visuals that depict everything from cracked stone floors to dimly lit passageways. The clean grid lines ensure clarity during combat while still maintaining the thematic atmosphere of a dungeon delve. Additionally, the maps are dry/wet-erase compatible, allowing GMs to make quick adjustments mid-session without worrying about damaging the artwork. The monster cards are equally well-designed, with clear and evocative illustrations that help set the tone for each encounter.

## Conclusion

For both newcomers and veteran GMs, The Veiled Dungeon is an essential toolbox for enhancing dungeon-crawling experiences. Its mix of reusable maps, random encounters, and unique monsters offers endless replay value, while its modular design ensures that no two sessions need to feel the same. If you're looking for a resource that will breathe life into your dungeons and offer players a challenging, dynamic experience, The Veiled Dungeon is well worth the investment.

**More info:** [www.lokebattlemats.store/products/the-veiled-dungeon-rpg-toolbox](http://www.lokebattlemats.store/products/the-veiled-dungeon-rpg-toolbox)

Dirk Vandereyken



# TABLETOP GAME ACCESSORY REVIEW:

## UPZONE THE POP-UP TERRAIN SYSTEM - ANCIENT ZONE

### POP-UP THE OLD ONES

The Upzone Pop-Up Terrain System: Ancient Zone by Everything Epic is a truly innovative solution for tabletop gamers who need detailed, immersive terrain without the hassle of storage or lengthy setup times. Designed like a pop-up book, this modular terrain set unfolds instantly to create a visually impressive battlefield, particularly suited for ancient or ruined environments. With its portability, flexibility, and ease of use, Ancient Zone is a game-changer for both RPG enthusiasts and wargamers.

**Upzone Pop-Up Terrain-System: Ancient Zone**  
**Pop-Up 3D Terrain**  
**Everything Epic**


**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story:                            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Rules System:                0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:         0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:               0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7





#### Versatility

The Ancient Zone set excels in creating thematic environments that fit seamlessly into ancient temples, ruins, or desert landscapes, making it perfect for games like Dungeons & Dragons, Warhammer 40K, or Pathfinder. The pop-up structures—complete with towering ruins and crumbling walls—capture the grandeur and mystery of ancient civilizations. The terrain works for any system that requires large, open battlefields, and it can also be combined with other Upzone sets like Cathedral Zone or Dungeon Zone for greater variety.

#### Game Mechanics

From a gameplay perspective, Ancient Zone introduces a three-dimensional battlefield with strategic depth. The various pop-up structures are sturdy enough to support miniatures, allowing for vertical gameplay and tactical positioning. The set includes eight foldable boards that can be re-arranged to create different layouts, allowing GMs and players to quickly change the environment during a session. This flexibility adds excitement, particularly in games that emphasize exploration and combat. The terrain is designed to provide plenty of cover, creating opportunities for ambushes and ranged attacks.

#### Design & Artwork

The design of the Ancient Zone terrain is one of its standout features. The pop-up structures unfold with ease, forming imposing ruins that immediately add atmosphere to your game. Despite being made of lightweight materials, the pieces are durable and can handle frequent use. The detailing on the structures is impressive, with ancient carvings, weathered stone, and dramatic elevation changes. It's not just visually appealing but also practical—after your game, the entire set folds flat for easy storage, solving one of the biggest problems with traditional terrain.

#### Conclusion

The Upzone Ancient Zone is a fantastic solution for gamers who want to enhance their sessions without sacrificing time or space. It's quick to set up, highly detailed, and versatile enough for a variety of games. Whether you're running a fast-paced skirmish or a slow-burning dungeon crawl, this pop-up terrain offers an immersive experience with minimal fuss. While it may come with a higher price tag, its convenience and visual impact make it well worth the investment for dedicated players.

**More info:** [www.everythingepic.us/upzone](http://www.everythingepic.us/upzone)

Dirk Vandereyken

# TABLETOP GAME ACCESSORY REVIEW:

## UPZONE THE POP-UP TERRAIN SYSTEM - CATHEDRAL ZONE

### MOODY 3D TERRAIN

**Upzone: Cathedral Zone delivers a dynamic and gothic-themed terrain system perfect for players looking to immerse their games in a more mysterious and sacred environment. This pop-up terrain system by Everything Epic is designed to bring large, intricate structures to life in a matter of seconds, combining ease of setup with dramatic visual impact. Whether you're exploring ruins or defending a grand temple, Cathedral Zone adds a new dimension to your tabletop gaming.**

#### Upzone Pop-Up Terrain-System: Cathedral Zone Pop-Up 3D Terrain Everything Epic

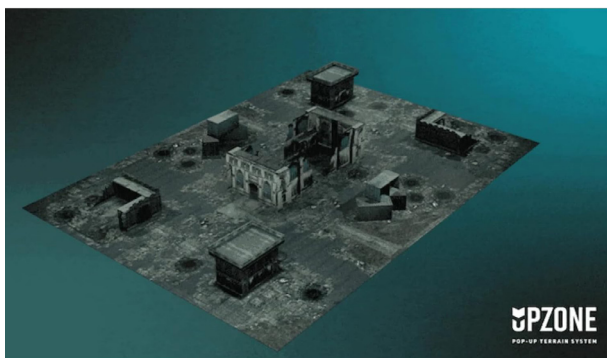
Overall: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Rules System: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



#### Versatility

Cathedral Zone is ideal for tabletop RPGs and wargames that take place in gothic, medieval, or sacred environments. Its towering structures and weathered stone designs are perfect for games like Warhammer 40K, Dungeons & Dragons, or Infinity. The boards create a sprawling battlefield, well-suited for any storyline involving cathedrals, ancient temples, or mystical ruins. The terrain also integrates seamlessly with other zones, like Ancient Zone, allowing players to swap components such as trees or other features to diversify the setting.

#### Game Mechanics

From a gameplay perspective, Cathedral Zone provides not just visual splendor but also functional terrain. The structures are sturdy enough to support miniatures, allowing for strategic vertical gameplay. The set's modular nature means GMs and players can rearrange the eight pop-up boards to create different layouts, adding flexibility to encounters. The terrain's 1-inch grid ensures compatibility with most wargames and RPG systems, enhancing the tactical depth of any battle.

#### Design & Artwork

The artistic detail in Cathedral Zone stands out, featuring intricate gothic arches, weathered walls, and towering spires that evoke a sense of grandeur and age. The boards are made of durable materials, designed to withstand the wear and tear of regular gameplay, while still being light and portable. The best part is the ease of storage—the entire set folds flat after the game, making it perfect for players with limited space. The pop-up mechanics work like a charm, transforming your tabletop into a cathedral landscape in seconds.

#### Conclusion

Cathedral Zone is a must-have for gamers who value both aesthetic immersion and practical functionality in their terrain. Its modular design, combined with the dramatic gothic setting, offers endless possibilities for customizing your game sessions. If you're looking to elevate the visual experience of your tabletop games without the hassle of traditional terrain setups, Cathedral Zone is a solid investment, providing both convenience and impressive detail.

**More info:** [www.everythingepic.us/upzone](http://www.everythingepic.us/upzone)

Dirk Vandereyken



# TABLETOP GAME ACCESSORY REVIEW:

## UPZONE THE POP-UP TERRAIN SYSTEM - DUNGEON ZONE

### OLD SCHOOL ADVENTURING IN 3D

The Veiled Dungeon from Loke Battle Mats delivers a robust, modular toolbox designed for GMs and players who love customizable adventures. Packed with versatile content, this set offers a mix of maps, monsters, encounters, and even an adventure specifically tailored for Dungeons & Dragons 5E. The modular nature of the components makes it an invaluable asset whether you're running a pre-written campaign or crafting your own dungeon encounters on the fly.

#### Upzone Pop-Up Terrain-System: Dungeon Zone Pop-Up 3D Terrain Everything Epic

Overall:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Rules System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Replayability:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



#### Versatility

The Dungeon Zone is ideal for fantasy RPGs such as Dungeons & Dragons, Pathfinder, and even close-quarters wargames like Warhammer Quest and Space Hulk. Its modular design makes it suitable for a wide range of dungeon environments, from mysterious crypts to sprawling underground labyrinths. The system's 1-inch grid is fully compatible with standard movement rules for most miniatures-based games, making it a flexible option for players of various RPG systems.

#### Game Mechanics

From a mechanics standpoint, Dungeon Zone offers a versatile battlefield that can be reconfigured in multiple ways. The pop-up structures are sturdy enough to hold miniatures on top and within various sections, allowing for multi-level gameplay. The modular nature of the 25-piece set lets game masters arrange new dungeon layouts quickly, adding a dynamic layer to tactical planning during sessions. The ease with which the terrain can be adjusted during play provides GMs the freedom to adapt the environment to the unfolding story, making each session unique.

#### Design & Artwork

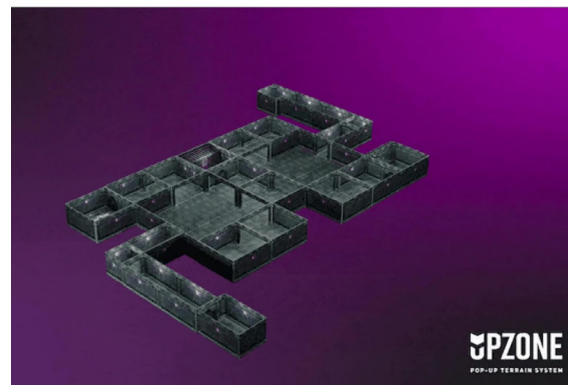
The artistry in Dungeon Zone lives up to the high standards set by the Upzone system. The pop-up terrain features detailed, photorealistic designs that evoke dark, atmospheric dungeons filled with worn stone, ancient traps, and shadowy corridors. The fold-away feature allows for fast setup and breakdown, making it ideal for players with limited storage space or those who need to quickly transition between scenes. Despite the portability, the pieces are robust and designed to withstand repeated use.

#### Conclusion

Dungeon Zone is a perfect solution for game masters and players who want to add an immersive, tactical element to their dungeon crawls without the inconvenience of traditional terrain setups. The pop-up design is intuitive and efficient, offering a visually impressive and highly functional environment.

**More info:** [www.everythingepic.us/upzone](http://www.everythingepic.us/upzone)

Dirk Vandereyken



# TABLETOP GAME ACCESSORY REVIEW:

## UPZONE THE POP-UP TERRAIN SYSTEM - OBSIDIAN ZONE

### SCIENCE FICTION 3D POP-UP TERRAIN

The Obsidian Zone is a striking addition to Everything Epic's Upzone series, offering a unique sci-fi and alien-themed environment. This pop-up terrain system, designed for tabletop RPGs and wargames, brings an otherworldly setting to life in seconds with its easy-to-assemble structures. Perfect for those who need quick, immersive setups without sacrificing visual impact, Obsidian Zone delivers both functionality and thematic depth.

**Upzone Pop-Up Terrain-System: Obsidian Zone**  
**Pop-Up 3D Terrain**  
**Everything Epic**


**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

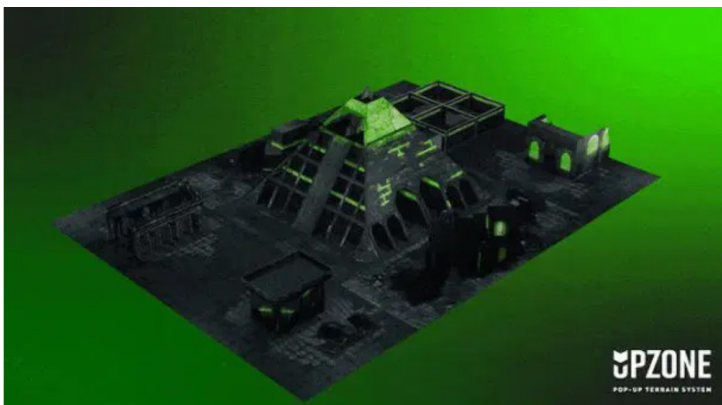
Story:                            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Rules System:                0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:        0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Replayability:               0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7





#### Versatility

The Obsidian Zone is particularly well-suited for science fiction and futuristic games like Warhammer 40K, Infinity, and other sci-fi miniatures games. The zone's black and green color scheme and mysterious alien design make it an excellent choice for adventures set on robotic planets or strange tomb worlds. Its tiles, which can be combined with elements from the other zones (such as Ancient or Dungeon), offer versatility for blending different environments into a single game.

#### Game Mechanics

From a mechanics perspective, Obsidian Zone delivers a lot of flexibility. The pop-up terrain is designed to support

miniatures of varying sizes, making it ideal for both role-playing and wargaming. The modular setup allows for different layouts, providing replay value and tactical variety during gameplay. The sturdy construction of the pop-up elements ensures that they can handle repeated use while maintaining stability for gameplay.

#### Design & Artwork

Visually, Obsidian Zone stands out with its dark, eerie aesthetic. The alien tomb-like structures, with their distinct black and green color scheme, give the terrain an ominous feel that fits well with sci-fi or dark fantasy settings. The pop-up feature allows for quick setup and breakdown, making it a convenient option for players with limited space. The terrain's fold-flat design is perfect for storage, offering both portability and durability.

#### Conclusion

The Obsidian Zone is an excellent addition to the Upzone line, offering a thematic, sci-fi twist that is sure to elevate your tabletop gaming experience. Its ease of setup, durability, and unique design make it a solid choice for players who want both practicality and immersive visuals in their gaming terrain. Whether you're a seasoned wargamer or an RPG enthusiast, Obsidian Zone provides both flexibility and style, enhancing any futuristic campaign.

**More info:** [www.everythingepic.us/upzone](http://www.everythingepic.us/upzone)

Dirk Vandereyken



# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME REVIEW:

## ACHTUNG! CTHULHU - PLAYER'S GUIDE

### PULPY WWII ACTION MEETS LOVECRAFTIAN GOTHIC HORROR

The *Achtung! Cthulhu 2d20 Player's Guide* by Modiphius is an exciting blend of pulp action and Lovecraftian horror, set against the backdrop of World War II. As part of the broader *Achtung! Cthulhu* universe, this book is tailored to players and game masters alike who are eager to dive into the mix of occult intrigue, military combat, and cosmic horror. Powered by Modiphius' 2d20 system, the *Player's Guide* offers a rich, character-driven experience that's as much about fighting eldritch terrors as it is about exploring the psychological toll of the war.

**Achtung! Cthulhu - Player's Guide**  
**Tabletop Roleplaying Game**  
**Modiphius Entertainment**


**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Character Creation:        0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:                         0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Game System:               0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork:         0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



### The Setting

Set during the tumultuous period of World War II, *Achtung! Cthulhu* takes the historically grounded conflict and layers it with a dark, supernatural element. Players navigate a world where Nazi occultists, like those in the infamous *Black Sun* and *Nachtwölfe* factions, delve into ancient powers and summon horrors from beyond human understanding. Meanwhile, Allied forces—particularly the covert *Section M* and *Majestic*—stand in opposition, using their own occult knowledge and brave soldiers to thwart the Axis' dark ambitions.

The setting artfully mixes military history with Lovecraftian myths. It strikes a balance between gritty war realism and cosmic horror, creating a unique narrative sandbox where soldiers, spies, and occultists battle against enemies both human and otherworldly.

The horrors of war are heightened by the presence of ancient gods, mad cultists, and dark magic, giving the setting a tense, ominous atmosphere where trust is thin, and dangers lurk in every shadow.

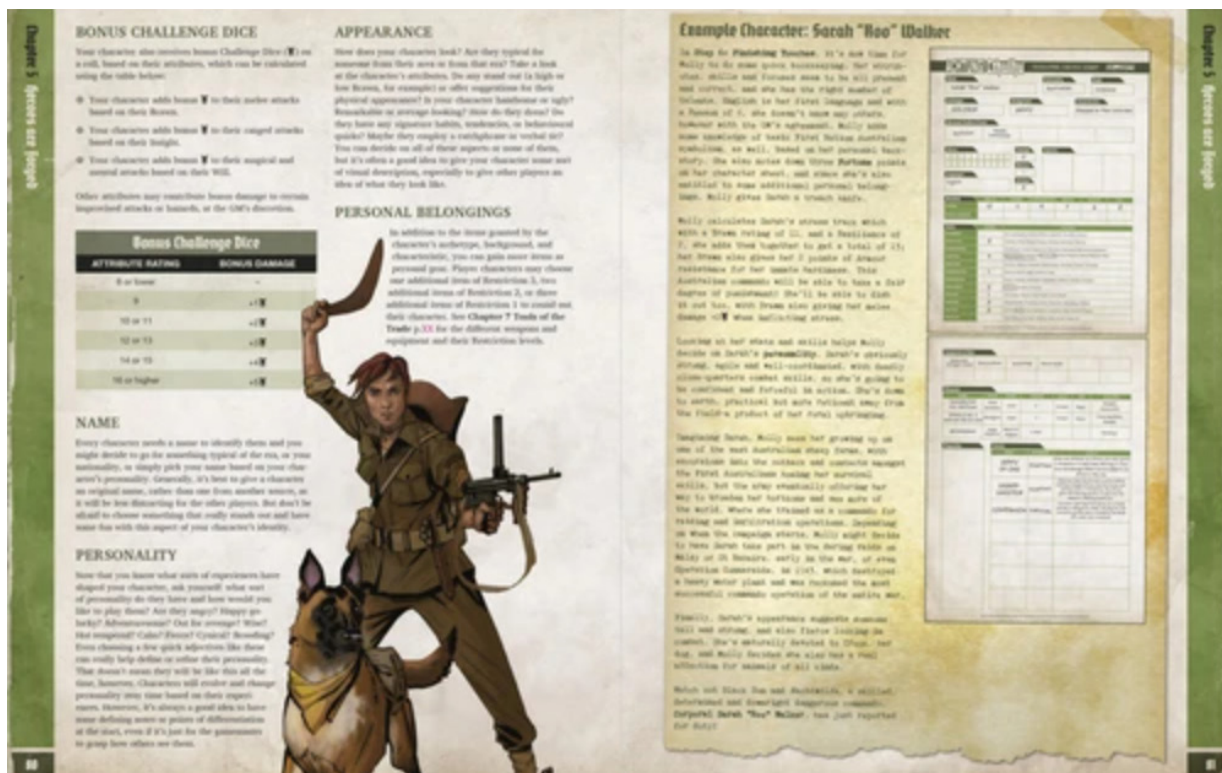


### Character Creation

Character creation in the *Achtung! Cthulhu 2d20* system offers a wealth of customization options, blending military archetypes with occult abilities. Players can choose to create soldiers, spies, resistance fighters, or scholars, each with their own distinct role and specialties. The *Player's Guide* provides comprehensive character-building tools, allowing you to craft unique and complex individuals who possess both mundane skills and supernatural abilities.

#### **Key elements of character creation include:**

- **Attributes and Skills:** Players distribute points among six core attributes (such as Agility, Reason, and Willpower), each representing a character's physical and mental capacities. Skills like Fighting, Persuasion, and Mysticism round out a character's expertise.
- **Talents:** These are special abilities that enhance skills or grant unique powers. Talents allow for a high degree of customization, letting players fine-tune their characters to suit specific playstyles.
- **Focuses:** Focuses are specialties within skills that represent a character's in-depth knowledge or practical experience, offering bonuses in key situations.



The game's character creation system encourages a well-rounded party, with each character contributing different abilities to survive both human and mythological threats. The system's flexibility also allows players to embody highly skilled fighters or deeply knowledgeable occultists, depending on the group's needs.

### Game Mechanics

Players roll two twenty-sided dice (d20s) and aim to roll under a combination of an Attribute and Skill total to succeed in tasks. The system incorporates a range of mechanics that enhance both the narrative flow and the tactical depth of gameplay:

- **Momentum and Threat:** Central to the 2d20 system, Momentum represents a pool of points that players can spend to improve their rolls or perform extraordinary actions. Conversely, Threat is a resource for the Game Master (GM), allowing them to introduce complications or strengthen enemies, thus creating a dynamic push-and-pull between players and the GM.
- **Fortune Points:** These offer players a way to push their luck by rerolling dice or ensuring critical successes, enhancing the game's high-stakes, pulpy feel.
- **Stress and Harms:** The game uses a Stress mechanic to represent both physical and mental strain. This allows characters to endure damage while adding a layer of tension, as accumulated stress can lead to Harm, which represents lasting injuries or mental trauma.
- **Magic and Mythos:** The Player's Guide introduces a robust system for learning and casting spells, but using magic comes at a great cost. Misuse can lead to physical or psychological damage, a mechanic that adds to the game's dark, foreboding atmosphere. Players must weigh the risks of tapping into forbidden knowledge, knowing that it could lead to their character's downfall.

### Design & Illustrations

The visual design and artwork in the Achtung! Cthulhu 2d20 Player's Guide are nothing short of stunning. The layout is clear and easy to navigate, with evocative illustrations that bring the grim, eerie world of Achtung! Cthulhu to life. From depictions of terrifying eldritch creatures to dynamic action scenes of soldiers fighting off cultists, the artwork enhances the thematic depth of the game. The use of atmospheric colors and period-specific design motifs helps to ground the setting in its 1940s wartime milieu while maintaining a sense of otherworldly dread.

The book's design is also highly functional, with sidebars for quick reference, well-organized chapters, and easy-to-read tables that make character creation and rule-checking a breeze.

### Conclusion

The Achtung! Cthulhu 2d20 Player's Guide is an excellent entry point for both fans of the Lovecraftian mythos and those interested in wartime role-playing games. Its blend of military action, espionage, and supernatural horror provides a rich and varied experience, supported by Modiphius' 2d20 system, which is flexible enough to handle both fast-paced combat and deep, narrative-driven moments.

Whether you're leading a team of elite soldiers against Nazi occultists or uncovering eldritch secrets best left forgotten, Achtung! Cthulhu offers a thrilling, dark, and atmospheric gaming experience.

**More info:** [www.modiphius.net/products/achtung-ctulhu-2d20-players-guide](http://www.modiphius.net/products/achtung-ctulhu-2d20-players-guide)

Dirk Vandereyken



# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME REVIEW: ACHTUNG! CTHULHU - GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE

## BRINGING THE HORROR TO WWII

The *Achtung! Cthulhu Gamemaster's Guide* is an essential companion to the *Player's Guide*, delivering everything a game master (GM) needs to create immersive, terrifying, and action-packed adventures within the *Achtung! Cthulhu* universe. Designed for Modiphius' 2d20 system, this guide focuses on running a game set during World War II where players not only face the horrors of combat but also the dread of cosmic forces. With rich lore, detailed mechanics, and flexible tools, the *Gamemaster's Guide* equips GMs to craft gripping campaigns that blend history with Lovecraftian mythos.

### *Achtung! Cthulhu - Player's Guide* Tabletop Roleplaying Game Modiphius Entertainment

Overall:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Character Creation:	n/a
Story:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Game System:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Design & Artwork:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



### The Setting

The *Gamemaster's Guide* expands on the richly detailed world introduced in the *Player's Guide*, offering deeper insight into the factions, locations, and conspiracies that shape the *Achtung! Cthulhu* universe. Set in the shadow of World War II, the guide introduces a sinister undercurrent where Nazi occult factions, such as the Black Sun and Nachtwölfe, harness dark magic and ancient artifacts to further their war efforts. Opposing them are the Allied occult forces, Section M and Majestic, whose agents are just as steeped in magic and espionage.

The book enhances the atmosphere with expanded world-building elements, including new locations and secret bases, which serve as staging points for missions or final confrontations. The setting mixes real-world war tension with otherworldly dangers, allowing the GM to craft adventures filled with both tactical challenges and existential dread.

### Game Mechanics

One of the core strengths of the *Gamemaster's Guide* is the wealth of tools and systems it provides to help GMs craft memorable campaigns. The 2d20 system, central to *Achtung! Cthulhu*, is flexible and cinematic, designed to cater to both action-heavy gameplay and narrative-driven moments. The *Gamemaster's Guide* focuses on how to best utilize these mechanics to heighten tension and create immersive, dangerous situations.

### Key mechanics include:

- **Threat and Momentum:** These core mechanics are central to the tension of the game. Threat is a pool that the GM can use to increase the stakes by introducing environmental hazards, enhancing enemy abilities, or summoning more eldritch horrors. Momentum, on the other hand, is accumulated by players and can be spent to achieve greater success. The *Gamemaster's Guide* provides advice on how to manage these resources to create a balanced, high-stakes game.
- **Eldritch Horrors and Mythos Creatures:** The guide offers expanded rules and advice on how to use Lovecraftian monsters and cosmic horrors. These creatures are not just physical threats but psychological ones, capable of warping reality and driving characters to madness. The book provides guidance on how to effectively portray these monsters to instill fear and how to balance encounters involving them.
- **Magic and Rituals:** Magic in *Achtung! Cthulhu* comes with a heavy price. The *Gamemaster's Guide* delves deeper into the mechanics of spellcasting, dark rituals, and occult knowledge. While players may be tempted to use powerful magic, the GM is equipped with rules to ensure that such powers come at a cost—whether through physical corruption, mental degradation, or unintended consequences.
- **Combat and Warfare:** The guide emphasizes the importance of combat tactics, equipment, and military action in the game. While the players face supernatural threats, the horrors of war are ever-present. The book provides guidelines on running large-scale battles, coordinating resistance movements, and making use of WWII-era technology in both ground and air operations.



## Design & Illustrations

Much like the Player's Guide, the Gamemaster's Guide is beautifully designed with a clean, accessible layout that makes it easy to reference during play. The illustrations are detailed and atmospheric, depicting wartime scenes infused with supernatural elements.

Whether it's soldiers confronting a Shoggoth or occultists performing forbidden rites, the artwork enhances the immersion and horror of the setting.

The book is structured in a way that allows GMs to quickly access the tools they need—whether it's a list of threats, environmental hazards, or tips for creating compelling NPCs.

The visual elements support the themes of dread and tension, while the intuitive organization helps GMs navigate the rules and lore efficiently.

## Conclusion

The Achtung! Cthulhu 2d20 Gamemaster's Guide is a must-have for any GM looking to run a thrilling and immersive campaign. It provides a wealth of resources, from detailed setting lore to flexible gameplay mechanics, all designed to help GMs craft complex narratives filled with action, intrigue, and terror. The guide balances the historical weight of WWII with the cosmic horror of Lovecraft's mythos, ensuring that each session feels both grounded in reality and fraught with supernatural dread.

With its stunning artwork, clear layout, and comprehensive rules, the Gamemaster's Guide enhances the Achtung! Cthulhu experience, offering the perfect toolkit for GMs who want to bring their players face-to-face with both the horrors of war and the madness of the Mythos.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** <https://modiphius.net/products/achtung-cthulhu-2d20-gamemasters-guide-pdf>



# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME REVIEW: DUNE

## ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM: AGENTS OF DUNE DELUXE STARTER SET

### STARTING TO ROLEPLAY IN FRANK HERBERT'S DYSTOPIAN UNIVERSE

**Agents of Dune** by Modiphius Entertainment takes players on a journey into the vast, intricate, and deeply political universe of Frank Herbert's *Dune*. Part of the *Dune: Adventures in the Imperium* roleplaying game, this standalone adventure box set introduces both new players and seasoned veterans to a detailed, high-stakes campaign where House politics, espionage, and survival intertwine. Leveraging the 2d20 system, *Agents of Dune* immerses players in the struggles for power and influence on the desert planet of Arrakis.

**Dune - Adventures in the Imperium: Agents of Dune Deluxe Starter Set**  
**Tabletop Roleplaying Game**  
**Box - Modiphius Entertainment**

**Overall:** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Character Creation: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



### The Setting

*Agents of Dune* is steeped in the rich lore of *Dune*. It's set within the brutal and fascinating world of Arrakis, where every grain of sand holds value, and where the spice, melange, is the most coveted resource in the universe. The game situates players within a new House tasked with taking over governance on Arrakis, thrusting them into the deadly politics of the Landsraad, the intrigue of rival Houses, and the ever-present danger posed by the native Fremen and the lethal environment of the planet itself.

What stands out about the setting is how faithful the game remains to Herbert's original vision while offering flexibility. The political tension, existential dread, and environmental themes central to *Dune* are captured brilliantly. Players find themselves navigating alliances, rivalries, and the dangers of both the landscape and the Harkonnen remnants left on Arrakis.

The box set provides detailed resources for understanding the geopolitical landscape of the *Dune* universe, including House charts, briefings on notable factions like the Bene Gesserit, Mentats, and Sardaukar, as well as descriptions of how melange affects the universe at large. This allows both newcomers to the franchise and die-hard fans to engage with the setting fully, ensuring that players can immerse themselves in the intrigue-heavy atmosphere for which *Dune* is known.



### Character Creation

In *Agents of Dune*, character creation is centered around creating agents of a newly established House tasked with taking control of Arrakis. The characters, whether they be noble-born members of the House or loyal retainers, all serve a vital role in advancing their House's interests. The game employs Modiphius's 2d20 system, which emphasizes narrative choices and versatility in character backgrounds.

Players build their characters by selecting Archetypes such as Duelist, Mentat, Spymaster, or Swordmaster of Ginaz, which helps define their characters' roles within the House. Each Archetype is aligned with specific talents and skills, ensuring a level of specialization that encourages teamwork and group dynamics.

The Lifepath system allows characters to have detailed backgrounds, reflecting their past experiences, allegiances, and how they came into the service of the House. These details not only create well-rounded characters but also provide rich hooks for storytelling and roleplaying opportunities.

Additionally, Agents of Dune shines in allowing customization to reflect the player's engagement with different aspects of the Dune universe.

For instance, players may decide to delve into espionage, military strategy, or the use of the Voice—each bringing unique strengths to the table. The characters are bound not only to their personal motivations but to the interests of their House, which adds layers of tension and decision-making.

### Game Mechanics

The game uses the 2d20 system, a versatile framework that Modiphius has employed in other games such as Conan and Star Trek Adventures. This system allows for a balance between narrative-driven action and tactical decision-making, making it ideal for a universe like Dune, where political intrigue is just as important as combat prowess.

At its core, the 2d20 system is about resource management and risk. Players roll two twenty-sided dice to determine success or failure on tasks, with the option to add extra dice through Momentum, which is gained by rolling more successes than needed. Momentum can be spent to gain further advantages, such as extra actions, improved results, or obtaining crucial information. Conversely, the Game Master (GM) uses Threat, a pool of resources generated by players taking risks, to create complications and heighten tension.

Agents of Dune puts a strong emphasis on social interactions and intrigue, and the mechanics reflect this. Players often engage in duels of wits and negotiations, with rules that make these interactions feel just as dynamic as physical combat. Additionally, the game has unique rules for espionage, where characters must carefully manage their resources, hide their intentions, and outmaneuver their enemies in the deadly game of House politics.

The system also integrates the harsh environment of Arrakis, with mechanics for managing desert survival, dehydration, and spice addiction. The spice itself plays a significant role in the game, offering characters special abilities and foresight, but at a cost—over-reliance on melange can lead to addiction and corruption, a narrative thread for players to navigate.

### Design & Artwork

Agents of Dune is not just a campaign but a well-designed toolkit for running a full, intricate Dune experience. The physical design of the box set is visually stunning, with beautifully illustrated cards, character sheets, and maps that help bring Arrakis to life.

The attention to detail in the design is impressive, from the lavishly produced House dossiers to the modular nature of the adventure content, which allows the GM to adapt the narrative based on player choices.

The game is structured to be approachable for newcomers, yet rich enough to engage experienced players. The pre-generated characters and streamlined rules introduction ensure that players can jump into the action quickly.

For GMs, the game offers a wealth of guidance, including clear instructions for setting the tone, managing tension, and keeping the political intrigue at the forefront of the story.

The adventure provided in the box set spans several sessions and offers a mixture of combat, diplomacy, and problem-solving. The narrative is carefully constructed, with branching paths and multiple outcomes depending on the players' actions, making the game feel reactive to the choices made by the players rather than being a linear experience.

### Conclusion

Agents of Dune by Modiphius Entertainment is a highly polished, atmospheric, and deeply engaging RPG experience. It successfully captures the depth and complexity of the Dune universe while offering a flexible system that accommodates both intricate political maneuvers and intense combat encounters.

For fans of Dune, this game is a treasure trove of lore and immersive storytelling potential. The 2d20 system is a perfect fit for the intrigue-heavy nature of the setting, allowing players to influence not just individual events but the fate of entire Houses. The design is visually stunning, and the content is rich enough to provide countless hours of gameplay.

While the game's emphasis on narrative and politics may not be for everyone, those who relish the challenge of navigating complex power dynamics and weaving together an epic tale will find Agents of Dune a truly rewarding experience. Whether you're a veteran RPG player or new to tabletop gaming, this box set offers an accessible yet profound entry point into the world of Dune.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.modiphius.net/products/dune-agents-of-dune](http://www.modiphius.net/products/dune-agents-of-dune)





# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME REVIEW: LEGENDS OF AVALLEN

## ROLEPLAYING IN A CELTIC-FLAVORED FANTASY WORLD

**Legends of Avallen is a Celtic-inspired tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) created by Adhafera Studios, steeped in the mythology, folklore, and traditions of ancient Britain. The game blends a focus on narrative-driven gameplay, historical inspiration, and mythic storytelling. Players take on the roles of aspiring heroes and adventurers in the land of Avallen, a world filled with wild magic, ancient mysteries, and legendary creatures. With a strong emphasis on exploration, character growth, and moral choices, Legends of Avallen stands out as a unique TTRPG experience. Using a card-based mechanic rather than traditional dice rolls, the game offers a fresh approach to problem-solving and conflict resolution.**

**Legends of Avallen**  
**Tabletop Roleplaying Game**  
**Book - Adder Stone Games**

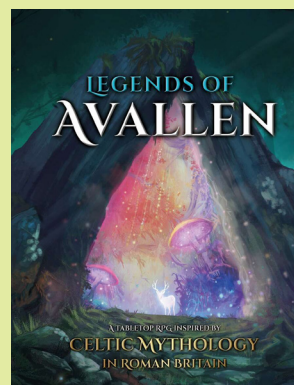
**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Character Creation:      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story:                        0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork:      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



### The Setting

The land of Avallen is a richly detailed setting, drawing heavy inspiration from Celtic myths and Arthurian legends. The island of Avallen is a living, breathing world, filled with lush forests, sacred groves, mystical lakes, and ancient standing stones. It's a place where the forces of nature and magic intertwine with everyday life. Players are immersed in a world where the spiritual and natural are not separate but interconnected, and every decision can shape the landscape around them.

The game's timeline places players during the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Celtic and Arthurian myth, making the land ripe for adventurers seeking to shape the future of Avallen. The world itself is divided between two primary forces: the nature-focused Druids and the structured Knights. These two factions represent different approaches to magic, governance, and morality, allowing players to align themselves with the ideals they find most compelling.

The game is also rich in lore, with legendary creatures like fae, dragons, and other beings from Celtic mythology playing a large role in shaping the world's mysteries and quests. Avallen is a place where every hill, river, and grove holds ancient secrets and where the deeds of the past influence the future.



### Character Creation

Character creation in Legends of Avallen focuses on flexibility, allowing players to craft characters that are deeply connected to the mythic world of Avallen. Characters begin as simple villagers, growing into legends as they engage with the game's rich narrative and explore the island's many mysteries.

### Attributes

Instead of using traditional RPG stats like Strength or Dexterity, Legends of Avallen uses four core attributes that define a character's abilities in different areas:

- **Vigour:** This represents physical endurance, strength, and toughness. It's crucial for combat actions like fighting and surviving harsh conditions. Characters with high Vigour excel in physical tasks, from wielding weapons to enduring the elements.
- **Agility:** This measures speed, reflexes, and dexterity. Characters with high Agility are adept at stealth, acrobatics, and precise movements. Agility governs ranged attacks and dodging in combat, as well as other delicate tasks like climbing or picking locks.

- **Spirit:** Representing a character's connection to the mystical and magical forces of Avallen, Spirit governs magic, intuition, and a character's ability to connect with the natural and spiritual world. Druids, in particular, benefit from high Spirit, as it enhances their magical abilities and interaction with the island's mythical forces.
- **Wit:** This reflects intelligence, creativity, and quick thinking. Characters with high Wit are skilled at problem-solving, strategy, and manipulation. Wit plays a vital role in social encounters, diplomacy, and understanding complex magical or historical knowledge.



that reflect their character's proficiency in that area. For example:

- A character attempting a physically demanding task, like climbing a cliff or swinging a sword, would draw from their deck using their Vigour-related cards. Stealth or acrobatic feats, such as sneaking past enemies or dodging attacks, would rely on Agility cards.
- Casting spells or interacting with spiritual beings would call for Spirit cards.
- Diplomatic negotiations or solving complex puzzles would depend on Wit cards.

### **Combat and Magic**

### **Path of the Hero**

In Legends of Avallen, characters start as ordinary villagers and progress along the Path of the Hero, working toward becoming legendary figures. This journey is shaped by the player's choices, personal quests, and how they interact with the world. As they progress, characters gain new abilities and influence over Avallen, allowing for a sense of growth both mechanically and narratively.

### **Archetypes and Skills**

Players can choose from various archetypes that reflect traditional Celtic roles, each with their own unique abilities. Druids, Knights, Bards, and other archetypes offer different strengths and weaknesses. Druids, for example, use their deep connection with nature to summon creatures or manipulate the environment, while Knights focus on martial prowess and leadership. The skill-based system allows players to specialize in areas like combat, magic, or social influence, creating a diverse range of character builds.

### **Game Mechanics**

The Legends of Avallen system is centered around a card-drawing mechanic that drives action resolution. Players draw from a deck to determine the success or failure of actions, with each card representing a combination of luck, skill, and the character's abilities.

### **Action Resolution and Deck-Building**

Instead of traditional dice rolls, actions are resolved by drawing cards from a deck that represents the character's available skills, abilities, and fortune. Each player builds a deck based on their chosen skills and archetype, allowing for a high degree of customization and strategy. For instance, a Druid's deck might include cards that boost their connection to nature, while a Knight's deck might focus on combat maneuvers and defense.

### **Vigour, Agility, Spirit, and Wit in Gameplay**

The four core attributes—Vigour, Agility, Spirit, and Wit—are tied directly into the card system. When performing an action related to one of these attributes, players draw cards

Combat in Legends of Avallen is fast-paced and strategic, relying on the card-drawing system to simulate the unpredictability of battle. Characters must carefully manage their resources, as each action depletes cards from their deck. Players must decide whether to go all-in during a fight or conserve their strength for later challenges. Magic, particularly for characters with high Spirit, plays a central role in the game. Druids can manipulate the environment, summon creatures, and perform powerful rituals, but the use of magic often comes at a cost. Overuse of Spirit cards may result in unintended consequences, adding an element of risk to every spell cast.

### **Design & Artwork**

The design and artwork of Legends of Avallen are exceptional, beautifully capturing the Celtic-inspired aesthetic of the game. The illustrations evoke the natural beauty and mysticism of the island of Avallen, with detailed depictions of sacred groves, ancient standing stones, and legendary creatures. The game's visual style draws heavily from Celtic art, with intricate knotwork and symbols incorporated into the design of the cards, character sheets, and rulebooks.

### **Conclusion**

Legends of Avallen is a rich and evocative RPG that offers players the chance to step into a world filled with ancient magic, personal growth, and mythic adventures. The game's emphasis on storytelling, exploration, and character progression makes it a deeply rewarding experience for players who enjoy narrative-driven gameplay. The card-based mechanics provide a fresh approach to problem-solving and combat, encouraging players to think strategically and engage with the world in creative ways.

For those who love Celtic mythology, Arthurian legends, and the magic of ancient landscapes, Legends of Avallen is an exciting and unique entry into the world of tabletop role-playing games.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.adderstonegames.co.uk/loa](http://www.adderstonegames.co.uk/loa)



# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME CAMPAIGN REVIEW: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 5E - AGAINST THE FAIRIE QUEENE

## A 5E & LEGENDS OF AVALLEN CAMPAIGN SET IN THE LEGENDS OF THE FALLEN SETTING

**Against the Faerie Queene** is a campaign book designed for **Legends of Avallen**, but it is also compatible with **Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition**. This 370-page campaign dives deep into Celtic mythology and folklore, offering a mix of high adventure, rich narrative, and strategic gameplay. The overarching story pits players against the powerful and enigmatic Faerie Queene, who seeks to reshape the world in her image. Throughout this campaign, players will explore everything from political intrigue to magical mysteries, all while facing the ever-growing

**Dungeons & Dragons 5E & Legends of Avallen - Against the Faerie Queene**  
Tabletop Roleplaying Game Campaign  
Book - Adder Stone Games

**Overall:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Character Creation:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story:

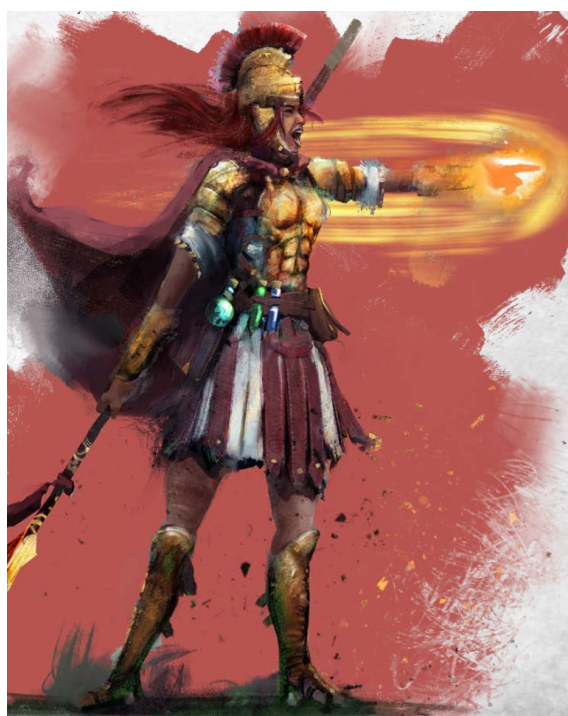
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



### The Setting

The campaign takes place in the mythic land of Avallen, a world heavily influenced by Celtic and Roman history. The setting itself feels alive with magic, ancient secrets, and legendary creatures, and it is steeped in deep folklore. The Faerie Queene, once human and now transformed into a powerful fae ruler, seeks to overthrow the gods and dominate Avallen. Players navigate a world divided between the Vallic clans, representing Celtic tribes, and the Raxian Empire, inspired by the Romans. This clash of cultures, combined with the mystical forces of the fae, makes for a world full of conflict, political intrigue, and wonder.

The campaign spans multiple environments, from the dense forests of Glyn Coth to the eerie shores of cursed towns, offering diverse settings that are as dangerous as they are beautiful. The campaign is structured around five distinct adventures, each with its own style and narrative focus:

**The Hunt:** Players track a demonic boar to save a royal wedding.

**The Heist:** A daring theft of a mythical artifact.

**The Horror:** A mystery in a cursed seaside town, complete with dark twists and supernatural threats.

**The Games:** A series of trials in gladiatorial combat where players vie for the legendary sword, Caledfwlch.

**The Cairn:** The epic conclusion in which the players descend into the fae realm to stop the Faerie Queene's ascension.

The modular design allows for flexibility in how these adventures are played. Aside from the first and final chapters, the middle three can be completed in any order, offering the Game Master (GM) more control over pacing and player choice.

The campaign explores various genres, from adventure and mystery to horror, making sure no two sessions feel the same. This variety keeps players engaged and allows for different styles of role-playing, whether through combat, puzzle-solving, or diplomatic encounters.

### Character Creation



Against the Faerie Queene expands character creation by introducing five new paths (or archetypes), available both for Legends of Avallen and D&D 5E. These new archetypes offer varied playstyles and deepen the character-building options, providing new ways to interact with the world of Avallen.

**Automaficer:** A skilled artisan capable of

creating living artifacts.

**Enwyr:** Masters of True Names, wielding ancient knowledge to unlock magical powers.

**Faceless:** A shapechanger with the ability to alter their appearance.

**Paragon:** A representation of Vallic virtues, inspiring others.

**Philosopher:** Scholars who seek to understand the world's deeper truths.

These paths bring fresh abilities and mechanics, from crafting automatons to manipulating the essence of names. For D&D 5E players, these archetypes can be easily integrated into other campaigns, though they are thematically tied to the world of Avallen, enriching the storytelling possibilities for both new and veteran players.

## Game Mechanics

The game uses a card-based mechanic in Legends of Avallen, while D&D 5E players stick to the traditional dice systems. In Legends of Avallen, the card mechanic adds a unique element, providing a more strategic layer to conflict resolution and exploration. The campaign introduces Fate Cards, which allow players to alter their environment or shift the narrative direction, making gameplay feel more dynamic and story-driven.

Combat in Against the Faerie Queene is often designed to be cinematic, allowing players to anticipate and react to the monsters' more devastating moves. For example, monsters can telegraph their most powerful attacks a round in advance, allowing players to strategically counter or mitigate the damage, adding tension and excitement to each encounter.

Additionally, the campaign leans into exploration, diplomacy, and stealth, expanding how players approach their challenges. Players aren't just encouraged to hack and slash their way through problems but to use cunning, negotiation, and careful planning to succeed.

## Design & Illustrations

Against the Faerie Queene boasts stunning artwork, heavily inspired by Celtic and Roman motifs. The visual presentation enhances the atmospheric world of Avallen, with evocative maps and character art that breathe life into the campaign's many settings. The color-coded boxes used throughout the book help GMs easily distinguish between narrative elements, NPC stats, and world-building information. This thoughtful design streamlines gameplay, ensuring that the game's complexity doesn't overwhelm the storytelling.

## Conclusion

Against the Faerie Queene is a standout campaign for Legends of Avallen and 5E players alike. Its deep connection to Celtic folklore and mythology creates a richly textured world where narrative and gameplay come together beautifully.

With its flexible structure, diverse adventure styles, and new character options, this campaign offers something for every type of player, whether they enjoy combat, exploration, or political intrigue. For those seeking a fresh, immersive RPG experience with a strong mythological core, Against the Faerie Queene delivers an epic and enchanting journey.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.adderstonegames.co.uk/atfq](http://www.adderstonegames.co.uk/atfq)





# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT REVIEW: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 5E: THE MASTERCLASS CODEx

## 16 EXTRA CLASSES FOR THE BEST-SOLD TTRPG IN EXISTENCE

The Masterclass Codex, published by EN Publishing, is a comprehensive supplement for Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition, offering 16 new character classes that expand upon traditional class archetypes. These classes, originating from A Touch of Class and A Touch More Class, are designed to provide players with innovative options that move beyond the standard D&D class structure. The Codex brings new mechanics, subclasses, and detailed customization options, making it an exciting addition for those looking to diversify their game.

### The Masterclass Codex Tabletop Roleplaying Game Supplement Book - EN Publishing

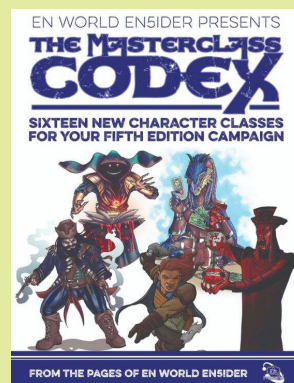
Overall: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Character Creation: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Game System: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Design & Artwork: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



### Character Creation

The Masterclass Codex provides a wide range of thematic classes, each tailored for specific playstyles. Among the standout options are the Alchemist, a scientist of magical concoctions; the Gunfighter, a black-powder expert; and the Monster Tamer, a class focused on bonding with and controlling fearsome creatures. Other intriguing classes include the Diabolist, who makes dark pacts for power, and the Savant, who leverages knowledge as a weapon. Each class comes with its own set of subclasses, adding even more variety and depth to character creation. These new classes are particularly appealing for players who want to explore unique and specific fantasy archetypes. For example, the Feywalker allows characters to draw on primal chaos, while the Morph offers shape-shifting abilities that can be tailored through three distinct essences: Doppelganger, Primordial Beast, and Trickster.

### Game Mechanics

Each class in the Codex is designed to offer new gameplay mechanics. The Cardcaster, for instance, casts spells by drawing from a tarot deck, making each turn unpredictable and adding a layer of strategic randomness to their magic. The Bloodweaver uses their own life force to fuel their spells, creating a risk-reward dynamic where every spell casts could tip the balance in life-or-death situations. The Codex also includes rules for multi-classing into these unique classes, giving players even more freedom to blend abilities and create hybrid characters. Many of the classes include custom mechanics that differ significantly from traditional 5E classes, providing fresh gameplay experiences while still staying balanced for use alongside core 5E material.

### Design & Artwork

The Masterclass Codex features clean and accessible design, with intuitive layouts that make it easy for players and Dungeon Masters to incorporate the new content. Each class includes comprehensive descriptions of their abilities, clear progression paths, and plenty of subclass options for further specialization. The artwork throughout the book is evocative, bringing to life the varied and unique fantasy elements of each class;

### Conclusion

Overall, The Masterclass Codex is an excellent resource for D&D 5E players and Dungeon Masters who want to add complexity and flavor to their campaigns. Its classes provide fresh and innovative mechanics that can lead to new, exciting gameplay experiences. Whether you're a veteran player seeking new challenges or a DM looking to offer your players something different, this collection is a worthwhile addition to your D&D library.

Dirk Vandereyken

More info: [www.enpublishingrpg.com/products/the-masterclass-codex](http://www.enpublishingrpg.com/products/the-masterclass-codex)

# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME REVIEW: PARANOIA: THE CORE BOOK

## NEWEST EDITION OF THE FUNNIEST TTRPG EVER

Paranoia is a legendary role-playing game that first appeared in the 1980s, and in 2017, Mongoose Publishing revived the franchise with a fresh take on the setting, mechanics, and tone in Paranoia: The Core Book. Known for its dark humor, chaotic gameplay, and the ever-present threat of betrayal, Paranoia immerses players in a dystopian future where trust is non-existent, and everyone is a potential enemy. But how does the new version hold up? In this review, we'll explore the setting, character creation, game mechanics, design, and artwork of Paranoia: The Core Book.

### Paranoia: The Core Book Tabletop Roleplaying Game Book - Mongoose Publishing

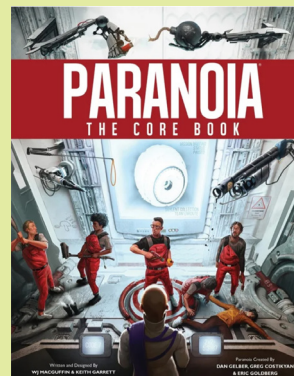
Overall: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Character Creation: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Story: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Game System: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Design & Artwork: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



### The Setting

Welcome to Alpha Complex, a twisted futuristic society ruled by an all-seeing artificial intelligence known as The Computer. Life in Alpha Complex is a nightmare painted in vivid satire. Citizens are divided into color-coded security clearance levels, with Infrared at the bottom and Ultra-Violet at the top. Every facet of life is controlled by The Computer, which is paranoid, delusional, and obsessed with rooting out "traitors"—a category so broad that it can include almost anyone at any time.

Players take on the roles of Troubleshooters, a dangerous job tasked with hunting down traitors, mutants, and members of secret societies. The twist is that every player character is likely involved in the very things they're supposed to be stopping. The Computer, of course, remains blissfully unaware of this irony, so long as players toe the line and remain loyal—at least, on the surface.

The setting thrives on its absurdity, and this dystopian world is brought to life through a combination of Orwellian surveillance, Kafkaesque bureaucracy, and brutal, often nonsensical rules. Death is common, betrayal is expected, and paranoia is your constant companion. The game's setting perfectly complements its mechanics, pushing players to embrace both the chaos and the comedy.



### Character Creation

Character creation in Paranoia is an intentionally chaotic process that fits the game's absurd tone. Players create their Troubleshooters using an innovative, semi-random system where they don't have full control over their abilities. In fact, a good portion of a character's skills are determined by the other players at the table. This creates an environment where sabotaging your teammates can begin even before the game starts.

Each character is assigned a security clearance, starting with Red, and must balance a complex set of allegiances. They are members of a secret society and might possess illegal mutant abilities—both of which are punishable by death. The beauty of character creation lies in how these elements set up every player for failure, forcing them to navigate a world where their very existence is a crime.





Instead of building heroic characters, players are encouraged to embrace the flaws, weaknesses, and chaotic tendencies of their Troubleshooter. The humor of Paranoia shines in this system, as players must grapple with both The Computer's absurd expectations and the competing agendas of their fellow party members.

### Game Mechanics

The mechanics of Paranoia are refreshingly simple but support the game's emphasis on chaos and unpredictability. The core system is built around six-sided dice (D6), with players rolling a pool of dice to determine the success or failure of their actions. Skill rolls are quick and to the point, but what sets Paranoia apart is the inclusion of the Computer Dice, a special die added to every roll.

The Computer Dice introduces random effects based on The Computer's whims. Rolling The Computer symbol can trigger unexpected events, often involving The Computer taking direct control of a situation or questioning the player's loyalty. This system keeps players on their toes and ensures that no action, no matter how simple, is entirely under their control.

Death is handled uniquely in Paranoia. Each player starts with a series of clones, allowing them to come back after dying—often in increasingly ridiculous ways. While death is inevitable, the game is not about survival, but rather about how long players can maintain their facade before their traitorous activities are uncovered.

The game encourages player-versus-player interactions, with betrayals, backstabbing, and accusations of treason baked into the very structure. Experience points are given out in a similar chaotic fashion, often based on The Computer's perception of the Troubleshooter's loyalty rather than their success. This approach keeps the game from becoming too mechanical, allowing players to focus on the story and the humor rather than simply trying to win.

### Design & Artwork

The design and layout of Paranoia: The Core Book are clean and accessible, but also capture the dystopian, bureaucratic nature of the setting. The pages are filled with helpful sidebars and bold, attention-grabbing boxes that make it easy to follow the rules, while also keeping the thematic tone intact. The book is designed to evoke the feeling of navigating through Alpha Complex's bureaucratic maze, with visual elements such as Computer directives and mandatory forms that help reinforce the tone.

The artwork is both functional and evocative, adding depth to the setting while reinforcing the comedic undertones of the game. The illustrations capture the absurdity of life in Alpha Complex—from paranoid citizens glancing over their shoulders to The Computer's ever-present watchful eyes. Characters are depicted in exaggerated, cartoonish styles that enhance the humor, but still maintain a sense of the oppressive atmosphere that defines Alpha Complex.

### Conclusion

Paranoia: The Core Book by Mongoose Publishing is a brilliant revival of a classic RPG, blending dark satire with fast-paced, chaotic gameplay. The setting of Alpha Complex is as absurd and dystopian as ever, providing players with a rich playground for betrayal, sabotage, and treason. Character creation and the game mechanics are streamlined to enhance the thematic elements, ensuring that the focus remains on fun and narrative rather than intricate rules. The design and artwork reinforce the satirical tone, making the book both a practical tool and an enjoyable read. Whether you're a fan of the original Paranoia or entirely new to the setting, in the world of Paranoia, trust no one, especially not your fellow player.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.mongoosepublishing.com/products/paranoia-core-book](http://www.mongoosepublishing.com/products/paranoia-core-book)

# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT REVIEW:

## PARANOIA: THE ACCOMPLICE BOOK

### COMMIE MUTANT TRAITOR SCUM EXPOSED

Hot on the heels of *Paranoia: The Core Book*, *Paranoia: The Accomplice Book* dives deeper into the treacherous world of Alpha Complex, offering new layers of chaos, betrayal, and treason for players and Game Masters alike. This supplement expands the core game by introducing fresh tools for both characters and GMs to enhance the paranoia, including new secret societies, mutant abilities, and mission complications.

**Paranoia: The Accomplice Book**  
**Tabletop Roleplaying Game Supplement**  
**Book - Mongoose Publishing**

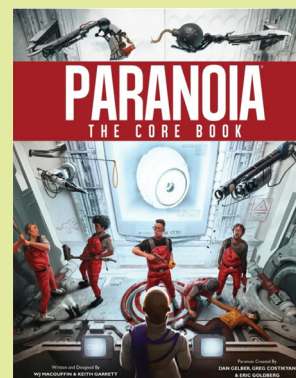
**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Character Creation:      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:                        0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:            0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Design & Artwork:      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



#### The Setting

As an expansion, *The Accomplice Book* enriches the *Paranoia* setting by deepening the twisted, bureaucratic labyrinth of Alpha Complex. The familiar paranoia-inducing environment, overseen by the hyper-vigilant and delusional Computer, remains the same, but this supplement adds new layers of intrigue and insanity. Players are introduced to more obscure, hidden corners of the Alpha Complex, with new opportunities to exploit or get caught in the crossfire of endless bureaucratic inefficiency and conspiracies.

This supplement delves further into the secret societies and factions operating beneath The Computer's nose, providing GMs with additional material to keep players guessing. These societies offer more opportunities for character intrigue, each with its own twisted agenda, forcing players to navigate even more dangerous waters. The setting enhancements in *The Accomplice Book* give players more reasons to be suspicious, and Game Masters more fuel to stoke the fires of distrust.

#### Character Creation

*The Accomplice Book* offers exciting additions to the character creation process, introducing expanded options for secret societies, mutant abilities, and service groups. Players can now explore more nuanced or absurd secret affiliations, which can drastically shift gameplay. New societies are introduced, ranging from the quietly insidious to the utterly bizarre, giving players additional ways to undermine each other—or accidentally (and hilariously) reveal their own treasonous activities.

Mutant abilities are also expanded, with new, often ridiculously overpowered (and dangerous) powers that reflect the unpredictable nature of Alpha Complex's genetic mishaps. However, using these new abilities increases the risk of detection by The Computer, making their use as much a gamble as an asset. The book encourages players to take these risks, ensuring that the tension between cooperation and betrayal remains at the forefront of the game.

Service groups also get more depth, providing characters with new roles within Alpha Complex's rigid hierarchy. These roles can serve as a tool for gaining leverage or hindering fellow Troubleshooters, adding a new layer of strategy to character creation. Overall, *The Accomplice Book* takes character creation from *The Core Book* and dials it up, providing more opportunities for chaos, betrayal, and of course, fun.







## Game Mechanics

From a mechanical standpoint, *The Accomplice Book* doesn't reinvent the wheel but rather enhances the existing systems established in *The Core Book*. It offers new options for character progression, including more specialized skills and equipment designed to further complicate missions and interactions between players. Players can now access more devious gadgets and weapons, many of which are just as likely to malfunction as they are to help—adding yet another level of absurd danger.

For GMs, *The Accomplice Book* provides new mission templates, side quests, and complications that inject even more unpredictability into the game. These missions are designed to increase tension, often leading to outright disaster—exactly what you want in a *Paranoia* session. The supplement also includes optional rules that allow for even greater flexibility when handling mutant powers, secret society missions, and mid-game betrayals. These additions keep the game feeling fresh, allowing for more creativity in crafting scenarios that force players into increasingly absurd situations.

One particularly fun mechanic introduced is the Commendation and Demotion system, which lets The Computer reward or punish Troubleshooters based on their performance—or, more often, its flawed perception of their performance. These rewards and punishments can shift power dynamics mid-game, giving certain players more influence—or stripping it away in the blink of an eye.

## Design & Artwork

Like *The Core Book*, *The Accomplice Book* maintains the same clean and humorous design that *Paranoia* fans have come to expect. The layout is structured to make it easy to navigate, with sidebars and diagrams that simplify complex rules and make gameplay smooth and intuitive. The writing continues to balance dystopian oppression with satirical humor, creating a guide that is as fun to read as it is to play.

The artwork once again stands out, combining comic-style illustrations with the darkly absurd tone of the game. The new pieces showcase even more of the exaggerated, chaotic life within Alpha Complex, with characters depicted in increasingly dangerous and laughable predicaments. Whether it's an overly enthusiastic citizen trying to appease The Computer or a Troubleshooter meeting an unfortunate (and often deserved) end, the art reinforces the game's themes of betrayal, paranoia, and dark humor. It adds to the immersive quality of the book, making it feel like a part of Alpha Complex's chaotic world.

## Conclusion

**Paranoia:** *The Accomplice Book* is an essential supplement for any *Paranoia* GM or player who wants to expand their game and push the boundaries of chaos and mistrust even further. It builds on the foundations set by *The Core Book* by introducing more ways for players to betray, fail, and—hopefully—survive. The expanded secret societies, mutant powers, and mission complications ensure that no session feels the same, and the new GM tools make it easier than ever to generate creative, unpredictable adventures.

The game mechanics and character creation additions fit seamlessly into the *Paranoia* universe, providing even more opportunities for absurdity and backstabbing. The witty design and engaging artwork ensure that *The Accomplice Book* is not only a useful resource but a delightful companion to *The Core Book*. If you want to take your *Paranoia* experience to the next level, this supplement is a must-have, offering hours of hilarious, tension-filled gameplay. Trust no one—but trust us, *The Accomplice Book* is well worth the dive into the depths of treason and madness.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.mongoosepublishing.com/products/the-accomplice-boo](http://www.mongoosepublishing.com/products/the-accomplice-boo)

# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME REVIEW: THE REVENANT SOCIETY - DELUXE BOXED SET INVESTIGATION-IN-A-BOX

The *Revenant Society* is a unique tabletop role-playing game designed by Banana Chan and Sen Foong-Lim, blending elements of mystery, time loops, and macabre storytelling. Published by Van Ryder Games, this RPG places players in the role of Revenants—undead beings trapped in a time loop, trying to solve the mystery of their own deaths. The game uses the Powered by the Apocalypse system, where players rely on 2D6 rolls to perform actions and uncover clues as they navigate their eerie afterlife.

## The Revenant Society Tabletop Roleplaying Game Box - Van Ryder Games

Overall: ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Character Creation: ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Story: ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System: ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Design & Artwork: ○ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



## Setting

The game is set in the atmospheric cities of 1910s Paris or 1920s New York, each steeped in historical intrigue and a sense of Gothic mystery. Players take on the role of revenants, souls stuck in a time loop between midnight and dawn, where they must unravel the reasons behind their deaths. As they gather clues and revisit events, they aim to prevent the Shattering Event, a catastrophic occurrence tied to their demise. The setting is richly thematic, with Art Deco aesthetics contributing to an immersive, noir-inspired experience.

## Character Creation

Character creation in *The Revenant Society* offers players the chance to build their unique undead avatars. The game begins with players selecting or creating their revenant characters who vaguely remember their past lives. These revenants are tasked with solving the mystery of their own deaths, trapped in a loop that restarts after each failed attempt. Here's how character creation works!

Players start with Playbooks, which are structured templates typical of Powered by the Apocalypse (PbtA) games. These Playbooks offer different archetypes, each representing a specific type of revenant or undead being with a unique past and skill.



set. The Playbooks guide players in shaping their characters' abilities, narrative backgrounds, and Moves (special abilities).

### Examples of archetypes include:

**The Diplomatic:** Skilled in persuasion with Moves like Gossip or Poison Breath.

**The Glamorous:** A character whose appeal lies in mystique and allure.

**Other archetypes:** There are a variety of character templates, each offering different ways to interact with the world and their mysteries.

While characters start with basic frameworks from these Playbooks, players are encouraged to customize their revenants by building on their backstories, which are unveiled progressively through gameplay. Character development is tied to the overall mystery of their demise, and players can choose from a variety of traits, skills, and special Moves that suit their character's narrative arc.

The Game Master, known as the Fate Weaver, helps guide character creation by weaving the backstories into the central mystery. They help players link their character's memories and fragmented past to the overarching narrative of the game. Through this process, characters evolve as they gather clues and learn more about their deaths.

While The Revenant Society allows for deep character customization, it does provide pre-generated Playbooks to get players started. However, players are not limited to these pre-generated frameworks and can extensively modify and expand on the provided Playbooks, creating fully fleshed-out, custom revenants that evolve with the story.

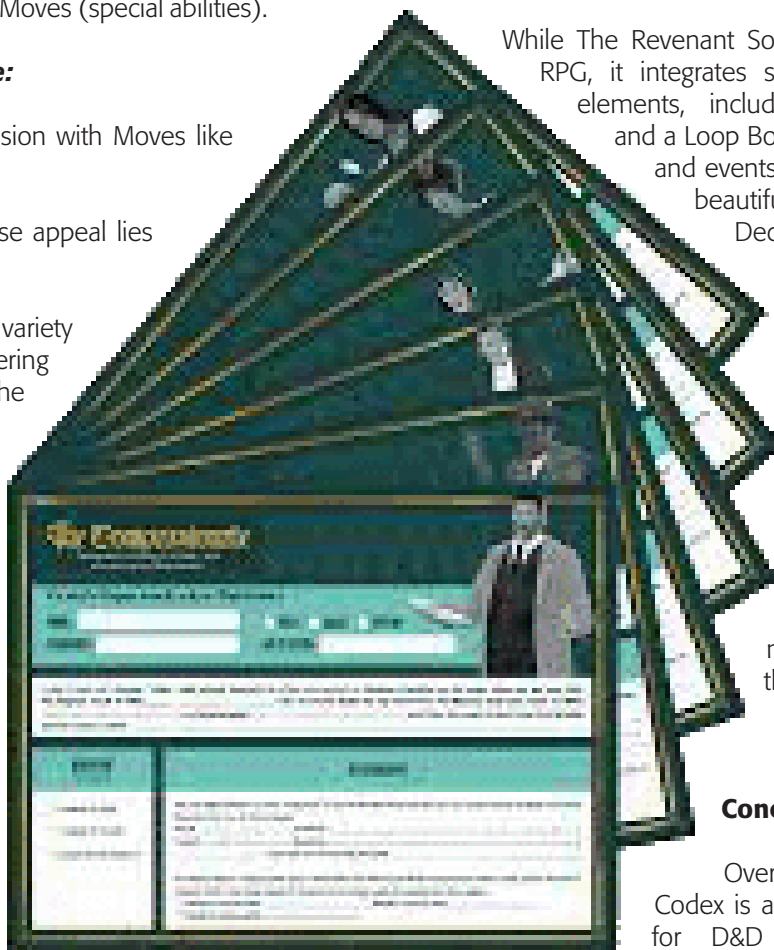
### Game Mechanics

At its core, The Revenant Society uses the Powered by the Apocalypse system, a framework that emphasizes narrative-driven play. Players, known as Revenants, perform "Moves" based on 2D6 rolls, with varying outcomes depending on their success. These Moves allow players to investigate clues, interact with NPCs, and navigate their decaying forms through the city while avoiding the Watchers—malevolent entities intent on keeping them trapped in the loop.

Each session typically spans 2 to 4 hours and revolves around replaying the same night four times, with players retaining knowledge from previous loops to help them solve the mystery. The Fate Weaver (Game Master) oversees the unfolding narrative, managing fixed events that remain consistent across loops and introducing new complications to keep the story dynamic.

### Design & Artwork

While The Revenant Society is primarily an RPG, it integrates several board game elements, including maps, tokens, and a Loop Board to track progress and events. The game features beautifully designed Art Deco components that reflect the early 20th-century setting, enhancing the immersion. Players can access a deluxe edition with physical tokens, miniatures, and other tools to help organize the game's many moving parts, though the core PDF offers a more streamlined, print-friendly option.



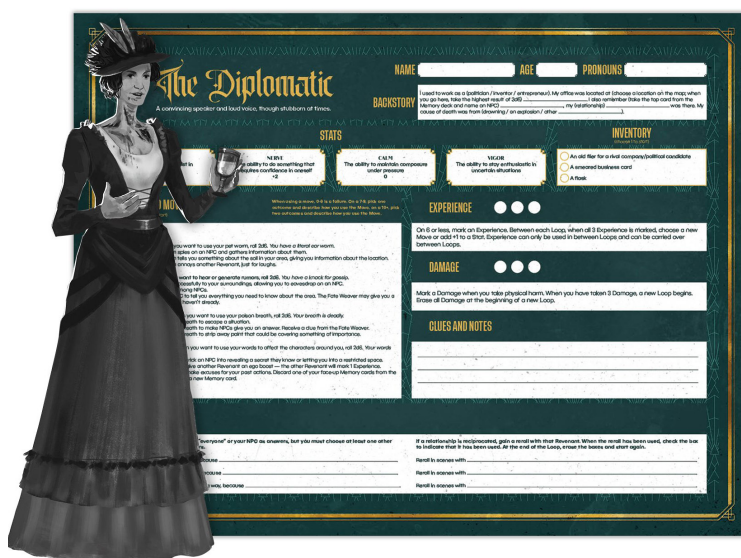
### Conclusion

Overall, The Masterclass Codex is an excellent resource for D&D 5E players and Dungeon Masters who want to add complexity and flavor to

their campaigns. Its classes provide fresh and innovative mechanics that can lead to new, exciting gameplay experiences. Whether you're a veteran player seeking new challenges or a DM looking to offer your players something different, this collection is a worthwhile addition to your D&D library.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.vanydergames.com/products/the-revenant-society](http://www.vanydergames.com/products/the-revenant-society)



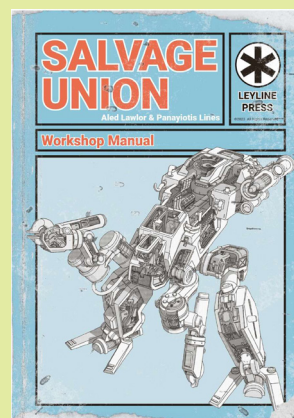
# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME REVIEW: SALVAGE UNION

## MECH-BASED STORYTELLING

Salvage Union is a post-apocalyptic mech tabletop RPG that combines the thrill of piloting giant mechs with the gritty realism of a world torn apart by war and ecological collapse. Set in a world ruled by corporate-controlled mega-settlements known as Arcos, players take on the role of salvager mech pilots, scouring the wastelands for valuable scrap to maintain their livelihood. The game uses the Quest RPG system, offering a streamlined and accessible entry point into the often complex genre of mecha RPGs.

**Salvage Union**  
Tabletop Roleplaying Game  
Book - Leyline Press

**Overall:** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
Character Creation: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
Story: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Game System: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Design & Artwork: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



### Setting

The world of Salvage Union is a bleak, war-torn wasteland where the remnants of civilization cling to survival. The majority of humanity lives in massive walking settlements called Crawlers, which function as both homes and mobile bases for the players. These Crawlers are central to the story, acting as the hub where players repair their mechs, upgrade their equipment, and interact with NPCs. The setting is evocative of a future where high-tech corporate elites have isolated themselves in Arcos while the rest of humanity struggles to survive amidst the ruins.

### Character Creation

Character creation in Salvage Union is both flexible and flavorful. Players begin by selecting a pilot class, each with its own unique skill tree, background, and flavor-driven elements like callsigns and mottos. These elements aren't just for show; they carry mechanical weight, offering re-rolls or other bonuses during gameplay.

Mech creation is equally detailed, allowing players to either build their mech from scratch using a budget or select from pre-designed templates.

Mechs are as much a part of the character as the pilot, and each one comes

with its own set of stats and abilities that can be further customized with various modules and upgrades.

Mech creation is equally detailed, allowing players to either build their mech from scratch using a budget or select from pre-designed templates. Mechs are as much a part of the character as the pilot, and each one comes with its own set of stats and abilities that can be further customized with various modules and upgrades.

### Game Mechanics

Salvage Union is powered by the Quest RPG system, which simplifies mechanics while still offering a robust level of customization. Players roll a d20, with a roll of 6+ being considered a success. The game emphasizes narrative over granular mechanics, but combat can still be intense and strategic, especially when piloting mechs. Character and mech customization are core features of the game, with players choosing from 30 different mech chassis and over 150 systems and modules to create their perfect machine. Each player also controls a pilot with their own skill trees, backgrounds, and special abilities. This dual-layered customization—where players manage both their human character and their mech—adds depth to the gameplay. The mechs themselves can range from plodding, heavily armored haulers to nimble, bird-like machines armed with devastating weaponry.



## Design & Artwork

The design and artwork of *Salvage Union* perfectly complement its gritty, post-apocalyptic setting. The visual style is a blend of industrial, functional aesthetics mixed with futuristic elements, evoking a world where giant mechs and scavengers roam the wastelands. The artwork, especially the mech designs, is highly detailed, showcasing a wide variety of chassis types from lumbering, heavily armored machines to sleek, agile forms like the *Mazona*. These designs are meant to fuel the imagination, with each mech evoking its unique personality and purpose.

The book's overall layout is sleek and intuitive. Color-coded edges make it easier for players to navigate between sections, a thoughtful touch for quick reference during gameplay.

However, some graphic design choices, such as the snake-like flow of the character creation pages, could have been more user-friendly. The illustrations of the mechs, NPCs, and environments are vivid and rich in detail, pulling players deeper into the immersive world of *Salvage Union*.



In terms of aesthetics, the artwork leans heavily into the “scrappy survivalist” vibe, with rusted, patched-together machines and a wasteland filled with decayed urban environments. The illustrations add depth to the world-building, helping players visualize the harsh reality of survival in a future ruled by corporate elites and dangerous bio-titans.

### Conclusion

*Salvage Union* delivers an engaging experience for fans of both mech fiction and post-apocalyptic settings. Its blend of narrative-driven play, deep customization, and a gritty world of survival and scavenging makes it a standout title in the genre. While it lacks the granular depth of more traditional mecha RPGs, its focus on accessible mechanics and rich storytelling makes it a perfect choice for both veterans and newcomers.

Dirk Vandereyken

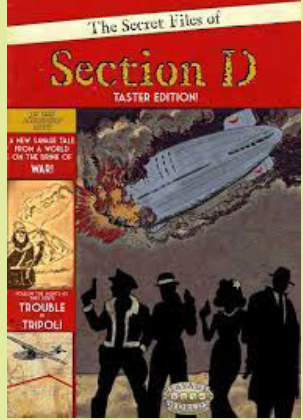
**More info:** <https://leyline.press/collections/salvage-union>



# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME REVIEW: THE SECRET FILES OF SECTION D

## A PULP-ACTION HORROR WWII HORROR INJECTION

The Secret Files of Section D is a pulp-action tabletop RPG set in an alternate-history version of the late 1930s, where espionage, cryptid monsters, and supernatural phenomena blend together. Powered by the Savage Worlds system, the game places players in the shoes of British intelligence agents, tasked with protecting the world from occult threats while Nazi pseudo-science, ancient secrets, and arcane powers rise to prominence. Published by Imaginarium Games, the setting embraces classic pulp adventure, with shades of Indiana Jones, James Bond, and The X-Files.

<b>The Secret Files of Section D</b> <b>Tabletop Roleplaying Game</b> <b>Book - Imaginarium Games</b>	
<b>Overall:</b>	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Character Creation:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Story:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Game System:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Design & Artwork:	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

### Setting

The game is set in the late 1930s, as the world teeters on the edge of World War II. In The Secret Files of Section D, history has been altered: magic is real, and secret societies, ancient cryptids, and alien technology all exist in this re-imagined world. The Nazis are aggressively searching for supernatural weapons, and the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) has formed Section D, a covert division tasked with investigating and neutralizing occult threats to the empire.

The campaign's action plays out across a variety of exotic locations: from searching for cryptids like the Yeti in Tibet, to recovering alien technology in Tunguska, or sabotaging Nazi attempts to harness ancient Atlantean relics. Section D's agents are constantly in a race against time to thwart the nefarious schemes of Heinrich Himmler and other global enemies.

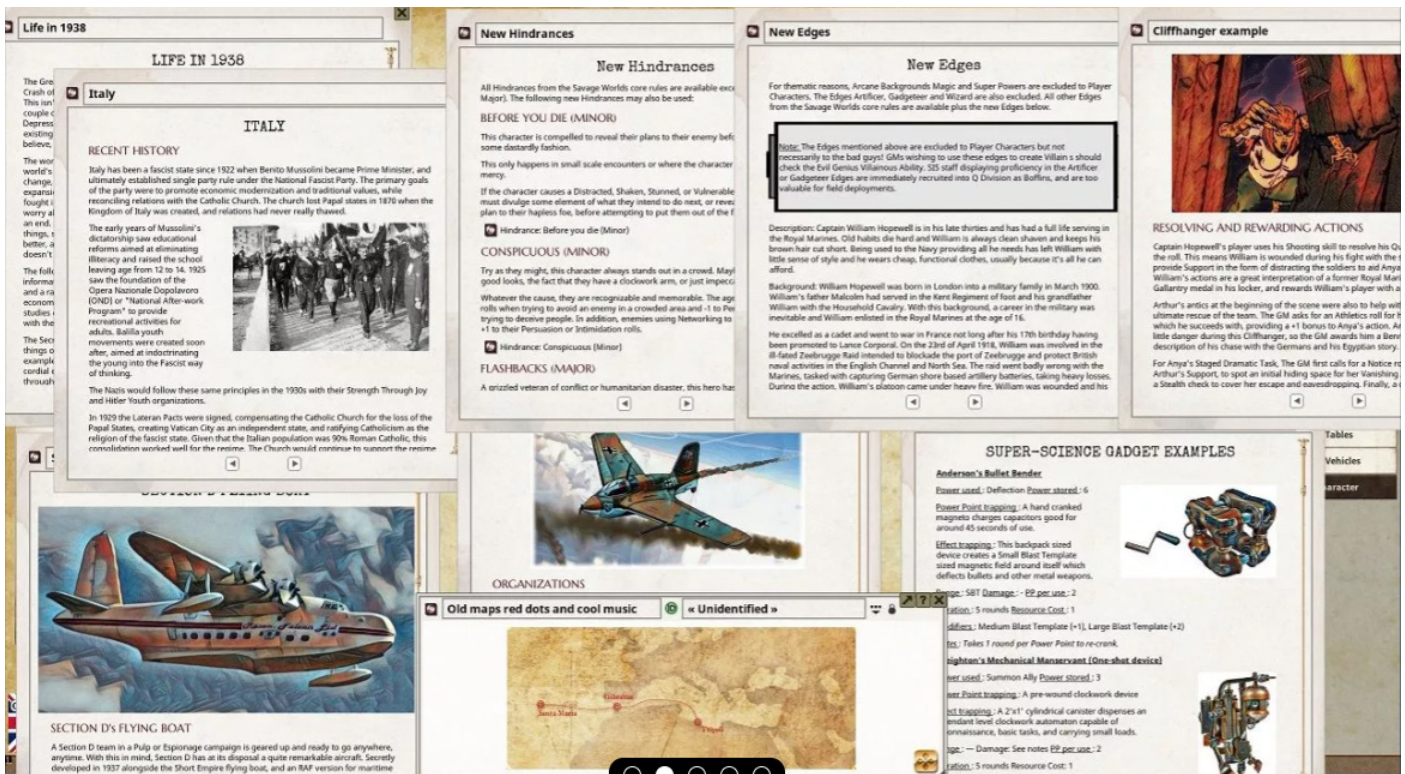
The setting is pulp at its core, capturing the adventuring spirit of the era, and it weaves elements of fantasy, conspiracy, and espionage into its alternate-history narrative. This world is full of cryptids, like the Loch Ness Monster, Nazi cults, ancient gods, and alien visitors—all threatening humanity from the shadows.

### Character Creation

Character creation in The Secret Files of Section D is both flexible and thematic, allowing players to build characters that fit into the game's pulp espionage narrative.

- **Concept and Background:** Players begin by developing their character's concept, such as a hardened spy, a cryptid hunter, or an academic with occult knowledge. These concepts are fleshed out with backgrounds that tie the character into the overarching world of espionage, mysticism, and global conspiracy.
- **Attributes and Skills:** Characters have five core attributes: Agility, Smarts, Spirit, Strength, and Vigor. Players allocate points to these attributes, which influence dice rolls for various actions. Characters also select from a wide range of skills that align with espionage or adventuring, such as Shooting, Stealth, Investigation, or Arcane Knowledge.
- **Edges and Hindrances:** Players select Edges and Hindrances that shape their characters' abilities and personalities. Edges may enhance combat abilities, increase stealth, or offer bonuses when dealing with mystical threats. Hindrances add challenges, such as personal traumas, curses, or physical disabilities, which can lead to rich role-playing opportunities.
- **Equipment and Gadgets:** Characters are equipped with a variety of tools and gadgets, from standard-issue pistols and espionage devices to ancient relics or experimental weapons. Players can customize their gear to match their character's role within the agency.
- **Arcane Backgrounds:** Some characters may choose to dabble in arcane powers, allowing them to wield ancient magic or artifacts. These powers come with risks, as characters may attract unwanted attention from dark forces or suffer mental degradation from exposure to forbidden knowledge.





## Game Mechanics

The Secret Files of Section D utilizes the Savage Worlds Adventure Edition (SWADE) system, known for its fast, action-focused gameplay. The system encourages cinematic action, with quick dice rolls and narrative-driven mechanics.

Players roll polyhedral dice based on their skill levels, with a target number of 4 for most actions. Successes allow players to overcome obstacles, while higher rolls can lead to greater successes. Wild Cards (players and key NPCs) roll a Wild Die (usually a d6) alongside their regular dice, increasing the chance of success. Players earn Bennies (tokens) throughout the game, which can be used to re-roll dice, avoid damage, or achieve extraordinary feats.

Blaze of Glory is a new rule that allows characters to make a heroic sacrifice, going out in a final, memorable action that can dramatically affect the outcome of a mission. Characters have access to a wide range of Edges (beneficial traits) and Hindrances (flaws), allowing for deeply customized agents.

These mechanics support the game's pulp-adventure style, with some Edges focusing on espionage, cryptid hunting, or arcane knowledge. Hindrances add layers of complexity, such as being haunted by past missions or having a debilitating fear of supernatural entities. The game also introduces rules for cryptid hunting, magic use, and code breaking, providing a unique toolkit for espionage-based adventures.

Combat and Gear: Combat in The Secret Files of Section D uses the SWADE mechanics, where players draw cards to determine initiative, with higher cards acting first. Characters engage in shootouts, fistfights, or vehicle chases using fast-paced, narrative-driven rules.

The game provides a wide array of weaponry, from standard firearms to experimental gadgets and mystical artifacts.

## Design & Artwork

The visual presentation of The Secret Files of Section D perfectly captures the pulpy, action-packed feel of the setting. The book is filled with illustrations of cryptids, occult artifacts, and exotic locations, all of which help immerse players in the dangerous, fantastical world of 1930s espionage.

The layout is intuitive, with sections clearly divided and color-coded for easy navigation. Artwork showcases both the mundane and the mystical elements of the game, from Nazi research labs to ancient ruins filled with arcane traps. The style perfectly balances the gritty espionage atmosphere with the high-adventure feel of pulp fiction.

## Conclusion

The Secret Files of Section D is an exciting fusion of espionage, pulp action, and supernatural horror. The game's use of the Savage Worlds system ensures fast-paced, cinematic gameplay, while the rich setting provides endless possibilities for narrative-driven adventures.

Whether you're infiltrating a Nazi base in search of an ancient artifact or battling cryptids in the snowy mountains of Tibet, The Secret Files of Section D offers thrilling adventures with a supernatural twist.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.imaginariumgames.com](http://www.imaginariumgames.com)

# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME REVIEW: SHADOWRUN: SIXTH WORLD - CORE RULEBOOK “CITY EDITION” BERLIN THE FANTASY CYBERPUNK TTRPG PAR EXCELLENCE UPDATED

The *Shadowrun: Sixth World Core Rulebook “City Edition” Berlin* is a specialized edition of the Sixth World ruleset, enhanced with region-specific content focusing on the neon-lit, cyberpunk streets of Berlin in 2080. Released by Catalyst Game Labs, this edition not only incorporates the latest errata and updates to the core mechanics of *Shadowrun Sixth Edition* but also introduces unique plot hooks, character qualities, and setting details that reflect Berlin’s distinct socio-political atmosphere within the Sixth World.

**Shadowrun: Sixth World - Core Rulebook “City Edition” Berlin**  
Tabletop Roleplaying Game  
Book - Catalyst Game Labs

**Overall:**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Character Creation:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:

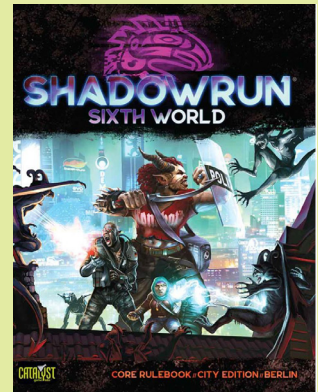
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



## Setting

Berlin stands as one of the most complex cities in the *Shadowrun* universe—a city torn apart by corporate interests, anarchist enclaves, and factional strife. In this urban jungle, players take on the role of shadowrunners, hired guns navigating the dangerous political landscape of the city while surviving corporate espionage, gang wars, and the creeping influence of magic and technology.

Berlin in 2080 is a city that defies the corporate dominance seen in many other *Shadowrun* settings. The city is divided into autonomous districts, each controlled by different factions, from anarchist groups to megacorporations. This fractured governance creates a hotbed of intrigue, where shadowrunners can find endless work, whether it’s smuggling goods across faction borders or working as spies for rival enclaves.

### **Key Features of Berlin:**

**Anarchist Zones:** Unlike most other cities in the Sixth World, Berlin is not entirely controlled by corporations. Anarchist groups have carved out entire sections of the city, providing a stark contrast to the rigid corporate structures in places like Seattle or Neo-Tokyo.

**Factions and Gangs:** The city is home to various factions, including street gangs, political movements, and corporations. These groups vie for control of different parts of the city, giving shadowrunners ample opportunities for espionage, sabotage, and combat.





#### **Step 4: Choose Qualities**

Qualities are advantages and disadvantages that give characters additional depth. Positive Qualities provide benefits, such as better combat accuracy or enhanced magic, while Negative Qualities create flaws or weaknesses that provide role-playing opportunities and offer additional points to spend on skills or equipment.

In City Edition: Berlin, some Qualities are specific to the setting. For example, players may take a Quality that gives them favor with one of the anarchist factions or a corporate benefactor, giving them access to new jobs and missions, but also increasing their enemies.

#### **Step 5: Magic or Technology?**

One of the key choices in Shadowrun is whether a character leans towards magic or cybernetics. Magic users can choose to become shamans, mages, or adept technomancers, each with their own set of magical powers. On the other hand, cyberware and bioware allow non-magic characters to enhance their abilities through technology, often at the cost of Essence. In Berlin, magic users may find themselves embroiled in mystical conflicts tied to ancient sites or cryptic factions, while technomancers and deckers could specialize in navigating the faction-divided cyberspace of the city.

#### **Step 6: Factions and Contacts**

In Berlin, factions are more important than ever. Characters will choose contacts based on the different power groups they want to associate with. These contacts can range from local anarchist leaders to high-level corporate execs, and they help shadowrunners navigate Berlin's political landscape. Building the right network of allies (and enemies) can mean the difference between life and death in a shadowrun.

#### **Step 7: Other Stuff**

Gear in Shadowrun ranges from mundane street-level equipment to high-end cyberware and magic-enhancing foci. Players can invest in weapons, armor, hacking tools, and magical implements to suit their playstyle. With the added layers of Berlin's complex economy, black-market dealings become crucial, as runners often acquire gear through illegal means or factional connections. These attributes, which influence dice rolls for various actions.

Characters also select from a wide range of skills that align with espionage or adventuring, such as Shooting, Stealth, Investigation, or Arcane Knowledge.

Players select Edges and Hindrances that shape their characters' abilities and personalities. Edges may enhance combat abilities, increase stealth, or offer bonuses when dealing with mystical threats. Hindrances add challenges, such as personal traumas, curses, or physical disabilities, which can lead to rich role-playing opportunities.

Characters are equipped with a variety of tools and gadgets, from standard-issue pistols and espionage devices to ancient relics or experimental weapons. Players can customize their gear to match their character's role within the agency.

**Technological Utopia or Dystopia?:** Berlin is a city where high-tech wonders coexist with grimy slums, making it a playground for runners who are equally comfortable in cyberspace or on the streets. The tension between these two worlds is palpable, creating an environment where every job is a balancing act between magic, technology, and raw survival.

#### **Character Creation**

Character creation in Shadowrun: Sixth World - Berlin City Edition follows the basic framework of Sixth World, but offers unique options that cater to the chaotic and factional nature of Berlin. The process is highly customizable, allowing players to create unique shadowrunners who can thrive in Berlin's turbulent political landscape.

#### **Step 1: Choose a Metatype**

In Shadowrun, metatypes refer to the different races that characters can belong to, such as humans, elves, dwarves, orks, and trolls. Each metatype has its own set of base attributes and characteristics, which affect how they interact with the world.

- **Humans:** The most common metatype, known for their flexibility and access to additional Edge points.
- **Elves:** Agile and charismatic, often excelling in social situations and stealth.
- **Orks and Trolls:** Stronger but less subtle, these metatypes tend to shine in combat roles.

#### **Step 2: Choose Attributes**

Players allocate points to five core attributes: Body, Agility, Reaction, Strength, and Willpower, as well as specialized attributes such as Edge and Essence. Essence is crucial for balancing magic and cyberware, as installing too much technology depletes a character's ability to use magic. Edge, on the other hand, represents tactical advantage and can be spent during gameplay to tip the odds in the player's favor.

#### **Step 3: Select Skills**

Skills in Shadowrun determine what characters are good at, from hacking the Matrix to wielding firearms. Depending on the character's archetype, players can select from a wide range of skills, including combat skills, technical expertise, magic, and social influence. In the Berlin edition, several new Berlin-specific skills may be introduced to reflect the local context, such as negotiation or smuggling across borders.

Some characters may choose to dabble in arcane powers, allowing them to wield ancient magic or artifacts. These powers come with risks, as characters may attract unwanted attention from dark forces or suffer mental degradation from exposure to forbidden knowledge.

## Game Mechanics

The Berlin City Edition maintains the core mechanics of Shadowrun Sixth Edition, emphasizing streamlined gameplay that still retains the deep tactical nature that longtime fans of Shadowrun expect. The system is designed to create fast-paced, high-stakes action.

**Dice Pool System:** Characters roll pools of six-sided dice (d6) based on their attributes and skills. The target number is generally 5 or 6, with successes determined by how many dice roll high enough. The number of hits determines the success or failure of actions.

**Edge System:** Edge is a key feature in Sixth Edition, allowing players to gain advantages during encounters. Edge can be spent to alter dice rolls, reroll failures, or even make sixes "explode" (rolling additional dice for more chances at success). The system encourages strategic thinking and rewards players for clever decision-making in combat and hacking scenarios.

**Combat and Hacking:** Combat is streamlined to make each encounter fast but deadly. Players roll dice based on their weapon stats, and combat rounds resolve quickly with fewer modifiers than in previous editions. Similarly, hacking in the Matrix (the virtual reality of the Sixth World) has been simplified but remains challenging, allowing technomancers and deckers to dominate in cyberspace.

## Design & Artwork

The Shadowrun: Sixth World Core Rulebook "City Edition" Berlin stands out visually with its distinctive and immersive design, perfectly capturing the cyberpunk and anarchist spirit of Berlin in 2080.

The artwork features stunning depictions of the city's iconic neon-lit streets, towering corporate skyscrapers, and shadowy underground scenes.

The illustrations strike a balance between gritty realism and the fantastical elements of Shadowrun, showcasing high-tech gear, dystopian landscapes, and intense urban combat. Each piece of art helps to pull players into the world, giving them a sense of Berlin's chaotic energy, from bustling marketplaces to corporate boardrooms.

The layout of the book is thoughtfully organized, with each section clearly delineated, allowing for easy navigation during gameplay. The pages are color-coded and feature fold-out sections that highlight important rules or city details, making it practical for both players and Game Masters.

Additionally, the character artwork is highly detailed, providing visual references for the various factions, metatypes, and gear that populate the Sixth World.



## Conclusion

Shadowrun: Sixth World - Berlin City Edition is an excellent expansion for both new and experienced Shadowrun players. The Berlin setting adds a unique twist to the already rich Sixth World universe, providing new challenges and opportunities for shadowrunners.

With its detailed character creation system, streamlined mechanics, and immersive setting, the Berlin edition allows players to explore the depths of political intrigue, corporate warfare, and magical mysteries.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [store.catalystgamelabs.com/collections/shadowrun/products/shadowrun-sixth-world-core-rulebook-city-edition-berlin-1](https://store.catalystgamelabs.com/collections/shadowrun/products/shadowrun-sixth-world-core-rulebook-city-edition-berlin-1)



# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT REVIEW:

## SHADOWRUN (SIXTH WORLD) - THE NEEDLE'S EYE

### A NEW PLOT SOURCEBOOK

**Shadowrun: The Needle's Eye is an intriguing addition to the Sixth World universe that shifts the focus away from the gritty streets and brings players into the opulent world of the ultra-wealthy. As part of a prestigious and perilous event known as "The Grand Tour," shadowrunners are invited to infiltrate this elite circle, full of hidden dangers beneath its luxurious surface. This plot book introduces new layers of intrigue and strategy, where social maneuvering and covert operations take center stage, adding a thrilling complexity to the familiar dynamic.**

#### Shadowrun (Sixth World) - The Needle's Eye Tabletop Roleplaying Game Book - Catalyst Game Labs

##### Overall:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Character Creation:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:

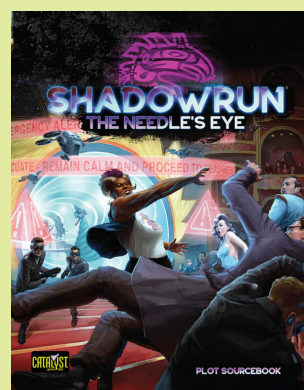
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



### Setting

The core premise of The Needle's Eye centers around The Grand Tour, a high-profile event frequented by some of the most powerful individuals in the world. These elites are not just rich, but often ruthless, and have access to vast resources, corporate ties, and even assassination teams at their beck and call. The locations featured, including cities like London, Paris, Zurich, and Frankfurt, are hubs of wealth and influence in the Sixth World, but each comes with its own set of challenges and unique political landscapes.

The game's focus shifts from the gritty, cyberpunk street-level encounters that many Shadowrun players are used to, and instead explores the corporate and political power games that operate behind closed doors. Players are thrust into a world where gathering intelligence, manipulating powerful individuals, and uncovering hidden truths are just as important as brute strength or hacking prowess. It's a departure from the usual chaos of shadowrunning, offering more opportunities for strategic roleplay, dialogue, and cunning over combat.

The Needle's Eye is filled with pre-made plot hooks and mission ideas, making it easy for Game Masters to incorporate this setting into their campaigns. These hooks are designed to cater to both new players and seasoned veterans, allowing a wide range of play styles to thrive in this upscale environment. Players could find themselves infiltrating secret auctions where forbidden technology is on sale, disrupting shady backroom deals, or even tracking down sensitive corporate information that could topple entire organizations.

The game also doesn't shy away from danger. While the surface of The Grand Tour is all elegance and glamour, the stakes are incredibly high. A wrong word, a misstep at a high-end gala, or a botched attempt at infiltration could lead to players being hunted by powerful adversaries. The world of The Grand Tour is glamorous, but it's also cutthroat, making each decision critical to the mission's success and the team's survival.

One of the unique aspects of The Needle's Eye is its international scope. Unlike many Shadowrun campaigns that are focused on a single city or region, this plot book takes players on a journey through some of the most iconic and powerful cities in the Sixth World. Each city is brought to life with rich detail, offering both familiar settings and new twists that make them distinct from their real-world counterparts.

London is presented as a city where royalty and corporate power collide, with traditionalists and tech-innovators vying for dominance. Paris is a city of art and style, but beneath its beauty, corporate espionage and underworld dealings are as fierce as ever. Zurich acts as a banking and corporate haven, where the wealth of the Sixth World's elite is stored—and where those elites may hide their most dangerous secrets. Frankfurt is a central hub of commerce and tech, rife with innovation and cutthroat corporate tactics. Each city is crafted to offer its own unique flavor of intrigue, and Game Masters are given the tools to immerse players in these diverse and dynamic environments.

## Character Creation

The social and political intrigue of *The Needle's Eye* opens up new avenues for character development and interaction. Players who enjoy playing "face" characters—those skilled in negotiation, deception, and diplomacy—will find countless opportunities to shine. However, the game still offers plenty of room for hackers, riggers, and street samurai, as security is tight, and uncovering digital secrets or navigating high-tech surveillance systems is essential to completing missions.

The diverse scenarios encourage teamwork, with each member of the team needing to play their role, whether through hacking into secure systems, sneaking past high-tech security, or negotiating with powerful NPCs. *The Needle's Eye* is an ideal playground for players who enjoy blending combat, tech, and social encounters in their campaigns. **Edges and Hindrances:** Players select Edges and Hindrances that shape their characters' abilities and personalities. Edges may enhance combat abilities, increase stealth, or offer bonuses when dealing with mystical threats. Hindrances add challenges, such as personal traumas, curses, or physical disabilities, which can lead to rich role-playing opportunities.

## Game Mechanics

One of the major highlights of *The Needle's Eye* is how it integrates new game dynamics that emphasize social encounters, deception, and high-stakes negotiation. Players may find themselves in delicate conversations with dangerous executives or working their way into exclusive parties, all while maintaining their cover.

The mechanics of the core Sixth World ruleset still apply, but the missions here challenge players to engage in cons, complex heists, and social subterfuge.

This new focus can appeal to players who enjoy the narrative depth of *Shadowrun* and the rich storytelling opportunities presented when dealing with high-level political intrigue. For example, characters skilled in charisma, persuasion, or etiquette will likely shine in this environment, though there's always room for muscle to deal with security teams or secret enemies.

## Conclusion

*Shadowrun: The Needle's Eye* is an essential addition to the Sixth World for those looking to explore a more refined, strategic, and socially-driven side of shadowrunning. It offers a rich setting full of intrigue, deception, and high-stakes operations set in some of the world's most prestigious locations. This plot book challenges players to think beyond simple heists and combat, focusing instead on navigating a world where information, influence, and secrecy are the greatest currencies.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.store.catalystgamelabs.com/products/shadowrun-the-needles-eye](http://www.store.catalystgamelabs.com/products/shadowrun-the-needles-eye)





# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT REVIEW:

## TRAVELLER - SOLOMANI FRONT

### EXPLORING A TENSE SECTOR IN SPACE

Traveller has long been a beloved RPG for fans of deep space exploration, political intrigue, and tactical warfare. In *Traveller: The Solomani Front*, Mongoose Publishing expands the already vast Traveller universe by focusing on a particularly tense and tumultuous region of space—the Solomani Rim. This supplement plunges players into the heart of the conflict between the mighty Third Imperium and the rebellious Solomani Confederation, offering rich lore, tactical opportunities, and endless possibilities for intrigue.

**Traveller - The Solomani Front**  
**Tabletop Roleplaying Game Supplement**  
**Book - Mongoose Publishing**

**Overall:**                    0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Character Creation:        0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Story:                         0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Game System:              0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Design & Artwork:        0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



#### Setting

The Solomani Rim is one of the most iconic and politically charged sectors in the Traveller universe. It's the ancestral home of humanity, where the Solomani—a faction descended from Terrans—are locked in a bitter struggle with the Imperium for control of the sector. The tension between these two factions, one representing humanity's original home and the other a sprawling galactic empire, creates a backdrop rich with possibilities for diplomacy, espionage, and warfare.

The Solomani Front takes players into the heart of this conflict, offering a detailed look at key planets, political tensions, and military installations. The supplement masterfully expands on the complexities of the relationship between the Solomani and the Imperium, delving into questions of identity, freedom, and imperial control. Whether your campaign involves diplomacy, covert operations, or full-scale war, the Solomani Rim is a powder keg waiting to explode, and this book provides the matches.

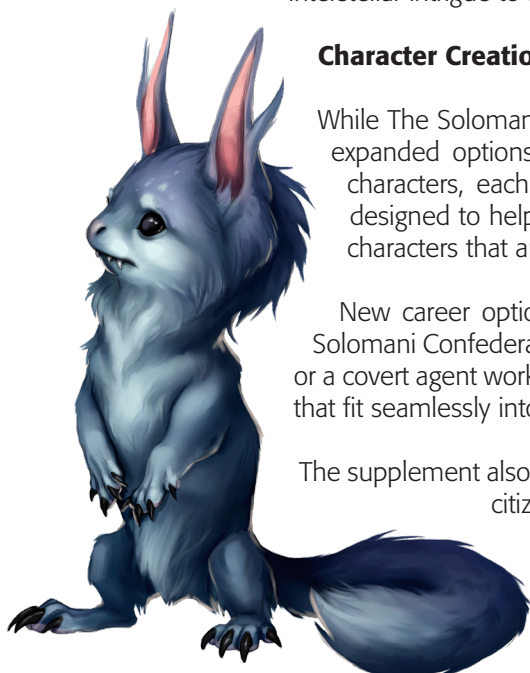
Key systems like Terra, the cradle of humanity, are fully fleshed out, offering players a glimpse into what has become of Earth in the far future. Other worlds, ranging from backwater planets caught in the crossfire to heavily fortified systems at the front lines, are brought to life with vivid detail. GMs will find a wealth of information to build campaigns that focus on anything from interstellar intrigue to military engagements, all set against the backdrop of a galaxy on the brink of war.

#### Character Creation

While *The Solomani Front* doesn't introduce an entirely new character creation system, it does provide expanded options for characters involved in the conflict. Players can create Solomani or Imperial characters, each with distinct backgrounds, allegiances, and motivations. These backgrounds are designed to help players immerse themselves in the nuances of the conflict, allowing them to craft characters that are deeply embedded in the political and military landscape of the Solomani Rim.

New career options are introduced, focusing on military roles within both the Imperium and the Solomani Confederation. Whether you want to play an Imperial naval officer, a Solomani freedom fighter, or a covert agent working behind enemy lines, *The Solomani Front* gives you the tools to create characters that fit seamlessly into the setting.

The supplement also introduces expanded details on cultural differences between Solomani and Imperial citizens, giving GMs and players more opportunities to explore themes of loyalty, patriotism, and rebellion. Characters are not just pawns in a galactic chess game—they have deep, personal stakes in the conflict, and the book provides excellent guidance on how to bring that into gameplay.



## Game Mechanics

The Solomani Front adds several new mechanics that enhance gameplay in this war-torn region of space. While much of the core Traveller system remains intact, this supplement introduces tactical rules for larger-scale warfare, including fleet engagements and planetary invasions. GMs can now run campaigns that scale from small squad-based missions to full-on space battles involving dozens of ships and hundreds of troops.

The book provides comprehensive rules for handling military operations, including detailed guidelines on how to run campaigns focused on espionage, intelligence gathering, and guerrilla warfare.

Characters can take part in skirmishes on contested planets, plan sabotage missions behind enemy lines, or engage in massive fleet confrontations. These mechanics add a layer of strategy and complexity to the traditional Traveller system, making it ideal for players who enjoy tactical decision-making.

One standout feature is the expanded system for covert operations. The Solomani Rim is full of spies, informants, and secretive factions working both for and against the Imperium and the Solomani Confederation. This supplement enhances those elements with new mechanics for intelligence gathering, infiltration, and sabotage, making espionage a thrilling and vital aspect of any campaign set in the region.

## Design & Artwork

Mongoose Publishing continues its tradition of high-quality production with The Solomani Front. The layout is clean and easy to navigate, making it simple for GMs to find the information they need during a session. The content is organized in a way that flows naturally, starting with an overview of the political and military situation before diving into specific worlds, factions, and gameplay mechanics.

The artwork is a real highlight of the book, capturing the feel of a galaxy on the brink of war. From the sprawling battle scenes in space to the gritty depictions of planetary warfare, the illustrations help to immerse players in the Solomani Rim's conflict. The maps, in particular, are detailed and highly functional, giving GMs a clear view of key systems and strategic points in the region.

Additionally, the character art and ship designs add a level of immersion, showcasing the differences between the sleek, imperial aesthetic and the more rugged, practical look of Solomani technology. The contrast in the visuals reflects the divide between the two factions, helping to reinforce the tension at the heart of the setting.

## Conclusion

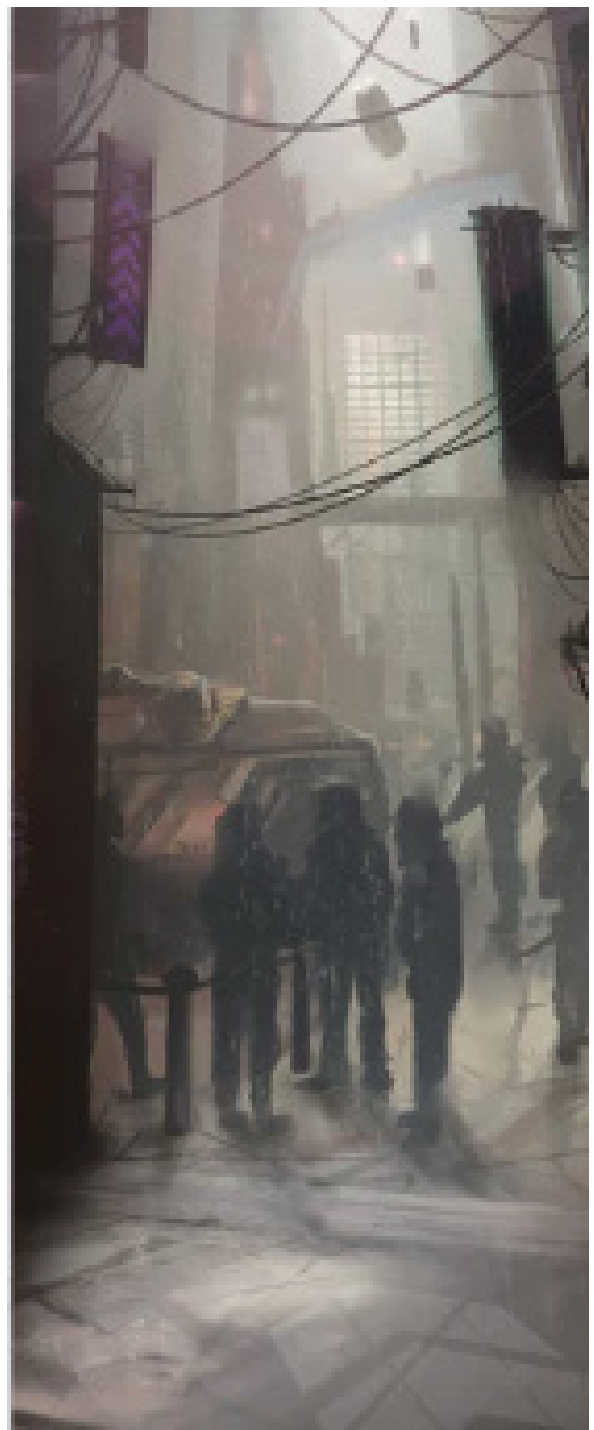
Traveller: The Solomani Front is a fantastic expansion that brings one of the most iconic regions in the Traveller universe to life. It offers a perfect mix of political intrigue, military strategy, and personal drama, allowing players and GMs to explore the depths of a sector on the brink of all-out war.

The expanded character options, tactical mechanics, and focus on espionage provide plenty of variety for different types of campaigns, ensuring that every session feels fresh and engaging.

Mongoose Publishing has done an excellent job with the presentation, from the detailed setting information to the evocative artwork. Whether you're a Traveller veteran or a newcomer, The Solomani Front provides a wealth of material to create rich, immersive stories set against the backdrop of a bitter and deeply personal conflict. For anyone looking to dive deeper into the politics and warfare of the Traveller universe, this supplement is an absolute must-have.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.mongoosepublishing.com/products/solomani-front](http://www.mongoosepublishing.com/products/solomani-front)





# TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT REVIEW:

## WARHAMMER 40,000: IMPERIUM MALEDICTUM

### NEW DIRECTION UNDERLINES CUBICLE 7'S MASTERY OF WARHAMMER

**Warhammer 40,000: Imperium Maledictum is a dark and deeply immersive role-playing game that places players in the terrifying and dystopian future of the 41st Millennium. This game stands out from other Warhammer 40,000 RPGs by focusing on mortal characters rather than the superhuman Space Marines or the larger-than-life warriors of the Imperium. Instead, players assume the roles of vulnerable, but resourceful, agents of the Imperium, carrying out missions for powerful patrons in a universe dominated by war, corruption and intrigue.**

#### The Secret Files of Section D Tabletop Roleplaying Game Book - Imaginarium Games

##### Overall:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

##### Character Creation:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

##### Story:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

##### Game System:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

##### Design & Artwork:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



Developed by Cubicle 7, Imperium Maledictum leverages themes of investigation, espionage, and survival, giving players a chance to explore the shadows of the Imperium, where secretive operations, political subterfuge, and the constant threat of chaos and alien forces dominate their lives. This game puts a fresh spin on the Warhammer 40,000 setting by focusing on the fragility and human nature of its protagonists.

### Setting

The setting of Imperium Maledictum plunges players into the heart of the Imperium during one of its darkest periods: the Age of the Dark Imperium, following the catastrophic opening of the Great Rift. The Great Rift, a tear in reality caused by the Warp, has split the galaxy in two, creating a vast region of lawless space known as Imperium Nihilus. Within this new galaxy-spanning rift, Chaos runs rampant, communication is fractured, and the rule of the Imperium teeters on the brink of collapse.

Players are cast as agents of the Imperium, sent to investigate threats, uncover heresies, and carry out missions that often tread morally gray areas. They serve various Imperial factions like the Inquisition, the Ecclesiarchy, or the Adeptus Mechanicus. In a universe where even the slightest hint of heresy or corruption can spell doom, players must tread carefully as they navigate both political and supernatural dangers.

What makes the setting so compelling is the emphasis on human vulnerability. The game doesn't glorify its characters but instead presents them as cogs in the larger, uncaring machine of the Imperium, which itself is on the verge of collapse. The themes of fanaticism, loyalty, and survival run deep in Imperium Maledictum, making every mission more than just a quest for power but a desperate struggle to keep the Imperium intact, despite its inherent flaws.



### Character Creation

Character creation in Imperium Maledictum offers players a highly customizable system, allowing them to craft unique, multi-dimensional characters who serve at the behest of powerful patrons. Unlike other Warhammer 40,000 RPGs, where players may take on the role of genetically enhanced warriors or alien entities, Imperium Maledictum grounds its characters in the more "normal" and vulnerable aspects of the Imperium. Players are mortal humans, each with their own skillsets, weaknesses, and backgrounds, making survival in this universe a true challenge.



**Archetypes and Roles:** Characters are built around archetypes that define their core roles within the Imperium. Archetypes range from the grim Arbitrators, enforcers of Imperial law, to members of the Adeptus Mechanicus, who worship the Machine God and deal in ancient, forbidden technology. Other archetypes include Imperial clerics, who wield both spiritual and political influence, and rogue traders, who operate outside the conventional rules of the Imperium. Each archetype offers a distinct flavor and skillset, allowing for diverse party compositions and interactions.

**Patrons and Influence:** One of the game's most innovative features is the Patron system. Each party of players is bound to a Patron, a powerful figure within the Imperium who gives the team missions and objectives. Patrons can be planetary governors, Inquisitors, or other high-ranking officials, and their support is crucial to the party's survival. However, these Patrons have their own agendas, and often their missions come with strings attached. The relationship between players and their Patron is central to the game's story, adding an element of political intrigue as players must manage their Patron's expectations while keeping their own interests in mind.

**Customization:** Players have a wealth of options to customize their characters, from selecting backgrounds that inform their past experiences to honing specific abilities that make them vital to their Patron's cause. Characters can specialize in investigation, combat, negotiation, or technical skills, ensuring that every player can craft a character that fits both their playstyle and the needs of the group.

In Imperium Maledictum, character creation is not just about building a powerful hero, but about creating a flawed, nuanced individual who is often at the mercy of forces far larger than themselves. This makes every decision and every character trait crucial.

## Game Mechanics

The core mechanics of Imperium Maledictum revolve around a streamlined d100 system, familiar to fans of previous Warhammer 40,000 RPGs like Dark Heresy or Only War. Players roll percentile dice to determine success, aiming to roll under their skill or attribute thresholds. This system allows for a clear, tactical approach to gameplay, as characters must weigh their abilities against the daunting challenges that the Imperium presents.

**Skill Checks and Combat:** Combat in Imperium Maledictum is lethal and tactical. Characters are far from invincible, and the damage dealt by even standard weapons can be devastating. This forces players to think strategically, making each combat encounter dangerous and tense. Skill checks also play a significant role, especially during investigative missions where players must uncover clues, decode encrypted messages, or determine if a target is trustworthy.

**Patron System:** One of the standout mechanics in Imperium Maledictum is the Patron system. The Patron is a powerful NPC who assigns missions to the group, but this system goes beyond simple quest-giving. Patrons have their own political standing, and players must navigate the relationship carefully. A Patron may expect loyalty, but their demands could lead the group into moral quandaries or potentially fatal missions. Failure to satisfy a Patron's objectives can result in losing favor or even being cast aside in favor of more capable agents, adding a layer of political tension to every decision.

**Corruption and Insanity:** The horrors of the 41st Millennium take a toll on those who serve the Imperium. The game introduces corruption and insanity mechanics, reflecting the mental and spiritual degradation that comes with prolonged exposure to the horrors of war, the Warp, and political manipulation.





Characters may begin to lose their grip on reality, and those who fall too far may face the grim fate of execution by their allies or worse.

**Resources and Influence:** Resources in the Imperium are scarce, and players must often rely on their influence with their Patron to acquire the tools they need for their missions. This creates an interesting economy where the group's success and failure can impact their ability to acquire critical resources, leading to tense moments where players must decide how to best use their limited supplies.

### Design & Illustrations

The design of Imperium Maledictum perfectly captures the oppressive, gothic atmosphere of the Warhammer 40,000 universe. The book's layout is clean and functional, making it easy for players and Game Masters alike to navigate through the rules, mechanics, and lore.

The artwork is stunning, with brooding depictions of the Imperium's decaying grandeur, Hive cities, and looming threats. The illustrations bring the grim setting to life, offering visual representations of the desolate cities, alien landscapes, and unsettling characters that populate the game.

### Conclusion

Warhammer 40,000: Imperium Maledictum is a standout RPG in the Warhammer 40k universe, offering a deep, narrative-driven experience that emphasizes survival, investigation, and political intrigue over brute force. The game's focus on human characters, its rich Patron system, and the lethal consequences of every encounter make it a perfect fit for players who want to explore the darker, more human side of the Imperium. The blend of lethal combat, social maneuvering, and investigative elements offers a variety of playstyles, ensuring that no two campaigns will be alike.

For those who crave the thrill of unraveling political plots, investigating forbidden knowledge, and facing the terrifying realities of the 41st Millennium, Imperium Maledictum offers a complex and rewarding RPG experience that captures the true essence of the Warhammer 40,000 universe. It is a must-play for fans of dark science fiction, intrigue, and role-playing games that emphasize tactical and narrative depth.

Dirk Vandereyken

**More info:** [www.cubicle7games.com/our-games/warhammer-40k-roleplay-imperium-maledictum](http://www.cubicle7games.com/our-games/warhammer-40k-roleplay-imperium-maledictum)

# EVEN MORE GAME REVIEWS... IN SHORT (SORT OF)

## BATTLE OVER MIDWAY

Board Game

Box - Bored Games

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

### What It Is:

Battle of Midway by Bored Games transports players back to one of the most pivotal naval battles of World War II, the Battle of Midway. Set in the Pacific Theater, it recreates the strategic conflict between the American and Japanese forces, emphasizing tactical planning, naval warfare, and the high stakes of controlling the seas. Each side must outmaneuver the other, launching airstrikes and positioning their fleets to gain the upper hand in this historic showdown.

### Review:

Opening the box, you're greeted with a meticulously designed board map featuring the islands of Midway and the surrounding waters. The game comes with beautifully detailed ship miniatures, aircraft tokens, and well-crafted cards representing different tactical maneuvers. The instruction booklet is thick but surprisingly user-friendly.

### Why You Want It:

For history enthusiasts and strategy game lovers, Battle of Midway is a must-have. The game strikes a balance between complexity and accessibility, making it suitable for both seasoned wargamers and those new to naval strategy.

### But Still...

While the set offers numerous advantages, the tokens need to be cut out before use, which can take some time. Additionally, they are not as sturdy as cardboard tokens, so for players accustomed to miniatures, they may be less appealing.



## CANGACEIROS

Card Game

Box - Ergo Ludo Editions

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

### The Story:

Cangaceiros is set in Brazil's northeastern region during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focusing on the outlaws known as the Cangaceiros. These bandits roamed the arid backlands (the Sertão), defying the rich landowners and authorities in search of freedom. The game's story revolves around survival in a harsh environment, where you lead a group of Cangaceiros attempting to evade capture, gather resources, and navigate difficult choices.

### Open the box and Discover...

Upon opening the box, you'll find high-quality components, including map tiles, tokens, cards, and vibrant artwork that brings the setting to life. The standout feature is the board, which depicts the expansive landscape of the Sertão. Each faction's pieces are well-crafted and designed to reflect the harshness of the environment, adding a layer of immersion to the gameplay. The rulebook is comprehensive, though it might take a few read-throughs to fully grasp the game mechanics. Expect some beautiful and thoughtful design choices!

### Buy it Because...

Cangaceiros offers a mix of survival, strategy, and historical intrigue. Its unique setting, based on real historical events, makes it stand out from many other strategy games. The combination of managing resources, fleeing from authorities, and balancing tactical decisions with thematic storytelling creates a rich and rewarding experience. Fans of historical games with a strategic edge, as well as those who enjoy asymmetric gameplay, will find plenty to love in Cangaceiros.

### Keep in Mind...

This game has a steep learning curve, with many rules and mechanics that may be daunting to newer players. Additionally, while the game is strategic, the randomness of card draws and dice rolls can sometimes disrupt carefully laid plans.







## DEFCON

### Board Game

#### Box - Giochi Uniti

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

#### The Story:

Defcon by Giochi Uniti plunges players into the tense and volatile period of the Cold War, where global superpowers teeter on the brink of nuclear conflict. As world leaders, you must navigate diplomatic negotiations, spy operations, and military escalations to secure your nation's influence while avoiding global destruction. The game's title refers to the Defense Condition scale (DEFCON), heightening the sense of urgency as players attempt to push their rivals into submission without triggering all-out nuclear war.

#### What You Can Extract from This:

Opening Defcon reveals a variety of well-designed components that capture the game's intense theme. Inside, you'll find a global map divided into different regions, which serve as battlegrounds for influence. The game includes player cards, tokens representing military and political power, and event cards that simulate real-world crises. The tokens and board are of high quality, and the design immerses you in the global tension of the Cold War era. The rulebook is concise, and the game mechanics are relatively straightforward, making it accessible to experienced and beginning gamers alike.

#### Why You Must Have This...

Defcon offers a thrilling combination of strategy, bluffing, and negotiation. Its unique Cold War setting and the DEFCON mechanic create constant tension, forcing players to make difficult decisions that could escalate into catastrophic war. The game's relatively short playtime is ideal for groups seeking a dynamic, high-stakes game in one session.

#### Where Perfection Just Falls Short:

While the mechanics are accessible, the theme may not appeal to everyone. Additionally, Defcon relies heavily on player interaction and negotiation, so it's best enjoyed in groups that thrive on intense social dynamics and competitive play.



## GARDEN QUEST

### Board Game

#### Box - Van Ryder Games

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

#### What It Is:

Garden Quest by Van Ryder Games invites players into a whimsical world where you take on the role of garden critters in a battle for control of a lush, vibrant garden. You lead a faction of insects, birds, or small mammals, each with their own unique abilities, in a quest to secure resources, defend territories, and outmaneuver your rivals. The game is lighthearted and family-friendly, with a narrative that centers on teamwork and strategy in the natural world, making it accessible and fun.

#### Review:

When you open Garden Quest, you're greeted with colorful and beautifully illustrated components. The game board depicts a sprawling garden with various terrain features like flower beds, ponds, and hedges. The critter miniatures and resource tokens are charming and well-made, adding to the game's visual appeal. The deck of cards provides players with actions, abilities, and event triggers, while the dice offer an element of chance. The rulebook is easy to understand, with simple mechanics that make it a perfect fit for family or casual gaming.

#### Why You Want It:

Garden Quest offers a delightful blend of light strategy, charming theme, and easy-to-learn mechanics. The game strikes a great balance between competitiveness and accessibility, making it a solid choice for families or those who prefer less intense strategy games. The different factions provide a lot of replayability and strategic options.

#### But Still...

While Garden Quest is fun and engaging, it's a lighter strategy game that may not appeal to hardcore gamers looking for deep tactical complexity. The luck factor might also frustrate more strategic players.

## NOLI

### Board Game

#### Box - River Horse

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

#### The Story:

Noli by River Horse takes players to the beautiful coastal town of Noli, Italy, in the Middle Ages. As aspiring families competing for wealth and prestige, players must engage in shipbuilding, trade, and other ventures to establish their dominance. The game focuses on the town's historical maritime culture, where controlling the sea routes and constructing grand buildings is essential to securing your family's place in history.

#### Open the box and Discover...

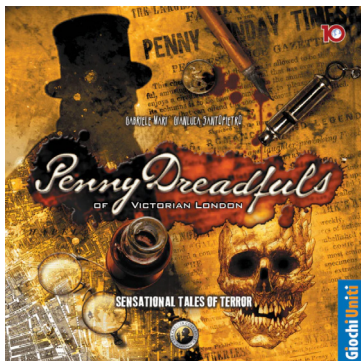
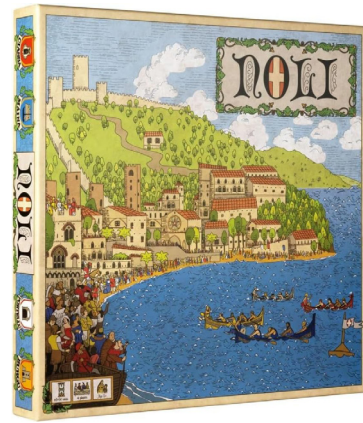
A visually striking game board that beautifully depicts the town's coastline, with detailed illustrations of the city and the surrounding waters. The components include wooden ship tokens, family crests, resource cubes, and a deck of cards representing actions and events that affect gameplay. The board and pieces are well-crafted, and the rulebook provides clear instructions with accompanying visuals to make the learning process smooth. Each player's individual boards are also nicely designed, helping to track progress.

#### Buy it Because...

Noli offers a thoughtful mix of strategic planning, resource management, and competitive play that will appeal to fans of economic and area-control games. The game's maritime theme is richly integrated into the mechanics, and its historical setting adds a unique layer of depth. The variable action cards and player decisions ensure replayability, making each session feel fresh.

#### Keep in Mind...

While Noli offers satisfying gameplay, its complexity may require a bit of a learning curve for new players, especially those unfamiliar with more strategic Eurogames. Additionally, some may find the competition for resources and control a little too tight and gameplay too long.



## PENNY DREADFUL'S OF VICTORIAN LONDON

### Board Game

#### Box - Giochi Uniti

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

#### The Story:

Penny Dreadfuls of Victorian London by Giochi Uniti transports players into the eerie, fog-shrouded streets of 19th-century London, where they take on the role of characters from infamous Victorian horror stories. The game draws inspiration from the cheap and thrilling "penny dreadful" serials that captivated readers during the Victorian era, featuring tales of murder, mystery, and supernatural events.

#### What You Can Extract from This:

Inside the box, Penny Dreadfuls of Victorian London delivers a rich visual and thematic experience. The game comes with a detailed map of London, player miniatures, character cards, and a deck of event and encounter cards that introduce various plot twists and challenges. The artwork beautifully captures the grim aesthetic of Victorian horror, with dark tones and atmospheric illustrations. The game's modular board design allows for a new layout each time you play, keeping the experience fresh.

#### Why You Must Have This...

If you're a fan of Gothic horror and love narrative-driven games, Penny Dreadfuls of Victorian London offers a thrilling experience. The game excels at creating an immersive atmosphere, with its blend of historical setting, supernatural elements, and mystery-solving mechanics. The dynamic board, coupled with the variety of characters and scenarios, ensures high replayability.

#### Where Perfection Just Falls Short:

While the game's theme is captivating, the rule complexity might be a barrier for casual gamers or those new to adventure-style board games. Sessions can also be quite long before getting to the climax.





## SNIPER ELITE: THE BOARD GAME

### Board Game

#### Box - Rebellion Unplugged

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

#### What It Is:

Sniper Elite: The Board Game, based on the popular video game series by Rebellion, plunges players into the tense, tactical world of World War II espionage and combat. In this one-versus-many game, one player takes on the role of elite sniper Karl Fairburne, sneaking through enemy lines on secret missions. Meanwhile, the other players control Nazi soldiers.

#### Review

Inside the Sniper Elite box, you'll find a game board that beautifully illustrates the various WWII-themed locations where the action unfolds, along with detailed miniatures representing soldiers and the sniper. The game includes mission cards, enemy patrol tokens, and hidden movement sheets, which allow the sniper to track their movements secretly. The rulebook is clear and concise, and though the game offers deep strategic gameplay, it's relatively easy to pick up for both seasoned gamers and newcomers.

#### Why You Want It:

Sniper Elite: The Board Game is perfect for players who enjoy stealth, strategy, and asymmetric gameplay. The thrill of being the sniper, quietly moving across the board while the other players desperately try to track you down, makes for a tense, exciting experience. It's a great blend of tactical planning and deception!

#### But Still...

The one-versus-many format may not appeal to every gaming group, as the game relies heavily on tension and strategic thinking. The sniper player will spend much of the game in secret, which may create a less interactive experience for that player. Also, the game is best with a larger group.

## THE SPIN DOCTORS

### Board Games

#### Box - Bored Games

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

#### What It Is:

Spin Doctors by Bored Games is a satirical and strategic board game where players assume the role of political consultants—or "spin doctors"—manipulating media, voters, and events to guide their candidate to electoral victory. Set in a fictional political landscape, the game takes a lighthearted approach to the often cutthroat world of politics, focusing on the art of spinning stories and managing scandals to stay ahead in the campaign trail. The goal is to win the most votes across different voter groups.

#### Review:

Inside Spin Doctors, you'll find a set of vibrant and well-illustrated components, including region cards, character tokens, and action cards that drive the mechanics. Players send campaign workers to different regions of the board, assigning them hidden tasks like fundraising, rallying, or spreading propaganda. The board design effectively represents the campaign trail, offering plenty of strategic opportunities. The hidden movement mechanic adds tension, as players know where their opponents are operating, but not exactly what they're doing.

#### Why You Want It:

If you enjoy strategy games with a unique twist and a good sense of humor, Spin Doctors is a great choice. It combines worker placement and hidden movement mechanics with thematic humor about political campaigns. The game's competitive nature, mixed with the need to anticipate opponents' moves, creates engaging and replayable sessions. It's especially suited for groups who enjoy player interaction, bluffing, and a bit of satire.

#### But Still...

While the game is fun and thematically rich, it may not appeal to everyone. Additionally, the reliance on hidden information and strategy means that Spin Doctors is best enjoyed by groups who love deduction and deception.





