

Edge of the Forest — Player Rules

Version 4

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Core Rules Changes

Folk Magic

Instead of “Push Yourself”, you have “Folk Magic”. Mechanically the same but the rationale is different — you’re using a simple enchantment to help you. Doing this under pressure is unsettling and risky, and exposes you to the influence of assorted spirits, hence the Stress cost.

NB if there’s no time for any plausible “magic action” now, can narrate as a flashback. There’s always a way to do this, regardless of the fiction.

Invoke

Instead of “Attune”, there is **Invoke** — Invoke the spirits of the hearth, the weather, the forest, or the dead.

Examples:

- Force the spirits causing the trouble here to show themselves to you
- Make the ghost of Lydia Mem, found dead on this very spot, act out how she died
- Communicate with a spirit that is manifest
- Harm or punish a spirit

Craft

Instead of “Tinker”, there is Craft. Its domain stays much the same.

Stress & Trauma

For now, as BitD.

Rationale — out here on the fringes of the kingdom, especially in these troubled times, life is hard. You are right on the edge of the forest, with all the unknowns and the threats and the fears that entails. To survive, and to function, you have to involve yourselves with those threats — recite folk magic, make offerings to fairies and spirits, lock the door well at night.

Most people cope with that ok, because surviving and getting by is all they do. They also stay within carefully with safe-ish boundaries — the fields, roads and holloways during the day, and the town or village at night. They don’t get too many traumas.

Player characters, in contrast, expose themselves to the threats directly. They hack off the holloway into the woods, they enter the old burial ground, they stay outside at night. Someone has to do that, and there are considerable gains to be won from it. But it fucks you up, in the end.

Penance

This replaces the “incarceration” option in Blades and serves to reduce **chaos**.

To do **penance**, use a downtime action and commit to something like:

- A pilgrimage to a far-off place holy to the Church
- Laudable public service somewhere away from the town
- Go into exile as a scapegoat
- Go off into the forest, seeking something

As a consequence, the **chaos** level of the organisation is reduced by one, and the **trouble** count drops to zero.

The length of penance required is measured in sessions (during which the player owning the PCs plays a different character) and depends on the current **chaos** level. Similarly, the number of sessions

- Chaos 1 — 1 session
- Chaos 2 — 3 sessions
- Chaos 3 — 5 sessions
- Chaos 4 — Life. The PC may never return.

Conditions:

- You can only start penance as a downtime action, or as a special part at end of a downtime phase
 - So you have to play a session at a suitable time to do it at all.
- To do penance, a PC must have played as many sessions as the current **chaos** level.
 - The locals don't associate the organisation with you until you've been around doing serious work for them. It can't have been your fault if you weren't there.

Play Sequence

1. Find out who everyone's playing, and have players announce it to remind others
2. Check everyone's sheets are current
3. Check player org sheet is current
4. Start music/sounds
5. Announce season
6. Announce news (stuff that they couldn't have missed)
7. Start in free play, around the player HQ
8. ...go into BitD sequence...
9. Do XP
10. Do player feedback slips
11. Canvas players for freeform feedback

Missions

Orientation Roll

Rolled *when they head out of town*.

Following the roll, we jump to a situation somewhere between “on the way to their destination” and “have completed the first step of their plan proper.” GM decides. Roll dictates nature of that situation, much like in BitD:

- Controlled — they are well-informed, aware of targets and threats, and their enemies are unaware of them
- ...
- Desperate — they are confused, have big gaps in their immediate situation model, and are under immediate serious threat

Dice:

- 1d for luck
- +1d for friends helping; -1d for enemies interfering (or cancel out)
 - GM tells players when enemies are involved, but not necessarily any details
- +1d if main opposition is 2 or more tiers weaker or situation in the mission area is fortunate for you; -1d if main opposition is 2 or more tiers stronger or situation in the mission area is problematic for you; (or cancel out)

Goodwill

Captures the general sense that you are good for the community, good for the people of the region. Replaces Blades' Coin and Rep.

- Base
 - 2 — someone was helped
 - 4 — a group was helped
 - 6 — a whole village (or more) was pretty consistently helped
- Then
 - Adjust for strength of main opposition — +1 per higher tier, or -1 per lower tier

Trouble & Chaos

Our version of heat and wanted. They're not *purely* for the PC group, though – they do double duty as a community health measure. Trouble is transient, while chaos is more fundamental. Trouble is about externalities; chaos is about the long-term effects of unmanaged externalities.

General rules —

- Trouble comes when PC actions breed ill-will — when people are hurt, or set against one another, or when they damage functioning of the community as it is — disruption to routines, to practices, to rituals
- Trouble comes when you use black magic, consort with powerful spirits etc

Trouble after a job/mission/expedition starts from the following base:

- 0 if quiet, peaceful, unacrimonious
- 2 if caused some discord
- 4 if permanently damaged relationships
- 6 if bred hatred

And increases for the following questions (top-level bullets are cumulative):

- +1 if *any party involved*
 - Killed a human
 - Destroyed homes and livelihoods
 - Engaged with the supernatural
- +2 if *the PCs or any of their agents*
 - Committed murder, without (apparent and public) justification
 - Used black magic

Entanglements

Roll 1d6:

Chaos 0-1		Chaos 2-3		Chaos 4	
1-3	Trouble in town	1-3	Trouble in town	1-3	Flipped
4-5	Rivals or Unquiet Spirits	4-5	Reprisals or Unquiet Spirits	4-5	Demonic Notice or Show of Force
6	Cooperation	6	Show of Force	6	Mob

Trouble in town — Part of your organisation causes trouble in town. Lose respect of the community (**goodwill** equal to your Tier + 1), harshly punish the offenders, or face reprisals from the wronged party.

Cooperation — A +3 status faction asks you for a favor. Agree to do it, or forfeit 1 **rep** per Tier of the friendly faction, or lose 1 **status** with them. If you don't have a +3 faction status, you avoid entanglements right now.

Demonic Notice — A powerful entity approaches the crew with a dark offer. Accept their bargain, hide until it loses interest (forfeit 3 **goodwill**), or deal with it another way.

Flipped — One of the PCs' rivals arranges for one of your contacts, patrons, clients, or a group of your customers to switch allegiances due to the **trouble** that follows you around on you. They're loyal to another faction now.

Mob — A group of the populace, blaming you for their recent troubles, form a mob to arrest you (a gang at least equal in **scale** to the **chaos level**). Pay them off with **goodwill** equal to your **chaos level** +3, hand someone over to face "justice" (this clears your **trouble**), or diffuse the situation somehow (difficult, as they are very riled indeed).

Reprisals — An enemy faction makes a move against you (or a friend, contact, or vice purveyor). Pay them (1 **rep** and 1 **coin**) per Tier of the enemy as an apology, allow them to mess with you or yours, or fight back and show them who's boss.

Rivals — A neutral faction throws their weight around. They threaten you, a friend, a contact, or one of your vice purveyors. Forfeit (1 **goodwill**) per Tier of the rival, or stand up to them and lose 1 **status** with them.

Show of force — A faction with whom you have a negative status makes a play against your holdings. Give them 1 **claim** or go to war (drop to -3 status).

Unquiet Spirits — A spirits is drawn to you. Acquire the services of a priest or exorcists, or attempt to deal with it yourself.

Downtime

Load cost

At the start of downtime:

1. Every player declares what load level they reached (in terms of items used which they brought from home)
2. The pay goodwill for the single highest level:
 - a. Low — free
 - b. Medium — 1g
 - c. High — 2g

Negative goodwill

If after load cost goodwill is negative, tick a 4-clock. Fill the clock, and your org goes into disarray — none of your special abilities work. Reduce the clock count by paying the 1 goodwill for each.

Healing

Healing uses BitD rules.

Base healing roll is 0d. Pay 1g, or **consort** with a new or existing doctor in town, to get 2d instead.

If you heal yourself, pay 1 **stress**.

The Kingdom

A Timeline

Year	Events
-404	The Old Empire invades, driving many natives into the hills and forests
-170	The Old Empire withdraws its garrison, leaving the Kingdom to find its own rulers and fend for itself.
0	Queen Paedaitis unites the feuding factions to create the modern nation
621	High Bishop Sian Numoteris declares the Third Crusade, and King Bynnfyr IV departs with it
623	Lady Zarastaen, the King's sister, declares that crusades and similar foolishness are an inevitable result of rule by kings, and leads an insurrection against not just the King but against the rule of monarchs itself
624	The King is gravely wounded in capturing the Holy City, and returns home to fight for his throne
625	Unbidden, unwanted, and unfortunate, the plague comes.
627	The King dies of plague, and Zarastaen's forces seize the capital, thus ending the civil war.
628	The crusade ends in disaster — the Holy City falls after an insider poisoned the wells, and a foolish counteroffensive at Pedemos is broken with a mass slaughter of crusaders.
629	Today

State of Play

Queen Vaisviet remains under house arrest in Claudeign. The rebels would use her as a symbol of legitimacy, but she is in no fit state. Lady Zarastaen acts as First Minister, but her Parliament of Worthies is fractious.

Crown loyalists hold Bretallac, the second city, an Old Empire fortress that is all but impregnable. They are fatalistic, disordered, and cynical.

The Church professes neutrality, though it's no secret that they would see rule by Church Prince Asmevodas, who is "neither man nor woman, neither young nor old" and would rule with divine wisdom. Asmevodas holds court in Melasaos, on the eastern border of the kingdom, but few have seen it in the flesh.

The plague, having glutted itself on a third of the population, has mostly abated. But pockets persist, and flare-ups occur. Rumours spread of "bearers" who suffer but cannot die.

Outposts remain in the Holy Land, where a tenuous peace holds.

Reference Sheets

(note that this is a separate section with different margins etc)

Hospital

Provides support and accommodation for the poor, along with some measure of medical treatment.

Key questions at creation

- Why have you chosen this town as the place where people most need your help?
- Who is your patron Saint?
 - E.g. St Aux, who gave to the poor and was eaten by rats

Special abilities

Start with one, take more as advances.

- [O] **Here to Help** — Take 1 less **trouble** from any mission that is primarily medical or palliative
- [O] **Care of One's Own** — All PCs get +1d to healing rolls in downtime
- [O] **Preventative Medicine** — +1d to resistance rolls against the consequences of disease, poison or contaminants
- [O] **Grateful Beneficiaries** — +1 effect when you Consort with anyone that the hospital has previously healed
- [O] **Doctor's Warning** — +1 effect when you Sway, Consort or Command by means of giving medical advice

Upgrades

At creation you get a free upgrade:

- A group of **nurses** (cohort)

Your special upgrade options are:

- [O] Medical kits – each character's first 2 load of medical equipment or supplies doesn't count for **load cost** or any in-mission encumbrance considerations
- [O] Superior Nurses — any Nurse groups are +1d when acting as such

Special XP Question

- Did you leave somewhere or something healthier than you found it?
(1 xp if you did it; 2 xp if you did it multiple times or in a major way)

Hermit

You are very much of the forest.

Action ratings

Invoke 2, Study 1

Abilities

Start with **two**.

- **Visions** — Go into a trance and gain **potency** when **gathering information** on something you couldn't otherwise know
- **Unsettling Knowledge** — tell NPCs small secrets about them that you probably shouldn't know, and gain (or grant to another) +1 effect when you **sway** or **command** them
- **Wanderer** — +1d to **gather information** about secret places in the forest
- **Herbalist** — you can **craft** to heal wounds in downtime, suppress the effects of harm (for an hour or two), or **study** an illness or corpse.
- **Strange Company** — you can converse with forest animals, although their memory and understanding is very limited
- **Dreamworker** — during downtime, take 2 free ticks to any long-term project related to the supernatural or the forest itself.

Friends/enemies

- Cross, an outlaw
- Huavir, an old devil
- Zsss, a wild animal

Special equipment options

- A fine skull you found
- Forest mushrooms with hallucinogenic properties
- Tame forest animal
- Wild forest animal, drugged
- A valuable that someone dropped in the forest
- A disease

Experience

- You gain xp at the end of a session if you *address a challenge by using the ways of the forest*

Hunter

You are half of the town, half of the forest. They two are not always easy to reconcile.

Action ratings

Hunt 2, Prowl 1

Abilities

Start with **two**.

- **Read the Leaves** — When you are in the forest and use Folk Magic to Study the history of your immediate surroundings, you will see visions of events that no ordinary perception could get
- **Follow the Trail** — When you **hunt** or **prowl** following a trail, take +1d
- **Bleed** — When you hurt something to lame it, +1 effect
- **Arrow Words** — invoke **folk magic** to fire a missile weapon much further *or* more rapidly than normal (as well as one of the normal **folk magic** effects)
- **Hunter's Mind** — You may expend your special armor to completely resist a consequence of surprise or mental harm (fear, confusion, losing track of someone) or to push yourself for ranged combat or tracking.
- **Watcher** — When you gather information to discover the location of a target, you get **+1 effect**. When you hide in a prepared position or use camouflage you get **+1d** to rolls to avoid detection.

Friends/enemies

- Mobid, a hermit
- Rottenleaf, a rogue faerie
- Hass, a ghost

Special equipment options

- A fine yew bow that you made yourself
- A fine dog, trained and loyal
- A black arrow that never breaks
- Forest mushrooms of poisonous nature
- Leather boots

Experience

- You gain xp at the end of a session if you *address a challenge by hunting it down*

Knight of the Cross

The third crusade ended in disaster, and you returned home to find a land equally ravaged.

Questions — Were you betrayed at the Holy City, when an insider poisoned the wells? Or did you narrowly escape the slaughter outside Pedomos?

Action Ratings

Skirmish 2, Wreck 1

Abilities

Start with **two**.

- **Horrors of War** — You've seen this happen before, though you don't care to remember. Take 2 **stress** to get an insight into the opportunities in a battle.
- **Knight Inspiring** — When you lead the faithful in decisive action, take +1d to Command, Sway or Consort
- **Knight Protector** — When you **protect** a teammate, take +1d to your resistance roll. When you gather info to anticipate possible threats in the current situation, you get +1 **effect**.
- **Knight Enduring** — You recover from harm faster. Permanently fill in one of your healing clock segments. Take +1d to healing treatment rolls.
- **One (Wo)-Man Army** — when you fight a group of up to six creatures, you don't suffer reduced effect due to their numbers.

Friends/enemies

Pick one to be each.

- Gash, a weakling
- Morrun, a lunatic
- Peirn, a murderer

Special equipment options

- A fine sword; you can tell the story of every scratch
- A fine arming doublet, strategically reinforced (armour)
- Fine mail, fits you perfectly (armour, double weight, can be worn on top of arming doublet)
- A shield with your emblem on it (armour)
- A grisly trophy of past violence
- A valuable looted item that you just can't get anyone to buy
- Trained Hawk

Experience

- You gain xp at the end of a session if you *address a challenge by leading martial action*

Occultist

You do more than folk magic – you do black magic. You consort with bad spirits, devils, the dead. You do the things that are forbidden and that your mother warned you against.

Key question — what originally pushed you into crossing this line?

Action ratings

Invoke 2, Study 1

Abilities

Start with **two**.

- **Ritualist** — You can perform ritual sorcery during downtime. You can **study** an occult ritual (or create a new one) to summon a supernatural effect or being. You begin with one ritual already learned. (Without this special ability, the study and practice of rituals leaves you utterly vulnerable to the powers you supplicate. Such endeavours are not recommended.)
- **Bitter and Vengeful** — You gain an additional **xp trigger**: *You got payback against someone who harmed you or someone you care about.* If your organisation helped you get payback, also mark organisation xp.
- **Spirit Claw** — You may imbue your hands, melee weapons, or tools with spirit energy. You gain **potency** in combat vs. the supernatural. *When you do this, how do you do it? What does it look like when the energy manifests?*
- **Driven** — You may expend your **special armor** to resist a consequence of a supernatural effect or to **push yourself** for occult actions.
- **Violate** — When you **wreck** an area with arcane substances, ruining it for any other use, it becomes anathema or enticing to the supernatural (your choice).
- **Foresight** — Two times per mission you can **assist** a teammate without paying stress. Describe how your scrying and haruspicy let you see this circumstance in advance.

Friends/enemies

Pick one friend and one enemy.

- Billit, a priest
- Alius, a witchfinder
- Drod, a corpse

Special equipment options

- Fine bone wand
- Fine grimoire of dangerous incantations
- Cursed water
- Body part of a long-dead sorcerer
- Trained crow

Experience

- You gain xp at the end of a session if you *address a challenge with occult action*

Priest

You are very much of the town. So much so that you cannot connect to the forest at all.

Special Feature — Strike out Invoke and replace with Pray. You are forbidden to speak to the spirit world, to the faeries, to anything that is outside the light of the Saviour.

- Pray for protection, blessing, or to drive back or destroy things from outside the human world.
- Examples:
 - Drive a spirit out of your sight
 - Exorcise a ghost from a place
 - Raise protection of a family against false words
 - Bless a bow to bring down a murderer
 - Consecrate a building for the Lord

Restriction — You cannot use Folk Magic (i.e. cannot “Push Yourself”).

Action ratings

Pray 2, Sway 1

Abilities

Start with **three** abilities (one more than usual, as partial compensation for your lack of Folk Magic)

- **Spiritual Authority** — the organisation takes 1 less **trouble** from any job that you are involved in
- **Drive Back the Devil** — +1 effect whenever you **pray** to delay, repulse or drive magic anything “unholy”
- **Tower of Faith** — when you **resist** an effect of magical or otherwise unholy nature, you always completely negate its effect
- **Mission** — you may expend your **special armour** to completely resist a consequence, or to gain one of the **folk magic** benefits on an action, whenever you are acting to impose the doctrines of the faith.
- **Preacher** — when you **consort, sway or command** someone faithful to the church, take +1d
- **Faith Healer** —use **pray** for a healing or medical study act (as in the Hermit’s ability **herbalist**)

Friends/enemies

Pick one friend and one enemy.

- Tivius, a sinner
- Gost, a criminal
- Vurio, a sorcerer

Special equipment options

- Cross of the Saviour
- Holy Water
- Relic of a Saint
- Testament of the Saints
- Trained Sparrowhawk

Experience

- You gain xp at the end of a session if you *address a challenge with faith or doctrine*

Soldier

You fought and bled in the civil war, then were discarded when the war ended. You now wander, and you have wandered... here.

Question — did you fight for the King and Queen? Or the King's sister, warts and all? Or for the Church Prince

Action Ratings

Wreck 2, Skirmish 1

Abilities

Start with **two**.

- **Brutal Intimidation** — Take 1 Trouble for +1 effect when using Command
- **Brutal Smashing** — Take 1 Trouble for +1 effect when hurting people
- **Unfeeling** — When you resist the effects of physical harm, you always completely negate its effect
- **One Spear Among Many** — +1d to any **setup action** involving coordinated action by several people
- **Frugal and Parsimonious** — At the end of each downtime phase, you earn +2 **stash**
- **Know Their Price** — +1d to Sway or Consort when offering money or goods as an incentive

Friends/enemies

Pick one friend and one enemy.

- Tilla, a pacifist
- Corrus, a freebooter
- Phile, a trader in odds and ends

Special equipment options

- A fine spear, looted from some noble fool
- A battered leather-and-plate armour assembly (armour)
- A crossbow
- Trained Kestrel

Experience

You gain xp at the end of a session if you *address a challenge with violence or coercion*

Edge of the Forest – supplementary character sheet

Friends

Enemies

I owe favours to

I am owed favours by

Reputations

Common equipment

- Sword
- Spear
- Bow
- Leather hauberk
- Strong whisky
- Spices and condiments
- Folk fetish or charm
- Holy wafers
- Rope
- Lantern
- Round Wooden Shield