

DEFENDERS OF THE REALM DRAGON EXPANSION

by Richard Launius

The King's eyebrows lifted, showing his disbelief. "Dragons, you say," almost whispering the words. The messenger only nervously nodded. Dragons had not been in the Realm for centuries, not since the days when the High Wizard Amarak advised the Royal Court, and now reports of not just the Blue Dragon that had attacked the settlements on the frontier of the Blizzard Mountain Range with an army of half men - half dragon-like creatures, but different Dragons and in service of the Dark Lord's army.

"What type of Dragon?" the King asked, seeking more information. Darius, the King's Councilor of Magic stood silently near the throne and sensed the King was hoping there was some kind of mistake. Maybe the reports were false, or maybe it was some type of illusion, but the elder wizard knew that no such fortunate wind was to blow – Dragons had been awakened and were in service of the Dark Lord. He had sensed their presence in the mana threads that flowed around him and knew the words to be true. The messenger hesitated, as if trying to gather his thoughts, or his courage, before answering, "A Red Dragon was reported by troops to the southeast near sunset, but only seen at a distance and in flight."

"Then the report could be wrong!" the King cut him off. "The setting of the sun playing tricks on the eye."

The messenger lowered his head and it seemed like an eternity before he whispered, "then the distant horizon turned black with smoke...the next day troops found the Raven Forest still ablaze."

With that the King sat back and calmly asked, "Is there more?"

"Aye, sire." The report was given of a Green Dragon

attacking a band of Rangers in Wyvern Forest, only a couple surviving due to the ministrations of an Elf monk. And then Darius heard the report he feared most, a Black Dragon had assaulted the stronghold of the Duke in McCorn Highlands, killing hundreds of veteran soldiers and critically injuring the Duke.

A Black Dragon, thought Darius, almost forgetting the others, for all the old records on the Black Dragons describe the evil creatures to be lightning fast, even by dragon standards, and with a heart blacker than their scales. The thought of Black Dragons on the loose in the Realm sent a shudder through the Councilor's body.

The King sat silent for only a moment before dismissing the messenger, watching him quickly scamper from the chamber, no doubt happy to have this business behind him. The guards sealed the chamber door leaving the King and Darius alone.

No one spoke for a long time then the King broke the silence. "Dragons..." the way the King said it sounded more like a curse than a question.

"It would appear so, my Lord." Darius responded. "I have felt a change in the energy that flows through the Realm," he continued, "and the presence of Dragons would cause such a disturbance."

The King said nothing, and just looked at his Councilor of Magic awaiting words of wisdom. When they came, they were not what the King expected. "Our heroes are strong enough to defeat the Dragons and when the Dragons fall, the Dark Lord will have lost."

The King contemplated the bravery and skill of his heroes, and could only wonder if it would be enough.

Overview

The Dragon Expansion builds on the base game of Defenders of the Realm, adding new Dragon Generals, Quests, and Special Hero Cards as well as introducing new aspects to the games such as Global Effects and Agents of the Dark Lord. The rules for the basic game will apply to using the items in this expansion. Much of what is included enables the players to customize their games to provide both a more thematic fantasy experience for their gaming group, as well as increase or decrease the difficulty of the game to meet the level of play that their gaming group prefers. A base copy of Defenders of the Realm is required to play the Dragon Expansion.

Components (second edition)

- 3 Dragon General Miniatures
- 4 New Dragon General Placards
- 1 Guardian Dragon – Sterling the Silver Dragon
 - 4 New Minion Placards
- 4 Wound Tracker Tokens – 1 for each General
 - 3 Agent of the Dark Lord Placards
 - 8 Fire Tokens
 - 8 Troll Renegade Tokens
 - 4 Royal Blessing Tokens
 - 1 Royal Blessing Card
 - 12 New Quest Cards
 - 10 Global Effects Cards
- King's Champion Fame Guide
 - 6 New Special Cards
- New Darkness Spreads Deck
- New Hero Cards Deck
- King's Champion Scoring Tokens
- 7 King's Champion Reward Cards
- Rulebook, with a story from the Realm

Challenge Level

The Dragon Expansion provides many different items that can be added to the game based on the challenge the players desire. Preparation of play for each game will take a little longer with the customization process, but will give the players an even greater fantasy experience. In this rulebook, the use of each component is discussed in detail, often with notes and additional options of how to use them in your games.

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Dragon Generals

Players can now choose between multiple Generals for the colors Green, Red, Black, and Blue (although we recommend using the High Dragon Sapphire when other Dragons are in play), mixing and matching to randomize their games to a greater degree, or play one of the preset scenarios, like Rampaging Dragons, in the back of this rulebook. (See Page 19.)

Setting up the Hero and Darkness Spreads Card Decks:

When using a new General, players need to customize the Hero and Darkness Spreads Decks by taking out the cards of the General(s) not being used in the game and shuffling all cards with Icons of the Generals being used (The Generals' Movement Icon for the Darkness Spreads Deck, and Generals' Attack Icon for the Hero Deck) into their respective decks. Once players choose the General, they should take the respective Wound Token and place it on the highest number of that Dragon General's Wound Track, as in the base game set up.

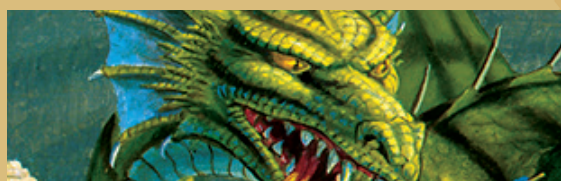
The new Generals in this expansion are all Dragons, and each is unique in their combat skill and the minions they command. Their General Cards are just like the original Generals with one exception: each of these General Cards show the General's starting location, the troops to be placed with him or her at the start, and movement type. In most cases, movement will be along the arrows on the board following the path the base game Generals move on, but for the Red Dragon Brimstone, that General starts on a new location, Fire River, and has special movement as described on the card and in this book – Dragon Flight.



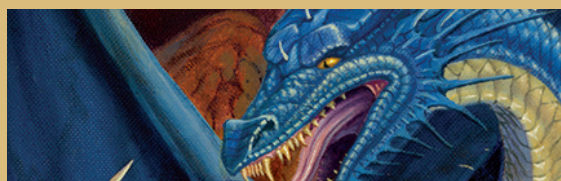
BRIMSTONE



ONYX



HEMLOCK



SAPPHIRE



Example: Replace Black General Varkolak's Darkness Spreads Cards with Black Dragon General Onyx's.



Replace the Hero Cards, too.

You can also look for this Dragon Expansion icon on the Darkness Spreads and Hero Cards.



BRIMSTONE

Brimstone's Special Movement

Brimstone moves differently than any of the other Generals in the game. Not only does he not start at the previous Red General's location, he does not have a path to Monarch City. He uses special movement called Dragon Flight and will move every time his General's Movement Icon appears on a Darkness Spreads Card as noted below.

Dragon Flight: This is a special movement that only the Red Dragon uses. On the Darkness Spreads Cards with Brimstone's picture, a Location will appear with the Dragon Flight icon identifying that the Red Dragon immediately moves to that location. The Red Dragon General will always move when his icon is activated, therefore he can move all over the board. When he moves, as soon as he lands, he sets the location On Fire—placing one of the **10** Fire Tokens on that location.

Setting a Location On Fire: There are **10** Fire Tokens that will be used when Brimstone is one of the Generals, or an Agent of the Dark Lord. Fire Tokens are only added to a location that Brimstone lands on, or a location that has **3** Fire Elementals on it. There is a limit of **1** Fire Token per location.

Effects of Fire Tokens on a Location: When a location is On Fire, it now only takes **3** of any Minion type present to Taint the location. Additionally, locations On Fire cost **2** Actions to enter and any Hero ending their turn in a location On Fire suffers **1** wound due to fire damage. Fire wounds are not blocked by armor or special abilities like Hiding in the Shadows.

Brimstone has no flight path that will land him in Monarch City. In order for Brimstone to move to the capital and defeat the Realm, he must place all **10** of his Fire Tokens on the board. When Brimstone is activated to move and all **10** of the Fire Tokens are on the board, Brimstone automatically attacks Monarch City and defeats the Heroes and the Realm.



Minions (Red):

FIRE ELEMENTALS

Fire Elementals are magical living flames that will set a location On Fire when **3** are present. Add a Flame Token to the location. A roll of **4** or more is required to defeat a Fire Elemental Minion.

Putting Out Fires

This is a new action that Heroes can take. A Hero may put out the fires by traveling to the location with a Fire Token on it and spending **1** Action to discard a Hero Card matching the color of the location On Fire. Roll **2** Dice—a roll of **4+** on either die extinguishes the fire and removes the Fire Token from the board, returning it to the surplus Fire Tokens near the board. The action is similar to Healing the Land, but with a better chance of success.



Onyx



Strategy Note: The berserker skill of the Zealots can do a lot of damage to Heroes, but if the players send armored Heroes after the Zealots (Paladin, Dwarf) using their ability to ignore 1 wound from minions, the Zealots are much less of a threat.

Minions (Black):

ZEALOTS

These Zealots are berserk fighters that deal out wounds each round of combat. When a Hero attacks one or more of the Zealots and fails to kill all in single blow, the Hero suffers 1 wound immediately at the end of each round of combat if 1 or more Zealots remain. A roll of 4 or more is required to defeat a Zealot Minion.

Berserk: Each round of combat (after each Combat Action) if there are any Zealots in the location, the Hero suffers 1 wound regardless of the number of Zealots present. This is in addition to any wounds that the Hero will suffer if they end their turn with 1 or more Zealots (or minions in general). As with typical minions, a player ending their turn in a location with 1 or more Zealots will suffer 1 wound for each Zealot present.

Heroes with Armor

Heroes that have armor protection can block the wound each round, as well as 1 at the end of the turn if in a space with the minions.

The Rogue

The Rogue's Ability to hide in the shadows will not prevent damage from the Berserk attacks, but will continue to stop end of turn damage from the Zealots as normal.

Example: The Rogue attacks 3 Zealots and rolls 3 dice getting a 2,2,5 – defeating 1. She now suffers 1 wound to the Berserk skill because 2 Zealots remain. She attacks again with her final action (brave little Rogue) rolling a 1, 3 – both misses. She again suffers 1 wound from the Berserk skill and would suffer 2 more wounds, but uses her skill Hide in the Shadows and therefore takes no additional wounds.

The Cleric

The Cleric has a blessed attack that will also work on Zealots as their evil triggers the blessing on her mace. Therefore, the Cleric adds +1 to each die rolled in combat with Zealots as she does with Undead and Demons.

HEMLOCK



Minions (Green):

IMPS

These creatures are Quick Flying and Mischievous. A roll of 3 or more is required to defeat an Imp Minion.

Placing Imp Minions: The Green Darkness Spreads Cards place the Imps the same way as they do the Orcs in the base game with the following exception:

Quick Flying: There will never be more than 1 Imp placed at one time per location – Therefore Imp Location

cards in the Darkness Spreads Deck will show only 1 Green Minion to be added. That is the good news. The bad news is that each time 1 Imp is placed, the Quick Flying skill will cause 1 Imp to be placed in each adjacent location that does not currently have an Imp on it, similar to an overrun.

Mischievous: Imps are sly and natural born thieves - Heroes lose 1 Random Hero Card rather than take wounds for each Imp at the location in which the Heroes end their turn.

Random Card Loss Process: Shuffle your Hero Cards. The player to your Right draws 1 for each Imp at your Location and discards the drawn cards.

Slayer & Defeating Imps: When a Hero becomes the Slayer of the Imps by landing the final blow on Hemlock, this is a special role from other Slayers in that no action need be spent to defeat the little troublemakers. The Hero merely needs to move into a location with 1 or more Imps to slay them (no combat action is necessary).



SAPPHIRE



Minions (Blue):

DRAGON MASTERS

These powerful wizards draw their power from the magic the dragons generate and create. Their combat power is not fixed, but determined by the number of Dragons active in the game. A roll of **2** plus the number of active Dragons invading the Realm is required to defeat a Dragon Master.

Example: If all 4 Generals are Dragons, the player would need to roll a 6 in battle to defeat a Dragon Master. If 3 Dragons are active, a 5+ would be needed – and so forth.

Agents of the Dark Lord

Each Dragon General (excluding Sapphire) provided in the game also has a corresponding Dark Agent Placard, and possibly a Dark Agent miniature as well. Agents act as special henchmen to the Dark Lord. The Agents never invade Monarch City, but they do harass and create problems that the Heroes will have to deal with.

Agent Rules

If the players want to increase the difficulty of the base game with the original Generals, or a mix of old and new Generals, they can add one Agent in service to the Dark Lord. This Agent's Card is placed next to the 4 General Cards and the War Status Board. Each Agent Card gives detailed information about the Agent: where they start, when they are activated, special powers, and how they can be defeated. Agents are also added to some of the Scenarios in the Scenarios Section of this rulebook.

Key Rules for Agents:

- ~ Only 1 Agent can be used in a game
- ~ The corresponding Dragon General and its Agent cannot be in the same game
- ~ Agents never invade Monarch City
- ~ Agents do not count as Minions on Locations
- ~ Heroes may move freely past Agents
- ~ Agents, like Generals, do not attack Heroes that end their turn on a Location with them
- ~ Agents only attack when they are activated to do so
- ~ Slaying an Agent grants a Victory Point with base game rules (more in the King's Champion Variant) and a reward of 2 Hero Cards



CINDERS



EMERALD



DRAKUS



CINDERS



EMERALD



DRAKUS



STERLING

STERLING

GUARDIAN DRAGON OF THE REALM

There are many threats in this Realm, but the Silver Dragon Sterling is one example of a helpful force. Adding Sterling to the game can give the Heroes a much-needed advantage against the Generals – but encountering the Silver Dragon requires traveling and actions.

Sterling Rules

Setup: Follow the steps below to setup Sterling as a Guardian of the Realm in your game. Note: using Sterling will make the game easier for the Heroes to win.

Step 1: Shuffle the 3 Sterling Global Effect cards into the Darkness Spreads Deck. These cards are not counted as Global Effects when building the deck with 3 Good and 3 Bad and may be included even if not using any other Global Effect cards.

Step 2: Place Sterling's board next to the invading Generals boards. Place the Silver Dragon miniature on his board.

Step 3: Shuffle Sterling's Encounter the Silver Dragon Cards and place next to the placard as indicated.

Playing a Game with Sterling the Silver Dragon: When a Sterling Global Effect is drawn, place Sterling on the Board at the Location of the Card. The Silver Dragon will remain active until she flies away as directed on her encounter cards.

Encountering Sterling:

Often the dragon is in Human, Elf, or Dwarf form, so difficult to find and encounter. Heroes on the same Location as the Silver Dragon may spend 1 Action per turn to Search for the dragon. Roll 3 dice (this is considered a Quest, so Quest bonuses may be used) and each 5 or 6 is a Success. Regardless of



SUCCESS	ENCOUNTER
0	Sterling takes flight. Remove Sterling from the board.
1	The Dragon's wisdom is great. Take any 2 Hero Cards from the discard pile. If you wish to take none, draw 2 Hero Cards.
2	The Dragon shares a Quest opportunity. Draw 1 Quest Card.
3	The Silver Dragon attacks one of the Generals and forces them back 1 Location. Then the Silver Dragon flies away—remove from the board.



STERLING

GUARDIAN DRAGON OF THE REALM

Sterling, like most Silver Dragons, prefers to take the form of a human, dwarf, or elf, and mingle amongst the people. In fact, many wise adventurers believe that the three heads of the Silver Dragon represent the fabulous creature's mental link to the 3 races and as such offer different responses when called upon, depending on which head the adventurer gains the attention from.

Setup: Shuffle the 3 Sterling Global Effects Cards into the Darkness Spreads Deck. Place Sterling's card and miniature near the board. Shuffle Sterling's Encounter the Silver Dragon Cards and place the deck next to this card.

Encountering the Silver Dragon

When on the Location where the Silver Dragon resides, spend 1 Action to roll 3 Dice. Each 5 or 6 is a successful encounter with Sterling. Draw a card and apply the effect associated with the number of successes gained.

the number of Successes rolled, draw the top card afterward. The Hero must use one of the bonuses equal or less than the successes they rolled on the card 0–3. If the action also has Sterling moving, the Dragon is moved (and may be removed from the board if instructed to do so).

Sterling on a Location:

While Sterling is on a Location, no minions may be placed on it unless they are part of a General's movement. They sense and fear the Silver Dragon.

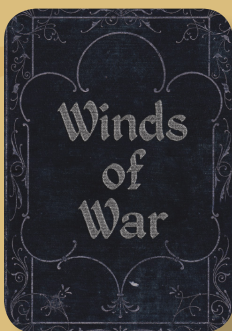
Winds of War

Players may choose to play with the Winds of War. In general, this makes the game more challenging for the Heroes.

Setup: Place the Winds of War Board near the General's cards. Shuffle the Winds of War cards and place them on the designated space on the board.

When Special Hero Cards are played for their Special Action (not dice to attack a General) they are placed on the Winds of War Board as a Played Special Card. Additionally, any Quiet Night Cards are also added to the board.

When **3** Cards appear on the board, a Winds of War card is triggered. Turn over the top Winds of War Card and either perform the Prevention required or activate the card's Action. Players collectively must decide what to do. Then discard the **3** Special Cards that triggered the event to the box—they are out of play.



Renegade Troll Rules: Trolls count as **1** Minion on their location. When attacking a location with a Troll, the player always attacks the Troll separate from other Minions present, and requires a separate Action to attack. To Attack Troll Renegades roll **3** Dice. To remove the Troll Renegade Token, you must roll doubles of any number. In other words, you need **2** of the same number—**1, 2, 3, 4, 5,** or **6** out of the **3** dice. Other minions on the location may be removed normally, but when removing the Troll, **2** dice of doubles must be spent. The Dwarf and Paladin are natural Troll Slayers and may re-roll some or all dice from an attack.



Attacks that fail to defeat the Troll result in a single wound to the hero that may be blocked by Armor (Paladin, Dwarf) or avoided by the Eagle Rider if in the air.

New Quests

Players should take the **12** new Quest Cards and shuffle them into the Quest Deck the first time they play using the Dragon Expansion, regardless of any other components they may choose to use in the game.

If a Quest surfaces that cannot be achieved because the focus of the quest is not in the game (like scout the Black Dragon General and there is no Black Dragon General in the game) the quest is simply discarded with no effect and a new one drawn.

Note: This is the same rule that applies with quests in the base game after Generals identified on an open Quest Card have been slain. When a Quest cannot be achieved, the Quest Card is immediately discarded and a new Quest is drawn.

The new Quests are used just like the Quests in the basic game. No special rules apply to the Quests of the Dragon Expansion.

New Special Hero Cards

Separate the Special (Purple) Hero Cards from the basic Hero Cards and combine them with the **6** New Special Hero Cards. Once all the Special Hero Cards are shuffled, deal **6** into the box without looking at them. Now shuffle the remaining Special Hero Cards into the Hero Deck.

Note: The set up process will be used in every game to keep the game balanced and challenging. If players add the new Special cards without removing any, the game balance will shift toward an easier experience for the players. Of course, if players are having a difficult time winning, they may want an easier game. (See Variant: Want an easier game?).

Note: Generals should be chosen and the appropriate Hero Cards (Cards with the matching General Attack Icons and name on the bottom of the card) be put into the Hero deck prior to shuffling in the Special cards. (See New Generals for more details).

Global Effects

There are **10** Global Effect Cards provided in the Dragon Expansion. These cards are new to play and when activated from the Darkness Spreads Deck will change play until discarded by a new Global Effect or by a General moving. There are **5** Good Global Effect Cards, beneficial to the Heroes, and **5** Bad Global Effect Cards, a hindrance to the Heroes. Not all **10** Global Effects should be included in each game. The players may establish the number of Global Effects they prefer to be in the game to make it tougher or easier, but the following setup is recommended for Global Effects (See Establishing Global Effects below).

Global Effects do not count as Darkness Spread Cards drawn when it comes to placing minions or moving Generals. When a Global Effect is drawn, it is activated by placing it on the board as a reminder of the effect to all players. Immediately draw another Darkness Spreads Card after a Global Effects is drawn.

Global Effects remain active until a) A new Global Effect is drawn, or b) A General moves or c) An instruction on the card requires you to discard the Global Effect Card. These events will cause the active Global Effect Card to be discarded.

Note: If a second Global Effect is drawn on the same turn, it (the second Global Effect Card) is discarded with no effect. Likewise, if a General Moves on the turn the Global Effect is drawn, this movement will not cause a discard of the Global Effect Card, nor will it negate the Global Effects.

All is Quiet Cards: It is recommended that the All is Quiet Cards be removed from the Darkness Spreads Deck. If you want an easier game, leave them in, but the Global Effects should replace these cards as a thematic way to both give the players a little breather, and to create some interesting challenges.

Establishing Global Effects and the Darkness Spreads Deck for the Game: Take the **5** Bad Global Effects, identifiable by the background on the front of the card, and shuffle them. Then deal **3** to the box without looking at them and place the **2** that will be active to the side for use shortly. Now take the **5** Good Global Effects (also identifiable by the background on the front of the card) and shuffle them. Discard **2** of these cards into the box without looking – they will not be used. Next, take the **5** Global Effects (**2** Bad Effects, and **3** Good Effects) and shuffle them into the Darkness Spreads Deck.

inns closed

Increased raids have forced the Innkeepers to flee for safety...

Immediate Effect:

The Inns are closed!

Ongoing Effect:

While this card is active, Heroes may not Heal at the Inns or take Rumors at the Inn Actions.

SHIP TRANSPORTS

Local fishermen assist the Heroes with travel in these most desperate times...

Immediate Effect:

For 1 Action, Heroes may move from any one Location touching the Seas to any other Location touching the Seas.

Draw Another Darkness Spreads Card

Note: In the same manner done for the Hero Cards Deck, Generals should be chosen and the appropriate General Darkness Spreads Cards identified and used to create the Darkness Spreads Deck prior to shuffling the **5** Global Effect Cards into the deck. If the Orcs are not being used, remove the Orc Patrols and Orc War Party and replace those cards with the new “Special” Darkness Spreads Cards.

Note: As more expansions for Defenders of the Realm are released, there will be more Global Effects Cards added to the game. The setup will continue to be recommended with **2** Bad Global Effects and **3** Good Global Effects so that the game continues to be balanced and challenging. Of course, players that want a tougher game can put **0**, **1** or **2** Good Global Effect Cards in the game while someone wanting an easier game can reduce the Bad Global Effects and increase the Good ones that they add to their games. It is recommended that the maximum number of Good or Bad be **3** Global Effects Cards and a total of no more than **6** Global Effects appear in any game and never more than **4** of one type (Good or Bad). This way much of the game will be played with no special effect in play, and by randomly changing them every game, the story aspect of the game continues to increase as no two games will ever be the same.

Rules for 5 or 6 Players

Rules for 5 Players: The following changes to basic game rules should be used to keep the balance of a challenging game when adding a 5th Hero (player) to the game. Remove all of the Darkness Spreads All Is Quiet cards from the deck. They will not be used in the game.

~ The choice of Hero Selection should be random – Shuffle Heroes and deal 1 to each player.

~ Players start with 1 Hero Card rather than 2. Players will still gain 2 Hero Cards at the end of each turn.

~ Maximum Hand Size for Hero Cards is now 8 rather than 10.

Rules for 6 Players: The following changes to basic game rules should be used to keep the balance of a challenging game when adding a 6th Hero (player) to the game.

~ Remove all of the Darkness Spreads All Is Quiet cards from the deck. They will not be used in the game.

~ Shuffle all Special cards and remove 5 randomly. Place them in the box without looking at them.

~ The choice of Hero Selection should be random – Shuffle Heroes and deal 1 to each player.

~ Players start with zero Hero Cards rather than 2. Players will still gain 2 Hero Cards at the end of each turn.

~ Maximum Hand Size for Hero Cards is now 7 rather than 10.

In both setups (5 or 6 players), the players will still set the Global Effects normally as in a 1 – 4 player game.

As always, players may change the set up to make the game easier or tougher based on the level they wish to play, but the maximum hand size rules, and the number of Hero Cards gained each turn should remain as listed above.

Strategy consideration with increased players: The biggest issue the players face in 5 and 6 player games is the flow of Hero Cards. They start with less in a 5 & 6 player game and players hold less with a reduced hand size. With extra players, the control of Minions and Tainted Crystals should be easier to handle – so the key focus must be preparing to attack Generals.

Royal Blessing

The King's Champion Rewards

Defenders of the Realm is a true cooperative game with recognition of the overall King's Champion. Whether using the King's Champion rules in the base game, or this variant, all players continue to win or lose as a team. This variant introduces a more thorough way to identify the level of heroism exhibited by the Heroes in defense of the Realm and recognizes multiple Heroes at the end of the game.

Set up of the King's Champion Rewards: Make a draw pile of the Gold Fame Tokens (Minor Fame) anywhere near the board. Players will be drawing from this pile throughout the game, so make it accessible to all.

Take the Blue Fame Tokens (Major Fame) and place them in a cup for drawing during the game, then place the cup next to the Gold Fame Tokens. For easy tracking of when and what type of Fame Token to draw, refer to the King's Champion Fame Guide.

Playing the Game with the King's Champion Rewards: Play the game normally, but as the players perform tasks in defense of the Realm, they will be awarded minor and major fame that the King will recognize at the end of the war, should the Realm be saved by the Heroes. Heroes will earn Minor Fame for the following heroic actions – these Fame Tokens are awarded regardless of success.

Minor Fame Heroic Actions:

- ~ Attack **3** Minions in a Location
Gain 1 Minor Fame token
- ~ Attempt to Heal the Land
Gain 1 Minor Fame token
- ~ Attempt a Quest that requires Dice to be Rolled
Gain 1 Minor Fame token
- ~ Attack any number of Minions in Monarch City
Gain 1 Minor Fame token
- ~ Wound a General in Battle
Gain 1 Minor Fame token for each Wound inflicted
- ~ Attempt to put out Fires in a Location
Gain 1 Minor Fame token
- ~ Build a Gate (not by use of Special Card)
Gain 1 Minor Fame token
- ~ Delay a Quest to place Minions when supply is too short – *Gain 1 Minor Fame token*
- ~ Attack an Agent of the Dark Lord
Gain 1 Minor Fame token

Major Fame Heroic Actions:

- ~ Complete a Quest Successfully
Draw 1 Major Fame token
- ~ Land Slaying Blow to a General
Draw 2 Major Fame tokens
- ~ Successfully Put Out a Fire on a Location
Draw 1 Major Fame token
- ~ Gain **2** or More Cards from a Rumor Action in the Inn – *Draw 1 Major Fame token*
- ~ Slay **2** or More Minions in a Single Round of Combat
Draw 1 Major Fame token
- ~ Successfully Heal the Land (without a Special Card)
Draw 1 Major Fame token
- ~ Slay an Agent of the Dark Lord
Draw 2 Major Fame tokens

The Realm is Saved! At the end of the game, if the Heroes are victorious, The Realm is saved from the invading armies of the Dark Lord and all players are winners. To celebrate, the King sponsors a Grand Ball in which the Heroes are honored. If the Heroes fail to win, The Realm has fallen and the King awards no one – all players lose.

The Grand Ball after a Victory: Place the King's Champion Card on the board and shuffle the remaining Grand Ball Cards and deal **3** of them face up on the board. Starting with the player that achieved the highest total fame points (Minor+Major Fame), that Hero is honored by the Royal Court and awarded the King's Champion Card. The Hero with the second highest points now has their choice of remaining cards, then the third highest and the fourth. If playing with more than **4** Heroes, no further rewards are given out, but the King still recognizes those Heroes as honored warriors - to honor them, all players should cheer.

Awards: Players may want to keep track of awards on the chart on the following page so the next time they play Defenders of the Realm the player that earned the reward can (providing they play the same hero that won it) use the reward in the game. When a player winning a reward plays with the same hero that won the reward – they are awarded the Grand Ball Card at the start of the game as a benefit in the new game.

Award Tracker

Generals Minions W/L Champion Duke Land Mayor Stables Folk Hero Blessing

Track **Generals** used in the game with these abbreviations:

Sapphire (S)
 Varkolak (V)
 Gorgutt (G)
 Balazarg (B)
 High Dragon Sapphire (HDS)
 Onyx (OD)
 Hemlock (HD)
 Brimstone (BRD)
 Lord Vileheart (LV)
 Gash Bloodclaw (GBC)
 Ygzell (YZ)

Track **Minions** used in the game with these abbreviations:

Dragonkin (DK)
 Undead (U)
 Orcs (O)
 Demons (D)
 Dragon Masters (DM)
 Zealots (Z)
 Imps (I)
 Fire Elementals (FE)
 Nightmares (N) Skeleton Warriors (SKW)
 Wolf Riders (WR)
 Gluttons (G) Blood Demons (BD)

Rewards: Write the name of each Hero and the Player on the Reward achieved. They may use this Reward in their next game, providing they use the same Hero that earned it.

W/L - Win/Lose:
 Track wins and losses if desired, or just track wins for King's Rewards.

Scenarios

The Dragon Expansion provides new Generals, bringing the total number of Generals and Minions available for play to 8 each with the base game. Even more Generals and Minions are available in the “Minions” (Kickstarter) Expansion. Many different scenarios are possible by mixing and matching Generals and Minions to create different challenges. Below are a few game scenarios that we think you will both enjoy and find very challenging.

RAMPAGING DRAGONS

SCENARIO 1

The Dark Lord has engaged the Dragons to serve as his Generals and each has mustered an army to serve their ruthless attacks on the Realm.

Generals

Brimstone
Sapphire
Hemlock
Onyx

Minions

Fire Elementals
Dragon Masters
Imps
Zealots

Agent of the Dark Lord: None

Setup: Use the Darkness Spreads Deck that shows the Dragon Generals. The Dragon Quests are added to the Quest Deck. It is not important to discard the quests for the other generals – if they appear in the game, just discard them since they cannot be achieved. Add the new Special cards to the base game Special cards, shuffle them and then discard 6 into the box without looking at them.

Special Rules: The Dragons are relentless — there are no All is Quiet cards in use. They should be removed from the Darkness Spreads Deck.

Want an easier game against the rampaging dragons?

Use some of the base game’s Easier Game Rules or implement some of these:

- ~ Keep 1 or More All is Quiet cards in the Darkness Spreads Deck
- ~ Choose Which Special cards are discarded to the box
- ~ Use 1 or more Royal Blessing Tokens
- ~ Shuffle 4 Good Global Effect and only 1 Bad Global Effect Cards into the Darkness Spreads deck.

REALM IN FLAMES

SCENARIO 2

The Dark Lord has summoned the Fire Dragon Brimstone and unleashed him as an independent agent to turn the Realm into an inferno.

Generals

Balazarg
Sapphire
Gorgutt
Onyx

Minions

Demons
Dragonkin
Orcs
Zealots

Agent of the Dark Lord: El Fuego

Special Rules: Perform the following additional actions during setup of the game.

- 1) Darius, the High Mage and Councilor of Magic to the Royal Council, assists the heroes. After the Special cards are shuffled, 6 plus the number of players are dealt into the box. The remaining cards are now shuffled into the Hero Deck per the normal rules for preparing the Hero deck. The cards dealt into the box are now shuffled and each player is dealt 1 card randomly as part of their starting hand. The other Special cards are now placed back into the box without looking at the cards removed from the game.
- 2) Prior to placing the Minions per normal rules of play, turn over 3 Darkness Spreads Cards and place 1 Fire token on each of the 2 spaces on the card. On Fire rules apply and Tainted Lands may occur.
- 3) All is Quiet Darkness Spreads Cards: Add 2 All is Quiet cards to the Darkness Spreads deck.



ONSLAUGHT!

SCENARIO 3

The reports can't be true, but they are. The enemy has advanced very quickly; if the Realm is to stand, the Heroes must move quickly. Onslaught is a scenario where the enemy has advanced before the Heroes respond.

Generals and Minions:

The Players may choose the Generals or randomly determine Generals and Minions.

Random Selection of Generals: Shuffle all General cards and then deal them one at a time. The first of each color to be dealt is active in the War. Whenever a second General of the same color emerges, he is discarded and another drawn. When each of the 4 colors of General have been drawn, the selection is complete. Take the Minions that go with their General and place them near the board.

Agent of the Dark Lord: The Players may add a Dark Agent, by choice or randomly, as they prefer.

Special Rules: The following rules are used for setting up the game.

- 1) Do the normal set up, but when placing 2 Minions you will use 4 cards rather than 3. When placing 1 minion, use 5 cards rather than 3. During this placement, overruns and tainted lands can occur.
- 2) After the placement of troops, flip over 2 Darkness Spreads Cards. The General movement icon on the bottom is only used to identify the General that will move. Regardless of the location on the card (exception: Brimstone – he will use this location if in the game) the identified Generals will move to their next location. This means that 2 Generals will be 1 step closer to Monarch City, or 1 General will be 2 Steps closer at the start of the game. After this step, shuffle the Darkness Spreads deck, adding Global Effects Cards and All is Quiet cards as desired.
- 3) Shuffle the Special Hero Cards separately and deal 2 to each player. Afterward, discard 6 Special Hero Cards into the box without looking at them. Next, shuffle the remaining Special Hero Cards into the Hero Deck. When shuffled sufficiently, deal 4 cards to each Hero in the game.
- 4) Shuffle the Quest Cards and deal 2 to each player. The players review the 2 Quests, discard 1 and keep the other. Reshuffle Quest deck after the selection is complete.

THE LAND IS DYING

SCENARIO 4

The poison infesting the land is spreading quickly, accelerated by the venomous march of the Green Dragon Hemlock and his Imp minions.

Generals

Hemlock
Sapphire
Varkolak
Balazarg

Minions

Imps
Dragonkin
Undead
Demons

Agent of the Dark Lord: The Players may add a Dark Agent, by choice or randomly, as they prefer.

Setup: Follow the normal rules for set up. All 4 All is Quiet cards should be added to the Darkness Spreads Deck. No Agent of the Dark Lord should be used with this scenario.

Special Rules: Each time that Hemlock moves, place a Tainted Crystal on the space he moves into as his venomous breath decays the land.



THE BURNING LAND

SCENARIO 5

The Dark Lord has tasked Brimstone, the Red Dragon, to scour every village and dale with fire to make way for his advancing generals. The Heroes must douse the fires before the Red Dragon returns.

Generals

Balazarg
Sapphire
Gorgutt
Varkolak

Minions

Demons
Dragonkin
Orcs
Undead

Agent of the Dark Lord: None

Setup: Set up the game using the original 4 Generals and their minions. No Agent of the Dark Lord is to be used. All 4 All is Quiet Cards should be added to the Darkness Spreads Deck.

Set the Realm Ablaze: After the normal setup of the board, place an On Fire Token on all three Inns, Brookdale Village, McCorm Highlands, Seabird Port, and Monarch City.

Special Rules: The following rules are in play with this Scenario:

Locations On Fire: While these locations are On Fire, Heroes that end their turn on them may not collect Hero Cards and no Heroes can conduct Rumors at the Inn Actions.

The Return of Brimstone, the Red Dragon: As soon as a General is defeated, The Red Dragon enters play. The decks (Both Hero and Darkness Spreads) will need to be reshuffled with the Red Dragon cards added. Brimstone will have no minions; the Red Minion tokens remain Demons.

Preventing the Appearance of Brimstone: The Fire Tokens in the Inns and Cities must be extinguished before a General is killed. If this occurs, Brimstone will not appear in the game.

Removing Fire Tokens from Monarch City and the Inns: These Fires can only be removed by using the (special) purple cards to douse flames. Special cards used to put out flames are not discarded from the game, but placed in the discard pile of the Hero Cards and reshuffled since the special ability on the card has yet to be used.

Monarch City On Fire: If Brimstone enters the game and Monarch City is on Fire when he is activated to move, he immediately moves to Monarch City and the game is lost by the Heroes.



Want an easier game?

The Dragon Expansion provides a number of thematic ways to increase and decrease the difficulty level of the game. However, the expansion primarily introduces more challenges than benefits, so players that are losing too often may use the methods listed under this section in the base game rules along with any listed below to reduce the challenge to best fit their game group.

~ Choose which Special cards are discarded from the game. This not only assures players that the best Special Cards will appear, it eliminates the "fog of war" related to randomly discarding without looking and not knowing what resources are available in the deck.

~ Increase the Good Global Effects and reduce the Bad ones. Keep in mind that no more than 6 Global Effects should ever appear in a game and no more than 4 of one type (Good or Bad).

~ Use more Royal Blessing tokens than recommended for the number of Heroes in the game.

Base Game Rules Clarifications / FAQ

Since the Inns and Monarch City are all circled in purple, does Monarch City have an Inn? The answer in game terms is no. While there are certainly Inns in the city, players may NOT use Rumor Actions in Monarch City.

Design Note: The reason there is no Inn (in game terms) in Monarch City is that the central location makes it too easy to gain cards through the Rumors Action. My logic in not placing an Inn there from a thematic perspective is that while the city is full of Taverns and Inns, these establishments are not out on the frontier where the trappers, hunters, and woodsmen would be coming into and sharing information of what they have seen of the enemy in the surrounding lands. So, while you can heal in Monarch City like at any other Inn, you cannot gain the valuable enemy information from Rumors that awards Hero Cards.

Do Demons overrun when they Taint a Location with a 3rd Demon? No. Demons have the special skill of tainting a location when a 3rd Demon is placed on it, but this does not create an overrun. Overruns only occur whenever a 4th Minion is added to a location.

If 3 Demons are on a location and 2 are to be added, does the location immediately taint 2 times? No, there can only be 1 tainted crystal placed in a location per turn. Regardless of how many Demons are being added to a location that already has 2 Demons, only 1 tainted crystal would be added to that location. However if, by adding 2 Demons an overrun would also occur, then a Demon would be added to each surrounding location and if any of those locations would now have 3 Demons or 4 of any type of minion, that location would taint also. So, while only 1 tainted crystal can be added to a single location on a turn, more than 1 tainted crystal could be added by being placed on newly overrun locations as well as the original location from which the overrun spawned.

When the Ranger becomes a Slayer, does his archery skill couple with the Slayer skill? No, the skills do not stack.

The Slayer Card states that when spending a combat action in a Location, the Slayer defeats all of that type of minion. No combat roll is required, but the action is restricted to the location the Slayer is on.

Design Note: The Slayer's ability is gained because the minions now fear the Slayer. They know of his fame

and fear him, therefore they run at the sight of the Slayer - becoming routed troops fleeing in fear and open to the Slayer's attack. The Ranger's Archery Skill would not reveal him to the Minions as the Slayer and therefore would not cause them to route in fear as he approached, as he would be just an Archer firing at them from a distance — therefore the Ranger's Archery skill would not work with the Slayer action.

Can a magic gate be built at an Inn location? No, players must use a Hero Card to build a Magic Gate and no Hero Cards have the Inn locations on them. There is a Special card that allows for a Gate to be built anywhere, but Inns are restricted. You can build gates right outside the Inn in the location that is connected to them, but not the Inn itself.

Design Note: The Inns are never overrun and Gates cannot be built on them for the same thematic reason that Heroes can walk past Minions on other locations. Each Location on the board is considered to be a vast area (an entire town, forest or mountain range) but the Inns are small finite locations and as a result not attacked by the enemy that is working to gain strategic hold of the Realm and could care less about the Inns. Since a Magic Gate is actually a pretty large circle of stones, one could not be built in a small Inn.

Placing 2 Minions when 3 are present - are multiple tainted crystals and multiple overruns triggered? No - only 1 Tainted Crystal and 1 overrun will occur. When you have 3 of any type of minions on a location and are to place one or more new Minions of any type to that location, the location immediately becomes Tainted (only placing 1 Tainted Crystal regardless of type of Minions or number that was to be added) and the Minion type on the Darkness Spreads Card being added overruns to each surrounding location, meaning that 1 Minion of that type is added to each surrounding location. This overrun action may place a 3rd demon on a location if the overrun was Demons or a 4th minion on a location, and in doing so would cause an additional Tainted Crystal to be placed on the overrun location, but will not cause any additional overruns.

Are all quests one-shot Adventures? All quests are not a one time action pass or fail. Many are actions that do not have any dice rolls to succeed, but require the Hero to go somewhere and spend an action, like Scout a General. Some require the Hero to go multiple places and spend actions, like Organize the Militia. However, some quests are a one time event representing going into a dungeon to find something and



the player spends an action to roll X number of dice and must get a number (usually a 5 or a 6) on one of the dice to succeed. If they succeed, they take the card and now have the Reward. If they fail to get the required die roll, they discard the quest as a failure.

Are all Rewards discarded when used, or do some provide an ongoing advantage for the Hero? Cards that grant a one time benefit will state “discard to use” and identify the benefit. Some rewards, like the Unicorn Steed and Boots of Speed provide an ongoing benefit to the Hero, identifiable by the fact that the reward does not require the player to discard it to use the reward.

What about the Unicorn or the War Banner—they look like Quests you search for and you do roll dice? Why do they not say Discard if Failed? The Unicorn and War Banner are unique in that the player may spend actions seeking them, each action granting a single die to be rolled. While the failure of the roll does not cause them to be discarded, I have seen players chase these quests (which have very valuable quest rewards - so I understand their motive) to the detriment of Realm as minions spring up and Generals move while the Hero spends multiple actions (and in some cases turns) chasing the elusive Unicorn.

Design Note: These 2 cards are not in error by not having discard if failed—this was the way I intended them and not because they are of such great assistance to the players (although they are very valuable, especially if obtained early in the game). For me, the design of these quests (as well as every aspect of the

game design) was to focus on theme first. Create a fantasy world that the players can truly become heroes and as such pursue what they wish. So, in designing these cards, I wanted a Unicorn in Unicorn Forest that a player could pursue as a steed and I wanted them to have the opportunity to chase the mythical beast until they could catch it, or until all players became frustrated with the player pursuing it. It is kind of like King Arthur’s Questing Beast in that regard.

As for the War Banner, I felt like it was important to have a famed item that everyone knows where it is, but it is just hard to obtain. In the other quests, most read they are fabled or rumored - when the hero fails, the item was just not there or some long gone adventurers already took it. So, that is the story behind the Unicorn and the War Banner.

Does the wizard’s teleport ability allow him to move to any location once per turn? Yes, the wizard may teleport to any location one time each turn - no card is required, he just chooses a location and moves to it. His teleport, though limited to one time per turn, is very strong as it enables him to Teleport to Monarch City or any of the Inns even though there are no Hero Cards that enable that to occur.

Can he use the teleport ability to move to any magic gate on the board as listed in the number 1 part of the movement by magic gate action? Yes, he can choose any location to teleport to, but can only teleport one time per turn.

Is the 10 card hand limit only applied to the active player? When you are the active player, you must discard down to 10 Hero Cards at the end of your turn after you draw the Hero Cards for the turn. If it is not your turn and you go over the limit by participating in a victorious battle with a General, you must discard down at the end of the active player’s turn as well - you may not keep cards over the limit of 10.

When multiple heroes battle a general, do all players state how many cards they are committing to the battle prior to anyone rolling dice? If so, in what order do the players state how many cards they will commit? All players must commit all cards to the battle at the start of the battle. Players should place the cards they are committing on the board to show they are being used in the

battle. All cards placed on the board will be discarded after their battle dice have been rolled, or the battle is resolved. If there is a question of who commits first, the active player must commit first and then clockwise around the table from the active player. At this point, the active player (who is the commander of the assault on the General) determines who will attack first. After that attack is resolved, the commander picks the next attacker and so on, usually positioning so that he/she can be the slayer. If the General is slain before a player uses their cards, those committed cards are still discarded.

Note: If the General is Gorgutt, all players must roll even if the General is essentially slain as the roll of 1's may block previous hits, just as excessive 1's rolled early carry over to the other heroes' rolls.

Note: All players involved in the Battle with a General, whether they rolled or not gain the 3 Hero Card reward if the General is slain. Likewise they suffer the penalty if they lose to him.

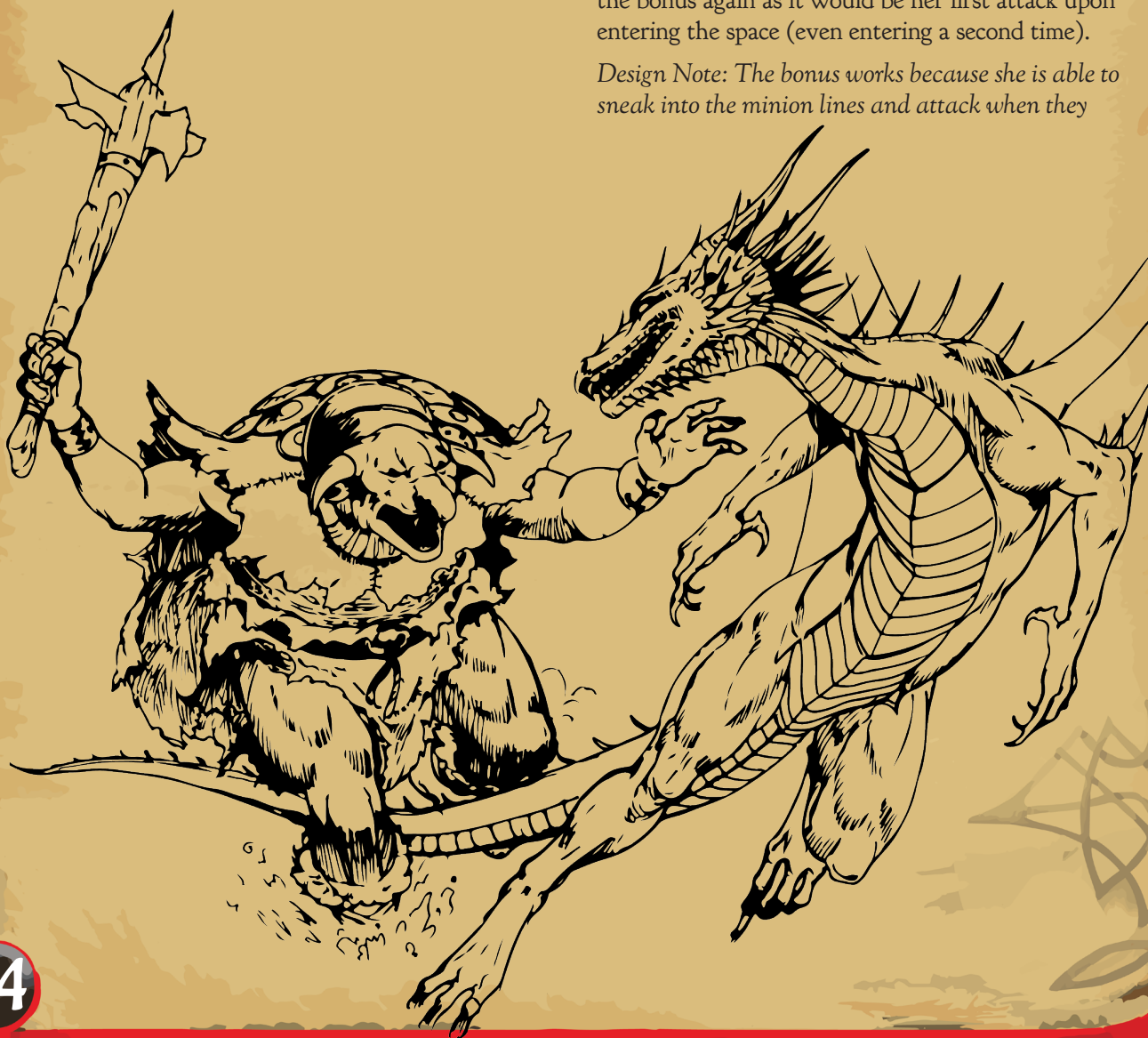
Sorceress, First attack Bonus: Her ability indicates that the first attack is at +2 against creatures of her new shape, does that mean she gets +2 for her first attack in each space she enters?

Question Example: She attacks in space A, at +2. She moves to space B, where more of the same creatures are and gets +2 against them. She attacks the group in space B again, but does not get the bonus this time.

She moves back to space A and attacks the last remaining minion there, but gets no bonus, because she attacked there earlier in the turn.

That is correct except the last point, the shape-shift attack bonus applies to the first attack on matching minions upon entering each location. Any additional attacks while she is on that location without leaving would not get the +2 bonus. However, if she left the space and returned to it later in the turn to attack any survivors from her first attack, she would get the bonus again as it would be her first attack upon entering the space (even entering a second time).

Design Note: The bonus works because she is able to sneak into the minion lines and attack when they



are most vulnerable, therefore the powerful +2 bonus to each die rolled. It is then lost, because even the most dense of soldiers will realize the attacker standing in their ranks with blood on their weapons and bodies at their feet must be the enemy. But if she leaves the space, whether to attack somewhere else or to just enter again, she will be able to sneak into their ranks and attack again. From a design perspective I wanted to leave this option open to the player if they failed to kill all the minions in the attack and did not want to continue fighting without the shape-shift bonus. But I also wanted to make it costly and it is, they must spend 1 action to leave the location, another to return and a 3rd action to attack again - that would be half of their Actions points - pretty costly. Few self-respecting sorceresses would lose that many actions pursuing this strategy, but it is possible.

How does the Wizard's Fireball Spell work when multiple colored minions are in the location being attacked? The Wizard player spends 1 action to attack 2 Orcs (Green) and 1 Undead (Black) and may now discard either a Black or Green card to use his Fireball. Regardless of which color card he discards, the Fireball will now defeat each minion on a roll of 2 or higher.

Ranger's Archery Skill: Is it used against all minions 1 location away (multiple locations) or is it used against 1 location that is one away? Card reads: May attack enemy minions 1 space away as if they were in the same location. The Ranger can attack one of the adjacent locations for 1 action as if he were in that Location. He cannot attack all adjacent locations at the same time for 1 action.

Example: The Ranger is in Monarch City at the start of his turn and there are 2 Orcs in Father Oak Woods, 1 Dragonkin in Bounty Bay, and 2 Undead in the Dancing Stones. For 1 Action he can attack any one of these locations without moving into them so he spends his first of 5 actions to attack the Dancing Stones with 2 Undead and rolls 2 dice getting a 3 and a 5 result.

He defeats one of the Undead. He spends a second action to attack again hitting the undead with a 6 die roll. He decides to move into the Father Oak Woods as his third action. He spends his fourth action attacking the 2 Orcs in Father Oak Woods and since his target is in a green location with him he gains the +1 die bonus for Woods Lore and rolls 2 dice (one for each Orc present) gaining a 2 and a 4 hitting both (You need a 3+ to defeat Orcs and he achieves this with his Wood Lore Bonus). With four actions spent and the desire to end his turn on a Green location to gain the Elf Support extra action next turn he looks at

all adjacent spaces and sees that he has 1 Dragonkin in Rock Bridge Pass and 1 Demon in Pleasant Hill. Because the Demon is easier to defeat than the Dragonkin (the Demon requires a 4+ to hit and the Dragonkin a 5+) he spends his fifth and final action firing at the Demon and gets a 4 removing it from the location. He ends his turn by Drawing 2 cards, adding 1 temporary Action token from supply to be used on his next turn, and then resolves 1 Darkness Spreads Card since the game is in the Early War status.

If the Eagle Rider sets his attack style to Ground, does that mean he cannot move 4 spaces flying? No, the Attack style applies only to how he chooses to fight the battle—either in the sky, or on the ground, where he has a better shot, thus enabling him to re-roll all dice one time if he wishes. His movement is always 4 spaces.

Note: Often players misread his Ground Combat skill. He may re-roll all dice or none. He may not just re-roll the failed dice.

If Imps attack me and I have armor that prevents 1 wound will it protect me from their card theft? Likewise, if the Eagle Rider is in his Sky Attack, is he safe from Imps stealing his cards since they can fly? Heroes that have armor protection from Minion wounds also are protected from Imps stealing their cards. The Eagle Rider when his combat style is Flying is also protected, he is to be considered too high for the Imps to reach and an Eagle can fly much faster than an Imp.

Defenders of the Realm DRAGON EXPANSION

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THE BLACK DRAGON

A WAR BEGINS

by Jason Maxwell

Ungracious boy, thought Dagan. Had he not been assigned to me, he would be facing certain death against Orcs or, even worse, burning alive in the pits of Demon-fire, and yet still he complains incessantly about the rain and cold! The King must think very little of me to give me so few resources and an ignorant, spoiled clot-head treading at my heels.

The last night Dagan stood in Monarch City the two moons were positioned on the shoulders of the God Yranyus - east and west - a good sign, he thought. Now months later Dagan felt ill of ease with his mission, and a part of him wished he had remained home tending to his experiments, which he felt sure were not properly attended in his absence.

I could use another positive sign, he thought.

The boy that traveled with him, Pirth - Dagan finally admitted - had been a tremendous help carrying his equipment, especially after their horses died. But the trip was hard on both of them; it affected Dagan's moods, which were easily affected in the first place.

A Miller led them to a place where they could hopefully sleep out of the rain. After passing Angel Tear Falls, the two travelers walked days without seeing a soul. Had it not been Dagan's passion of seeing the Falls for himself, he might not have had the will to continue. Now that the Falls were behind them, he was driven because they had come so far on so little. They were so close to their objective. Dagan doubted that they had enough food and supplies to make it back, especially if the war did not come to an abrupt end. There might not be anyone around willing to assist or shelter them.

Once I get the Black Dragon to assist us, we will fly back to Monarch city! Dagan thought rapturously. *Unlikely, thinks the King. They are all fools.* Still, in desperation, he was granted this chance to prove himself. He felt confident in his research, but if he failed, it could very well be the last thing he did. Pirth was solemnly unaware why they were traveling so far. He would give Pirth a last minute chance to turn back, once they reached their destination. He had no doubt that the young boy would take it.

Dagan tried to convey to the Miller the "poetic humours the Falls stirred within my soul", but the Miller had nothing to say in response, merely nodding his head. Dagan was afraid of what the Miller might be thinking. The times were not good. He would not test the man if he did not want to talk.

"Atone for our sins," Dagan muttered as they walked. He was apt to say his thoughts aloud, often in part. The Miller looked at him, a bit puzzled, then turned and pointed to a small shed near the mill. Dagan handed him a silver coin for his troubles, and despite the Miller not expecting it, he didn't seem to care. *What good is money now that war is feared to spread?* Dagan wore royal embroidery that gave him authority from the King; it was ill-advised by the King that he wear such marks on him, but Dagan knew he would need help from Averia's citizens on this long journey. More than once did it aid him. This was enough for the Miller to give Dagan shelter. Yet the silver coin did not make him more sociable. *In other times maybe . . . Averia has not seen a great war in hundreds of years. No one knows their place in this new environment.*

The Miller nodded again and left.

"Did you see that the old man carried a broadsword? Would I give anything to hear his story," Pirth said to Dagan as they laid their satchels to the ground. He made reference to the fact that millers never carried weapons in peaceful times. It was a sight neither one of them had seen before. They should feel lucky they were treated to a bed at all, although Dagan's feet were the only thing he could feel at the moment.

"Aye, lay down for sleep, boy. That old man probably has not seen battle. He carries for precautionary reasons. Now, I have need of conversation, despite the ache in my legs. I will return soon. I think you are safe here."

"Safe or not, I will sleep like the undead laid twice in his grave." With that Pirth's eyes closed. He did not even bother to take off his rain soaked boots. So Dagan, fearing the chills, took them off for him and allowed his feet to dry. They were in a tiny room probably used for storage or sleeping quarters for peasants. The room was only adorned with an improperly vented fireplace against the north wall. Dagan built a small fire before leaving and made sure the room properly vented the smoke. At least, the best he could.

The sky had recently turned dark, stars beaming. When Dagan left Monarch City, the King had recently readied troops for a great battle with Orcs. Dagan did not know at the time any details as to why the Orcs and Monarch City were at war; the King did not announce anything. Those details would only come along Dagan's travels, and he would eventually also hear rumors that Demons entered the battle. It was an eerie suggestion. He did not know if he should believe it. But the horror stories increased over the weeks of travel until he was forced to believe it. Dagan had read extensively on Demons – the creatures apparently lived in caves far off to the Southwest and were able to command fire; but in all recorded History of Averia and its surrounding lands, there had never been an invasion from Demons. Until now they seemed uninterested in Averia. Why was this happening? It made his journey to command the Black Dragon even more important. He felt more confident than ever that he was doing the right thing: that his reading of history and his knowledge of the scientific arts and history were correct, despite the ridicule received from his colleagues. The other of the King's scholars believed the orb was meant for some other purpose. *I am right—I know it!*

And what a powerful ally a dragon could make! Dagan swelled with pride. No one had ever commanded a dragon. Only in legend had such things been known, and few people believed legends anymore. Who wants to live their lives based on the tenets of stories over a thousand years old when times were peaceful and bountiful? So there was no absolute proof that it could be done. The King was willing to listen this time. He only wished the King had relented to all his requests—the object he carried was extremely valuable in Dagan's eyes. How could he just send an ignorant boy with him? Dagan should be commanding an army!

"It would be better that you only travel with the boy. If I send men, men vitally needed here, then you will bring attention to yourself. You would very well be attacked. Traveling by stealth is much better," the King said. His doubt of Dagan was obvious.

"Yes, my lord." Dagan bent his knee one last time before leaving his chambers, a smirk on his face.

The Fool! An old man and a naive boy traveling by themselves is most certainly not the best solution. It is not a solution at all! I can sense he does not trust me. I will prove him wrong. And the King fancies himself a dabbler of science and history. Ha!

Dragon's Teeth Ridge is easy to spot from a distance, but more interesting to ponder than the high, twisting ridges are the thousands of human cairns that dot the landscape north of the ridges – built by humans many centuries ago. The history on the subject is mostly vacant. Dagan was one of only a few scholars who studied all of the original histories in the Averian library. There was not

a lot of information on the ridge, not from any "official" source. Averia was woefully behind in many intellectual pursuits, or so Dagan constantly complained. The King devoted few resources to historical study.

The Black Dragon found the harsh, dry weather of the Dragon's Teeth Ridge to his liking. Few intelligent creatures lived within a couple days travel. And his near daily routine (despite legend that insisted he slept for years at a time) of hunting far away from his lair made it near impossible for anyone seeking retribution to follow his return. Only in the past century had the location of the Black Dragon been discovered. And none dared to enter his cavern.

Until now. He did not know how it was possible but days ago the Dragon awoke to find a visitor gazing at the crystal formations adorning his chamber walls. The Dragon wondered if he was under a spell or had been poisoned by one of the arrows that still protruded from his left hind leg from the previous day hunting. *Could this be an illusion?* There was an unholy magic aura surrounding the humanoid, his skin pale. The Black Dragon studied the creature as it flickered in and out of a self-sourced light. He had never seen anything like it. The figure disappeared from a fraction of a second to the next, coming in and out of being.

The entrance to his lair was beset with traps. *How did this creature get through?*

The Black Dragon struck the image with his tail several times in rapid fire succession. No mortal creature could survive that. His strikes passed through the man as if striking the air. *This is a projection, he thought, some human sorcerers have been known to create illusions of themselves. But in Averia? It must be something else.* He studied the vision more intently, combing his knowledge. *I will figure this out and destroy this intruder.*

"You are the only Black Dragon of this land," the man finally spoke. "I know much about Black Dragons, and even they get lonely isolated for too long, despite their want of isolation. I do know of a few other black dragons, but you will never find them on your own. Several live in the land of Orcs, very far away, beyond the great wall. I will guess that you have not been there. Orcs hate dragons more than they hate men or elves, so the dragons there are as fierce and stealthy as I have ever witnessed. But you are special even compared to them – in a different way. You do not even know it. Are you interested in visiting the land of the Orcs? It is quite beautiful. With canyons that appear bottomless even to the eyes of a dragon. It would be dangerous for you to go alone . . . the magic potential of Orc country far exceeds Averia. But that may change soon. Averia has for too long been a land where sorcery is limited. Too limited. I have discovered the source of this limitation." The man spoke very casually.

The man continued, "Stubborn creatures, black

dragons. They don't even know what's good for them. Not that you would admit this fault. But let's get on to the real reason I am here." he paused to gaze into the Dragon's eyes. "A great war has begun . . . under my guidance, of course. It is yet in the infant stage. You are the most powerful Dragon of this land, and perhaps any land. I am not sure yet. You have a talent you have not discovered. I would make you a King over whatever you hate most, to do to your citizens as you like. And give you knowledge to tap into your potential." There was a long pause. The Dragon thought about his options, which were few. He, of course, would never accept any proposition from a sorcerer. No human could ever be trusted. Either they feared dragons, or they wanted to use them for their own purposes. In either case, they could not be trusted. "I was once called 'The Dark Lord', although that is not my name, of course. I was once human as you have guessed already, and I found my fellow men to be hideously base, full of fear and love. I wanted to transcend that. I did." A short pause. "I can help you as well. You do not know how special you are, but you must do as I ask."

The Black Dragon allied himself with no creature. The Dark Lord smiled. But of course he will not join me. *He is too young and foolish. I will have to influence him.*

"As we destroy the civilization of Averia—to rebuild this land with what I believe to be an advanced civilization—I will only ask for now that you stand aside. Simply do nothing. The other two options are obvious. You can join me or you can die."

The Black Dragon decided another option. He had fully studied the timing of the human figure that flickered before him. Satisfied, he struck quick as lightening with a ferocity of supernatural speed, his claws hard as steel and sharper than diamonds. The Dark Lord howled for a split second, and then disappeared completely.

"I am fully aware of my power," the Dragon howled, hoping this Dark Lord could still hear him. The Dragon had figured that the Dark Lord was no projection at all, but

through sorcery he could disappear and reappear from moment to moment. He measured the time of the Dark Lord's vibrations and then struck with precision, doing the

impossible—striking flesh.

"Foul wizard, you will never forget that last wound!" the Dragon roared with pride. He would not be back, this Dark Lord. "I am sure you will think twice before returning here!"

The Black Dragon felt fiercely proud. And with a swiftness too quick for the eyes of mortal beasts, he flung himself through his cavern and out into the open wind. *I might not have sorcery that allows me to flicker in and out of being, but I am quicker than lightning and can also vanish, but with speed, not cowardly magic!*

Dagan spent half the night speaking with an old, grey-haired elf named Anefel at a tavern a few miles from the mill. He knew that folk gossip was not very reliable, but he could seldom resist listening to local rumor and legend. And besides, this elf appeared wiser than most commoners; it was a measure of learning to pick out the useful information and discarding the rest. The elf had seen a lot. Unlike most in this region, his family had traveled through Orc territory to reach Averia. He descended from a small group of elves that once lived (and vanished) out in the far reaches of the territories, lands barely known to Dagan. But Dagan had heard of the clan of elves from which this elf had descended. They had a noble reputation.

Anefel's hands were a bit shaky, but he was vibrant in mind and manner. "Aye, I know of the King's convoy to study the Dragon..oh, they had come here some 75 years ago. My father owned a skirt of land at the time that was closest to the Dragon's lair." Anefel told Dagan that his father would sometimes have words with the convoy on their way in and out of the Dragon outpost. "My father got his land cheap. People were afraid of the Dragon, although he never bothered anyone locally. And we lived a good two day journey by horse from the outpost. Now, it is different; people around here don't fear him so much. The Dragon sleeps in his cave for years at a time, then only comes out to eat large rodents and wildebeests. Don't know why, but he never attacks farmers and villagers."

Dagan's personal readings of the expedition revealed that the Dragon in fact did not sleep for years at a time, that he was constantly active. Dagan was more interested in what happened to the small convoy of scientists and engineers that were sent to study the

Dragon. On their last voyage of many to the outpost, they never returned. Yet according to Anefel, they left back for Monarch City and never returned to the outpost.

"What happened to them you think?"

"Well, not sure. The King recalled his expedition. They went back to Monarch City one day and never returned. Just up and left. The King was probably not too happy to hear they learned little. Ha! People still think the expedition folk were killed by the Dragon. The old fort they built is in shambles now."

As Dagan got up to depart the Inn, a group of warriors, mostly axe bearing farmers weary from battle, entered mak-

ing all manner of noise with their tales of battle, both solemn and boisterous. Something new piqued Dagan's ears. He could hardly believe what he heard. They told tales of dragonkin destroying villages to the east. Sapphire and her dragonkin had entered the battle. They too appeared to be making haste to Monarch City. In their wake they left a corruption upon the land that killed most plant and animal life. This was devastating news.

Sapphire was once an ally to Monarch City! How can this be?

As Dagan made for the door, a farmer stood and called out to him. "You sir! You wear the colors of the King?" The farmer bowed.

Dagan turned his head slightly, not knowing what to expect.

"Please," Dagan responded, "I am a friend of the people and my mission is urgent. It may even be our salvation in this diabolical war. I would love to talk but I can only do it whilst walking."

The man tensed his eyes. "We have a hero with us. He felled several dragonkin by himself, both with the precision of his bow and in hand to hand with the slice of his blade. I have never seen anything like it. The times call for modesty amongst warriors. Please let him accompany you back to Monarch City for more heroic accomplishments. We can handle the dangers here. The lands here are yet sparsely populated. He will be needed elsewhere but he is not accustomed to the map. His name is Ereril."

A ranger stood and turned toward Dagan. He took up his bow and downed a fresh mug of ale. A long scar covered one bicep. He did not look friendly.

"Aye, I could use some assistance. We would welcome your company, and the protection you could offer as we climb the Dragon's Teeth." Dagan replied. The ranger raised his eyebrows at the mention of climbing the treacherous Dragon's Teeth, but only nodded.

Dagan was secretly delighted. He wondered when the God Dionasias would look upon him with favor. The gods didn't like to intervene, but they did favor civilization over ruin and chaos. Dionasias was Dagan's God of Fortune. Most did not believe in Him. But look here!

Ereril bid farewell to his colleagues. He seemed to be more than willing to leave with Dagan. Upon passing, Ereril spoke directly into Dagan's ear. "If you are not from the King and you are some sort of decoy, or a spy, I will cut out your innards and feed them to the beasts of the forest. Though I have nothing to live for, now that my family has been taken from me by the Orcs, except to take down that savage Gorgutt, I will not take kindly should I learn you have mislead me about your

mission."

Dagan nervously nodded his head. He saw a strange device attached to Ereril's side. There would be time on their journey to talk, if the man was up to it.

The Black Dragon had trouble sleeping in between hunts. Plagued with thoughts of the Dark Lord invading his private sanctum both infuriated and unsettled him. He could not think of any trap or any magic to keep the creature out, and for the first time in his 300 plus years, he pondered seeking outside assistance. But who could advise him if he could not help himself? He felt something inside him had changed.

He took to the sky again and again in restless rage. He bolted across lands and sea to strike any and all corrupted lands, basking in battles he saw below. He began to feel a connection to these areas, killing and raging. It was as if he was drawing strength from the chaos and destruction below. Civilization became more of a scourge to him than ever before. He watched as an army of Demons burned an entire village on the outskirts of Averia, and he was pleased. The King was indeed in need of valiant heroes; it was clear to the dragon that the human armies fought awkwardly, and were no longer accustomed to great war – they would not survive long.

Dagan and Pirth were once again able to travel by horse. Ereril helped procure them, and not by any ethical means. The gods indeed were beginning to smile on

Dagan's journey. He was very pleased. He decided to share with Ereril what his journey entailed, allowing Pirth to hear the conversation. He was now sure he could control the great beast—with the aid of the gods.

"Pirth, you may sit beside us and join the conversation. I am going to reveal why we are on this journey and why I have taken such precaution along the way by not telling you everything." The three sat on rocks around a fire. They were a day's journey away from the Kingdom's old outpost. By Dagan's calculations they should arrive tomorrow night.

"I have been sent by the King with a truly unique orb, a vessel of intense magic forged a long time ago by the Wizard Amarak. Legend suggests it is able to control the actions of any Black Dragon within its presence, simply by willing the creature to act as

the orb possessor pleases. I am sure that this orb, called the Phlanxe, is already felt by the Black Dragon, but because of his youth, he is most likely unaware of what this 'presence' is, and he most certainly can't avoid its alluring call, like that of a Siren. He

will wait for us, but in this interim he may be very dangerous to us. I feel with all that is honest in this world, that I can control this dragon and bring a swift end to this

war. The Black Dragon, as we all probably are aware, is one of the most powerful creatures known. If we can shield him with our armor and send him into battle for us, he may very well be invincible. Or at least, a very powerful deterrent to the armies invading us. And he is swift. Even Sapphire cannot come close to his speed or strength.

Dagan could see doubt in Ereril's face. The large Ranger had a distasteful smirk. Dagan waited to see if anyone had questions. Pirth showed a great deal of discomfort at the idea of trying to tame a dragon, but he said nothing. He had little choice but to stick by Dagan's side. Or run.

"I have seen this beast in action recently," Ereril finally said. He pulled a piece of meat off of a small wild boar that roasted over the pit. He chewed, grease on his face. "This is a fool's errand."

Dagan screwed his eyes to the heavens. He knew better than to rely on support from an ignorant warrior. But the Ranger was only here to ensure their safe travel, he would not have to endure the company of this fool for long.

"We have just one more day to reach our destination. Then a couple days most to test my theories. If this orb is not the orb that I believe it is, then we may leave."

"How will we know?" asked the Ranger.

"He will come to us. He will not be able to resist. He knows we are coming already. Once he is near us, I will be able to command him with the knowledge I have gained. I have been in study for years on Black Dragons. I believe this is what legend speaks, this orb." He almost said "priceless orb," but thought better of it, having two commoners with him.

"What does the King and his court believe?"

Dagan lied, "Only the King knows of my mission. It was our idea to keep what I am doing a secret, so as not to attract attention. So far we have been successful. But the journey has proven very hard. Neither I nor Pirth are used to such travels. Now, I am entrusting you, because we are both weary and because fighting has broken out so widely across the land since we left Monarch City, and we may need protection even if our mission succeeds, which I know it will. I believe the gods have been looking down on this project by bringing you to me. I believe the three of us have a purpose; our journey here will be sung by bards for many generations."

"Mmmm," the Ranger chewed. He did not seem too impressed.

I will show the fool, thought Dagan. He is not worthy of legend, I can see that, but I can't fault him for being cynical. He is but a warrior with the brains of half-rat. I

am doing him an immense favor.

The Ranger lifted up a blade on a stick and stuck it near Dagan's face, "See this, alchemist. This is an arrow of my own design. The metal for the blades were forged over a year long process outside of Averia, so I was able to infuse the metals with magic that no armor can resist. Once the blade enters the flesh, three small blades protract and inject venom from a Gnarkun sea creature, the deadliest venom known." Dagan had surely heard of this poison.

He wanted the Ranger to put the weapon down before an accident happened. It merely took a touch on the skin to kill a man. "But it would definitely not kill a Dragon."

"Very interesting design. Perhaps the King will have some additional use not only during this war but also after this war is over. His blacksmiths will be very interested in . . ."

"Shut up, alchemist. I am not interested in working for the King. I have but one purpose now for now." The Ranger pursed his lips.

Dagan sensed that Ereril wanted to say more, in a more acerbic tone. His bitterness was apparent. Dagan was glad he held his tongue; men should not always let feelings dictate their words. In that Ereril showed wisdom. The next hour was silent, as Ereril prepared more simple arrows and Dagan basked in his imaginative glory. Soon after he turned to his bed. Pirth was already asleep with his head on the rock he was last seen sitting upon.

As Dagan fell into slumber, he dreamt that Ereril used his arrow on the Black Dragon, striking his heart, felling the great beast, while Dagan held up the glowing orb never getting a chance to use the Dragon for the Kingdom's purpose.

"The King will have your head," he scolded Ereril in his nightmare.

The Dragon tried to rest this day, struck with restlessness and a lazy slumber. He knew he must find a new cave. He must find a place that not even a Dark Lord could penetrate.

He was also aware that the three bold travelers were almost to the outpost. He could not fathom their purpose—few intelligent beasts dared travel so close, but he did not feel they were a threat.

His dreams were periled with thoughts of the Dark Lord and when he awoke, he felt as if he had been asleep for ages. He never slept for more than a few hours in the past. This too bothered him intensely.

Again with lightening speed the Dragon zipped to the sky. The clouds were dark and heavy. He could more easily fly cloaked in the mist of heavy and dark clouds. With

vision that could see for miles he noticed that indeed the three travelers had reached their outpost and were setting up camp. The Dragon admonished himself for sleeping so long.

He felt a thirst to cleanse the land, but first he wanted to know the travelers' purpose – felt compelled almost to investigate.

The Black Dragon stood the height of at least four men. His wingspan was triple that. Like a feather touching ground, he landed behind their view, but only a few hundred feet away. Neither Dagan nor Pirth noticed for several seconds. Ereril was absent from the scene; he had just felled an antelope for dinner when he sensed the beast had come.

Ereril deliberated on an important decision: he could run towards camp, to sure death, in honor. Or he could stay afar hoping the creature would not hunt him down and live another day to take down Gorgutt.

As Ereril decided his next move, Pirth's eyes lifted and his bowels opened.

Pirth had never known fear before – not like this. His heart stopped at the sight of the beast, and he quietly cursed Dagan.

"Gods be damned! Pirth, the horses have taken flight! Did you not tie them properly?!" Dagan yelled; he was furious, ready to beat Pirth. He started after the horses but it was hopeless. As he turned back, his head down, he cursed the air he breathed and considered cutting Pirth's throat. When he noticed the silence that pervaded, he looked up. Dagan lost his breath, fainting momentarily, falling to the ground.

"God be with us, please." The sight of the Dragon brought tears to his eyes. The vision before them all was one that few men, if any, had lived to tell – it was fiercer than the face of death. Dagan fell several times trying to arise, he feet and legs trembling. *I must get to the orb. Why did it not warn me!?*

Pirth took off running. His legs, as opposed to Dagan's, seemed to be working fine. The Dragon resisted the automatic urge to attack the running peasant. In a deep rumbling voice, he asked, "WHY ARE YOU HERE?" Dagan's legs held steady long enough to reach his satchel. Fear blinded him. He reached into his bag and grabbed an object much too heavy to be the same orb he had carried this long distance. Still, he held it above his head and closed his eyes attempting to control the Dragon.

The Dragon realized that the old man was attempting some magic, but he also knew how fruitless the attempt. He saw a pathetic creature that, more than most, deserved to die.

"Open your eyes, old wizard, before I kill you," the Dragon

told him.

Dagan opened one eye, not to look at the Dragon, but to look to see what it was he could possibly be holding in his hands. He held a boulder. *I have been deceived! I should not have allowed that wretched Ranger accompany me.*

The Black Dragon attacked slowly to give Dagan a chance to dodge when in fact Dagan never saw any movement from him at all. He was still too fast for a man to follow his movements. One moment Dagan was standing fixated on the boulder and the next he was sliced into three segments. His remains fell to the ground, the boulder landing near him.

The Dragon knew that the Ranger had arrived several minutes before. He did not look at him until now. The Ranger had his prized self-engineered arrow pointing futilely at his heart.

Then the Black Dragon surprised the Ranger.

"Ranger, your kind are a scourge to these lands. Averia will no longer belong to Monarch City. Your King would be wise to have you all eradicated himself. Because left to me and the forces that are coming, you will wish you had left these lands long ago. Travel to Monarch City and warn your tiny King."

Ereril's finger lightened and loosened slightly. He was close to firing his arrow, whatever good it might do him. He still did not think this Dragon would let him live.

But the Dragon, as quickly as he appeared, vanished into the dark sky. The clouds, a few seconds later, fell open. Rain came hard. Lightning streaked across the sky and thunder hailed to the gods.

Ereril did not hesitate. He grabbed his satchel and ran north as fast as he could. *There is no time to spare.*

Near the clouds, standing on the highest Ridge of Dragon's Teeth, The Dark Lord, entirely cloaked, held the orb. It glowed ominously. "Yes, you are a rare creature," he said aloud. "I will enjoy giving you direction and motivation."

Morticus, also known as the "Dark Lord" of legend, recently re-risen from his grave—an undead scourge thousands of years old—had, in fact, allowed the Dragon to touch his flesh. A small wound, but also a bond between them. He howled in derision.

The games had begun.