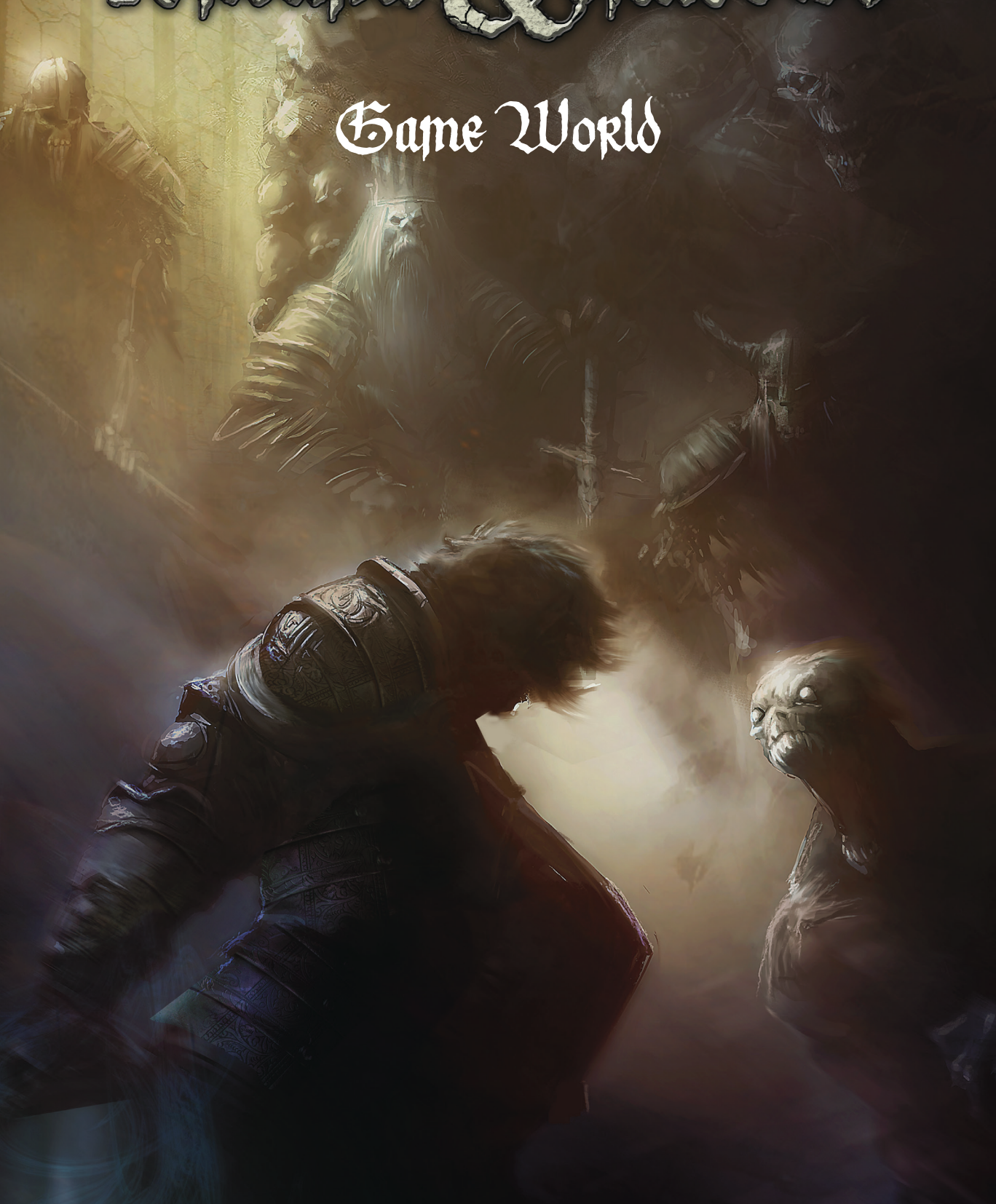


Of Dreams & Shadows

Game World



Introduction

Of Dreams & Shadows is a cooperative board game for up to 6 players, set in a fantasy world where ominous signs foretell a rising darkness. People have gone missing from their homes and investigators can only find strange stick figures that have been left behind. Rumours of the dead rising are whispered in taverns across the land. Terrifying beasts have been sighted roaming the countryside in the wake of grisly murders and prophetic dreams reveal omens of war. The players take on the role of champions who must embark on a quest to save their realm.

I will always remember that night many years ago. A noise woke me from sleep. Restless and curious, I lit a lantern before leaving my room to investigate. Noises that sounded like scraping and scratching against wood could be heard down the hall. I thought it was my father returned late from the city so I called out to him, but there was no reply. When I opened my parents' bedroom door, I saw it then. Its face looked like my father's, but was contorted and twisted. It held my mom tightly in its arms, as if in an embrace, and I could hear it feeding. Her eyes were staring blankly and her feet were dangling above the floor where a pool of blood welled. I stood there frozen, unable to comprehend what I was witnessing. My eyes slowly tore away and focused across the room to where my little sister was supposed to be sleeping. She lay crumpled and unmoving on her bed, drenched in her own blood.

A sudden cold rage filled me and I threw my lantern at it. The monster howled and lashed out at me as the lantern broke open and bathed it in oil and fire. Out of instinct, I leapt away and slammed the door shut. I ran back to my room and barred the entrance before grabbing my hunting knife. It was a gift from him.

"A pretty girl can never be too careful", he had once said. It was with a gruff and stern voice, ruined by eyes full of fondness and love. I had always kept it by my bedside.

I could hear it right outside screeching and pounding heavily against the door, but the oaken wood held firm. Smoke began to waft in and the smell of burned flesh nearly made me retch. I snatched what possessions I could carry before climbing out the bedside window like I often did as a child.

Once outside I waited with knife in hand, trembling in the dark. The monster never came for me. It seemed to take only a few moments before my home went up in flame. For a long time I just stood there and wept as the whole of it sunk in. Dawn eventually broke sometime later. I searched the ruin of my home and found my mother and sister. I made sure to give them a proper burial and prayed for their souls. There was no sign of the monster that wears my father's face. To believe such a thing was consumed in the fire would be wishful thinking. No, it is still out there somewhere and that knowledge haunts my dreams to this day.

~Nora



The World

The world of mankind is divided into four kingdoms; Albion, Tyr, Eriu and Dragova.

The kingdom of Albion lies nestled in the south amidst fertile fields and plains. The light-skinned people of Albion are industrious farmers and crafters who have built idyllic towns and cities. The chivalric order of Knights was birthed in this land and a king rules with the support of several noble houses.

Across to the frigid north is the kingdom of Tyr. Led by a queen and her fair-haired Valkyries, those who live at the top of the world are a hardy seafaring people with a reputation for raiding and plundering. They glorify combat and respect is given to those who demonstrate great martial skill. To the east is the kingdom of Eriu, a coastal

region filled with dense and lush forests. Eriu is the most fractious kingdom as its wood-painted people are divided into numerous clans, each vying for dominance. They are a prideful folk who value honour above coin and are the most diverse in appearance, ranging from charcoal complexion to ivory skin. The capital of Eriu is actually a neutral city where the clans can meet in peace and host diplomats from the other kingdoms.

The mountainous lands of Dragova stretch across the west and are inhabited by a dark-haired people. Dragova has a strict caste system, where blood line is paramount to determining one's place in the world. The kingdom was once ruled by a single royal family for centuries. However, a dark scandal involving blood

Dragova descends into civil war.



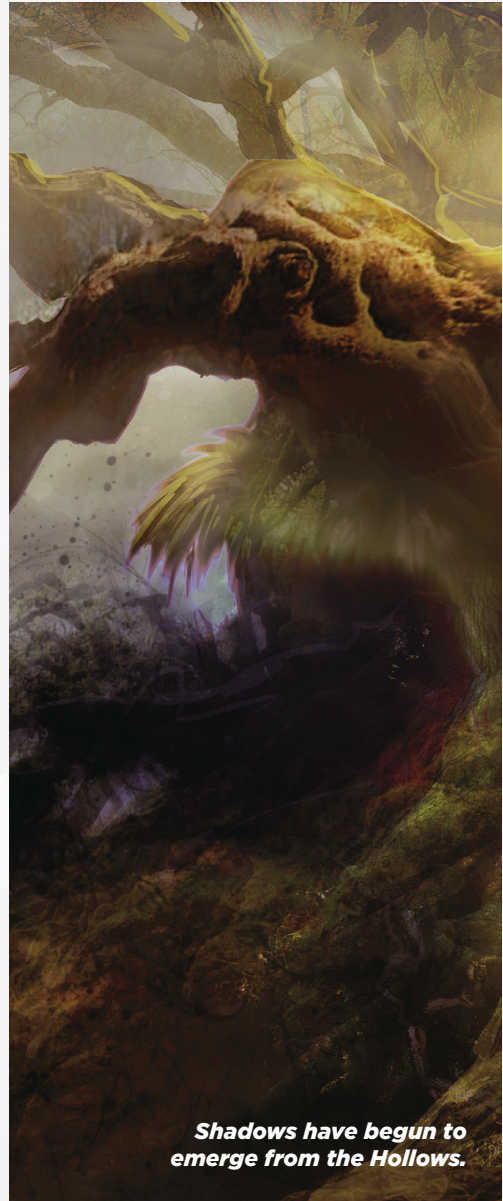
Waves of refugees are fleeing the countryside.

sacrifice led to a coup and their downfall. Dragova is now ruled by the heads of several fiefdoms that watch over the kingdom from their gothic castles.

There is a brittle peace among the kingdoms that has held in recent years, but an old enmity lingers between Albion and Dragova that has lasted from a generation of war. Eriu has always suffered internal conflict among its clans and Tyr gazes at their fractious neighbours with a predatory eye.

Beyond the four kingdoms lie the Wilds. These unsettled lands consist of vast stretches of unexplored wilderness, mountainous peaks, and hidden valleys. Exploring the Wilds can be perilous as strange spirits and terrifying Werefolk inhabit these regions. Also, deep within the Wilds are enchanted forests where the Veil is thin between this world and the realm of the Fae.

Deep beneath the earth lie the Hollows, a maze-like network of ancient underground catacombs and tunnels. This subterranean territory is filled with ruins and the tombs of a long-dead people from another age. The Hollows is named for the entryways at the surface that are formed out of hollowed-out openings of great ancient trees.



Shadows have begun to emerge from the Hollows.

Factions

Across the kingdoms are several organizations with their own agendas and goals. The Watchers is an independent group of agents and detectives that work to investigate strange and horrific crimes. They also act as the “eyes and ears” on external threats to the human realm. The White Rose is another neutral organization dedicated to the pursuit and study of supernatural lore. Its members include gifted scholars and academics along with Spirit-touched magi and seers. Finally, the Coppers is a loose affiliation of thieves and criminals that make an art form out of larceny and mischief. Its members are often made up of the lower social classes who aim to undermine the effete nobility.

The chivalric Knights are elite oath-sworn warriors in service to either Albion or Dragova. Their code: to uphold the values of honour, valour and courtesy. The Knights often roam the countryside and embark on quests for their order and kingdom. The Valkyries are a special cadre of warrior women in service to the queen of Tyr. They are highly trained fighters that are fierce in battle and often raid down Eriu's eastern coast. Finally, the Free Companies are a collection of long established mercenary units formed of adventurers and professional soldiers that hire out their services to the highest bidder. While these sellswords are most often employed by the warring clans of Eriu, they can be found in all kingdoms.



The Knights set an example for others in the hope of a better future.

***The Coppers despise the upper castes
and dream of revolution.***



Spirits and Magic



Spirits are the source of all magic.

The world is filled with incorporeal spirits nearly invisible to the naked eye. Some are the souls of the dead who remain bound to this world. Those who have committed the worst of crimes are sometimes punished this way. Other spirits have never been human at all. They are sentient and tend to have an affinity for elements of nature. The most powerful and ancient of these are the Primordial Spirits who have perhaps existed since the world's beginning.

While spirits often mimic wildlife, some have also been known to possess and affect the forms of the living. Dire Beasts are an example of creatures who have been altered by the whims of spirits.

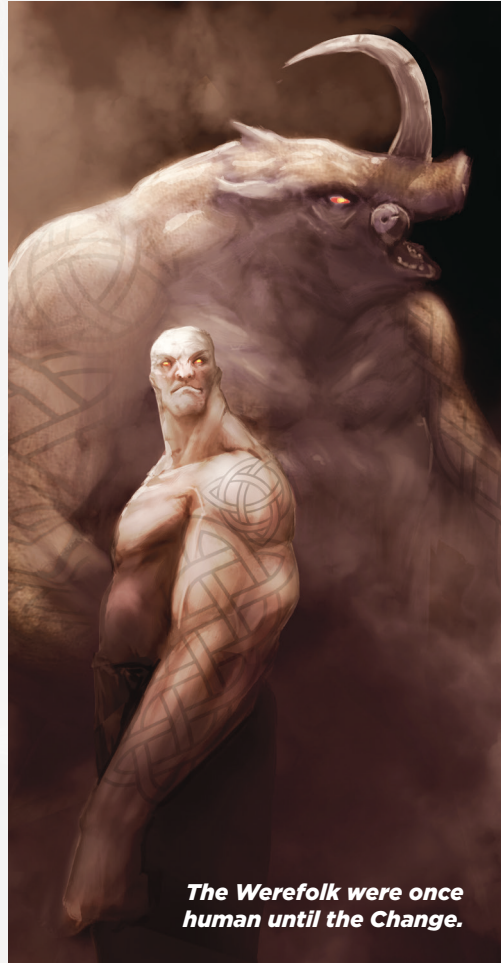
Their bodies have been transformed, often taking on aspects of multiple animals. Dire Beasts roam the Wilds and are among the most deadly of predators.

Those who are gifted with the "Spirit-touch" can commune with spirits and tap into a new sense of the surrounding world. With proper study and practice, people possessing this gift can coax and bargain with spirits to perform wondrous magical effects. However, some practices are forbidden as they involve sacrificing life, abusing corpses of the dead or other vile acts. Death cults have always plagued the realm for there have always been those lured by dark power and the promise of eternal life.

Non Humans

The Fae

In a bygone age, the world was once filled with supernatural beings that inspired fear and awe. The Fae were not one race, but a collection of beings, said to be born from dreams. They were beyond mortal understanding as their very nature defied reality. The Fae bound themselves to strange rules and formed their own societies. The two most prominent factions were the Seelie and Unseelie Courts, which sometimes fought with or against mankind. At some point the powers of the Fae began to wane and they fled to another realm; one of dreams where their powers remained strong. As time passed a barrier called "The Veil" formed between worlds, which prevented any travel. Mankind's encounters with the Fae eventually became myth and legend. In this age, the Fae have begun to reappear in the heart of the Wilds.



The Werefolk

Shape-changers that can take the form of beast-like creatures, the Werefolk are a melding between human and spirit. They live in tribes aligned to the animal whose form they can assume. The Werefolk have claimed vast territories in the Wilds, slaying any that would dare to trespass on their domain. All Werefolk have an ancient enmity against humans for their ancestors were once feared and hunted down without mercy. They see humans as an ever-growing threat to upsetting the balance of nature and wait for a day of reckoning between their races.

Where the Story Begins

The signs have come. Shadows flicker and stir in the Hollows. A chill has settled in those ancient ruins and expedition pack animals refuse to enter the underworld realm. There are new sightings of large beasts roaming the countryside and strange unnatural calls fill the night air. Hunters have gone missing without a trace and it is no longer safe to explore very far into the woods. My sisters wake from the same nightmares. A skeletal hand, pale and white as snow, grasping out from darkness. Thousands of red-eyed crows flying over a field of dead. A bloody maw gaping open with rows of gleaming teeth the size of daggers. I see these images in my own dreams and I fear for what is coming.

-Selene

Arawn

Deep beneath the earth, at the very heart of the Hollows, lie the restless dead. They are ruled by Arawn, one-time king from a previous age. He was a cruel monarch that brought pain and ruin upon his underworld kingdom. Imprisoned and cursed with immortality, Arawn and his wraith host must eternally wait until the end of all human life before they may pass on. At least that is what the myths have said. One day, an expedition of treasure hunters ventured further than any others and unknowingly opened his sealed crypt. Now Arawn plots to free himself of his immortality by bringing all the living from above under the shroud of death.

Arawn's Quest

Arawn has summoned an army of undead and retrieved the eldritch runes that power his curse. He has entrusted some to his most powerful of servants and hidden the rest throughout the Hollows. The Champions must descend into the underworld realm to retrieve them as the runes can be used to render Arawn vulnerable to physical attack.

Morrigan

Within the Wilds, the barrier between this realm and the World of Dreams is much weaker. The Veil separates the reality of the mortal world with the land of the Fae, but recently tears have somehow been opening.

Morrigan is a legendary Fae Queen of the Unseelie Court who embodies battle, strife and death. She has taken advantage of the new gateways to invade and conquer the kingdoms.

Morrigan's Quest

The Seelie Court, a rival faction of Fae, has provided a means to undermine Morrigan's invasion. They have scattered enchanted song notes throughout the Wilds in the hope that human Champions can find them. Singing the notes inspires courage and bravery in mortals, allowing them to temporarily resist Morrigan's dark powers. Sensing this ruse, Morrigan has dispatched her own servants to prevent the song notes from falling into the hands of the Champions.

The Dragon

An ancient being slumbers in a state of torpor, undisturbed within his barrow since the last age. His true name lost to time, the Dragon is a being made of human flesh merged with the essence of a Primordial Spirit. His form has taken the aspect of multiple beasts, with the head of a prehistoric reptile that has become his namesake. He is sometimes referred to as "the First" as he is the progenitor of all Werewolf, having sired many children that are the ancestors of today's tribes. Through his dreams, he can also reach out to a chosen few and form a pact that brings about the Change. The reclusive Werewolf tribes, resentful of the ever-expanding human kingdoms, have learned of his impending awakening. They now prepare for the time when the Dragon will rise once again to cull the humans and end an age.

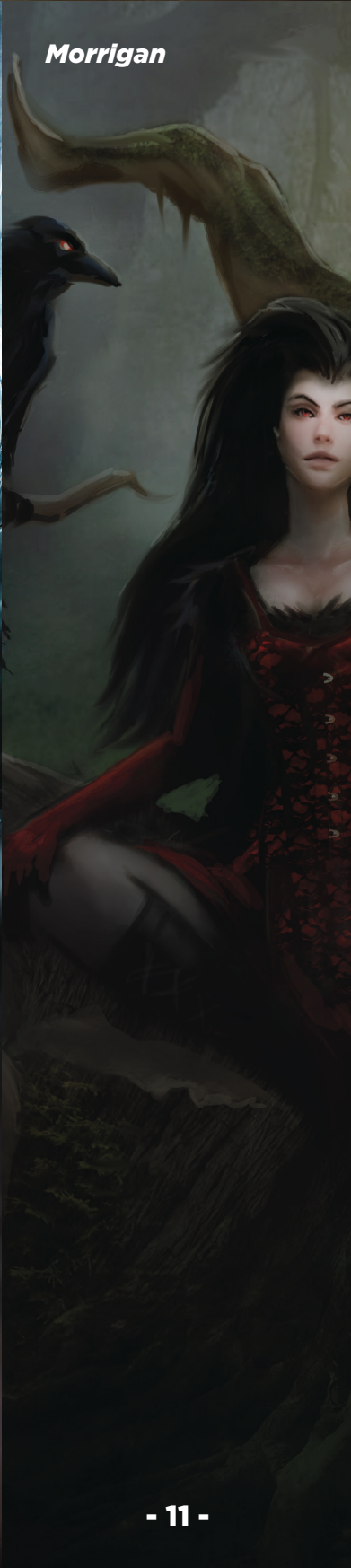
The Dragon's Quest

Scattered throughout the wilderness are totems containing the fragmented essence of a Primordial Spirit. This ancient spirit is linked to the Dragon and the totems can be used to provide temporary protection. The Champions must explore both the Wilds and Hollows for these totems as any that possess a fragment can spend it to limit the Dragon's deadly attacks. Through dreams, the Dragon has warned the Werewolf tribes of the Champions' intentions and has called a hunt on them.

Arawn



Morrigan



The Dragon



