

# Mordavia

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## UPDATES

Rules revisions since April 2004:

- Endurance tests removed
- Poison effect immediate
- Sunlight damages Vampires
- Strike Down changed
- Guild advantages clarified
- Steadfast high advantage

*Mordavia* is a dark fantasy Live Action Role Playing game (LARP). There is no tabletop or dice; you do not control your character with a mouse or keyboard. You *are* your character: you dress, talk, eat and sleep as them. The game includes combat with safe latex weapons, but the emphasis is on good roleplaying and immersive atmosphere.

The lost kingdom of Mordavia lies deep in the Carpathian mountain ranges, shrouded in a misty valley. Human travellers unlucky enough to enter Mordavia find corpses returning to life, elves and orcs battling over territory, and vampires holding positions as civic authorities. They may spend an evening sharing a tankard of ale with a traveller from the Faerie Realm, or something stranger straight out of their granny's fireside tales.

Much of the action takes place in Berium, a small town deep in a pestilent swamp in the heart of Mordavia. Even to the jaded natives, Berium has a particularly sinister reputation.

In real life the events take place in parks and reserves around Auckland. Berium is physically located at the Motu Moana Scout Camp in Green Bay. The players and crew come from a wide range of backgrounds: tabletop roleplaying, historical re-enactment groups, drama and everyday people who've heard about the game and come along for the fun. You don't need to know how to fight with a sword, although it's a handy skill to have.

Our weekend events run from a Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, with food and accommodation provided. You must be aged 16 or over to attend the weekend events. We also run one-day events, which younger players can attend by arrangement.

Visit our website at [www.mordavia.com](http://www.mordavia.com) to find out more about Mordavia. We're always open to new players and crew.



### Things to Remember

**Roleplaying** – always stay in character unless you are talking to a GM or you are in a designated out-of-character area.

**Costume** – medieval or dark fantasy garb is suitable. Don't wear modern clothes such as jeans, shorts, or sneakers.

**Hands on Head** – when a person has their hands on their head they are invisible to your character. Act as if they aren't there.

**Time Out** – in an emergency or to talk with a Player GM out of character, make a T sign with your hands and say "time out".

**Murder** - taxpayers are protected by the King's law. If you kill other townsfolk you will probably be caught and sentenced to death. Killing non-citizens is not murder.

**Pull Your Blows** – hit with a firm tap. If someone strikes you painfully, say "pull your blows" to remind them to fight safely.

## WHAT IS LIVE ACTION ROLEPLAYING?

*Mordavia* is a *Live Action Role Playing* game (LARP). This is a hobby that is popular in many parts of the world, especially the USA, the UK, and Europe.

In the game you play a character in a fantasy world. Unlike in conventional role playing games, you do not *say* what your character is doing - you *do* it. To successfully fight, negotiate, cast spells, and if necessary run away, you act these things out in the real world.

The game is organised by a group of people called the *Game Masters* (GMs). The GMs plan the event, organise people for the game crew, and act as referees on the day.

*Is it safe?* We use foam weapons for combat. It's safer than many sports, but care still must be taken to avoid injury.

*How does magic work?* Spell casting is represented by reading scrolls aloud, and by throwing soft spell charms.

*Is it fun?* A good live role playing event combines the adrenaline of combat, the creativity of impromptu drama, the challenge of problem solving, and the atmosphere of a good story. It's better than a poke in the eye with a blunt stick.

*How do I get involved?* Email [ryan@mordavia.com](mailto:ryan@mordavia.com) or phone Ryan on 918-6132 if you're interested. Players and crew must be aged 16 years or older.

# INTRODUCTION

When we were children we played pretend, inventing stories and putting ourselves into them.

Live action roleplaying is playing pretend for adults. It's a medium for spontaneous creativity, an outlet for the storytelling urge in all of us. In order to add consistency to the setting, we have rules about what your character is capable of doing. And to make combat fun and exciting, we do it by actually fighting with safe latex weapons. Mordavia is therefore improvised theatre, gaming, and sport all rolled into one.

## *Immersion*

The thing that makes live roleplaying special is immersion. That's when you really feel like you are your character, and that the environment is real. Note the word "feel". You don't actually believe that you're a hero in a medieval world. That's called psychosis. Don't get the two confused. Here are some of the ways that we encourage immersion in Mordavia:

**Look right** – when everyone around you is wearing suitable costume you're more inclined to have a gut reaction that the setting is real. That's why movie actors have costume and makeup. That's why we ask for everyone to be appropriately costumed. Not because we're aiming for historical authenticity, but because we want everything to feel right.

**Get the environment right** – making a scout camp give the impression of a medieval village is a difficult obstacle. We only use candlelight in the Inn, because the flickering shadows enhance the atmosphere. We dress up our building interiors with hangings, tablecloths, and candelabra, and use special effects to enhance scenes. You can help improve the environment by bringing your own props, and by disguising any modern items you bring or keeping them out of sight.

**Act right** – Immersive roleplaying is not about being a good actor, or being dramatic or impressive. It's about acting as if you were your character. It's easier to achieve immersion when other people are trying to achieve it too. When other players want to "get powerful", or "solve quests", or "impress people" they usually screw up immersion for everyone around them. Just try to be your character, and you'll make it easier for everyone else to do the same.

## *Game Masters*

The game is organised and run by the Game Masters (GMs). They create the ongoing plot of the setting, help players develop their characters, act as referees at events, and brief the crew. There are usually one or more Player GMs who stay with the players to take care of their needs and answer questions.

## *Being a Player*

You have an incredible opportunity to put on a costume and be someone else for a couple of days. So go ahead and be that person as hard as you can be. You won't need to break out of character unless there is an emergency. You'll find yourself pursuing your character's agenda, helping or hindering other characters, creating stories and striving to survive the game.

Don't worry if you've never played in a LARP before, our crew and players are very friendly and will make you welcome. Create a character using the Character Creation section of this rulebook, and contact us to sign up.

## *Being in the Crew*

The players in the game get to change personality for a couple of days. You're more adaptable and can change personalities several times an hour. In a single evening you may be a humble peasant, an arrogant mage, and a tricky spirit. Your dramatic roles may vary from comedy to tragedy. If you enjoy fighting you'll get plenty of it.

You are under the direction of the Game Masters, but you still have to think for yourself. You will often be given just the sketchy outline of a character to play, but you are expected to fill in the details such as a name, background, and personality. Any character or monster can provide powerful moments of roleplaying if the crewmember gives it some thought.

Contact us to sign up as crew for the next game.

## *The Spirit of the Game*

For a live roleplaying game to be successful all of the participants must approach it with the right attitude. Some people think that if they achieve their character's objectives then they have "won" the game. It's fun to succeed, but in a live roleplaying event you can have just as much fun when your character fails miserably or dies. That's because your character is part of a larger story that unfolds spontaneously from the improvisation of the participants. For that story to be believable and gripping there must be both success and failure. When you start enjoying the event not only from your character's perspective but also from the story's perspective then you start to understand the spirit of the game.

## *Helping Out*

During events there will be odd jobs to help with. For crew this includes helping with props and running errands.

Both players and crew need to help the cook in the kitchen, chopping vegetables and washing dishes. Whenever food is being prepared an assistant is needed. Players whose character is a commoner can work in-character for a few kopeks. Nobles should drop out of character to help out.

## *Players Arriving at the Game*

Before arriving give these rules a scan to ensure they're fresh in your mind. Arrive in costume with your gear ready.

On arrival you'll be briefed by a Player GM who will check that your weapons are safe, give you your spell scrolls, and brief you on any special instructions for your character.

Then you will enter Mordavia. Start playing your character as soon as the Player GM sends you into the game.

## *Crew Arriving at the Game*

Crew should wear plain clothes that will go well under most costumes. Avoid jeans, shorts, sneakers, and shirts. When you arrive report to the GMs in the Crew War Room.

## *Finishing and Cleaning Up*

A Player GM will announce when the game is over. Please stay in character until this announcement.

Once the game finishes we expect both players and crew to stay and help clean up. When we're playing at a scout camp there will be a checklist for each building of things that need to be cleaned. Please don't leave until all of the buildings have been cleaned and checked by the camp warden.

# SETTING

Mordavia is an evolving setting created by the players and organisers. Our players have a lot of leeway to invent places, people and events that relate to their characters' backgrounds.

## *The Hidden Valley of Mordavia*

Mordavia is a lost magical kingdom set in Eastern Europe in the middle of the 15th century. In most of the world magic is only rumoured at darkly, and monsters only appear in children's stories. But in Mordavia, these things are real.

## *History*

Many centuries ago, when Europe was still in the fist of the Roman Empire, Mordavia was just a little village in the mountains. Then strange things began to happen. Magic came to the land, elves appeared in the forests, the gypsies developed unique abilities, and a bridge was created to the land of Faerie. Mordavia started to grow. Within a century it was a small valley with several towns. Travellers who tried to pass out over the mountains became lost and found themselves back in Mordavia. A legion of Roman soldiers found their way into the valley, but could not leave. Ogres and orcs filled caves beneath the mountains. Vampire attacks left people shuddering behind locked doors. The valley continued to grow, and a King emerged to rule the new Kingdom of Mordavia.

## *The Swamp*

Our story takes place about a thousand years later, in the midst of the fifteenth century. The people of Mordavia are largely unaware of their peculiar position in the world. What they are concerned by is the Swamp. Since a century ago when it first appeared, the Swamp has grown to an enormous mire that has consumed hundreds of towns and villages in its wake. Every year its borders creep inexorably outwards, threatening to consume the entire valley of Mordavia. Whenever someone dies in the Swamp or near to it, it is not long before they come back as a ghoul, bent on destroying life. Even when buried, the dead of the Swamp can be heard scraping at the lids of their coffins, shrieking for blood from beneath the ground.

In the centre of the swamp is the small town of Berium, only accessible via a floating road through the mire.

## *Technology*

Because of the lack of commerce with the outside world, technology in Mordavia has followed its own path. Clothing has been influenced by the elven, fairy, and monster races. Armour and weapons have their own unusual flavour. Sophisticated items like plate armour are very rare and valuable commodities. There are no firearms in Mordavia.

## *Nobility*

Mordavia is a small feudal kingdom ruled by the King from the city of Carpathia in the south. The King has lords in manors across the Kingdom, who collect taxes from their local populace, a portion of which they pass onto the King as payment for their fiefdom. The payment consists of money, goods, and soldiers for his army.

Commoners regard the nobility as their social superiors, bowing and addressing them as "my lord" or "my lady."

## *Laws*

There are three types of people: Citizens, slaves, and outlaws. Citizens are protected by the Law. To be a citizen you must pay your taxes, be law abiding, and not be a gypsy. Slaves are the property of their master, and therefore protected by property law. Outlaws are not protected.

The follow activities are crimes:

- **Disturbing the Peace** is punishable by a fine.
- **Theft and Property Destruction** is punishable by a fine, dismemberment, or slavery.
- **Poaching** is punishable by a fine.
- **Murder** is punishable by death, unless it took place in a duel supervised by an Officer of the Law.
- **Treason** is punishable by death.

## *Guilds and Trade*

Trade is overseen by seven guilds made up of people with related skills who have banded together for mutual protection and benefit. Each guild has numerous guild houses. A guild house is a private business owned by a guild master.

Independent traders also exist, but they are monitored by the guilds to ensure they don't undercut guild members.

The standard rate of tax is 1/4 of the value of the transaction. The seller must pay over this tax to a tax collector.

## *Religion*

Given the time period and location of Mordavia, the people should be Christian. In practice, because of the extreme isolation from the outside world, the people of Mordavia pray to whatever god or gods they think might be listening. The elves, orcs, gypsies, fairies and demons all have their own concepts of the divine, and the King is happy to let any religion flourish that does not threaten his land or his taxes.

## *Magic*

Some people in Mordavia are gifted with the ability to learn magic. Schools of magic have opened in some towns, including a University of Magic in Carpathia. Despite this increase in the general acceptance of magic many peasants still regard it with suspicion and fear.

## *The Races of Mordavia*

Humans are the most common race in Mordavia. The closest allies of the humans are the long-lived elves, who have their own forest fiefdoms under the King. Vampires also have long lives, but they are regarded with less favour than elves. Vampire Lords in particular are seen as dangerous enemies of the land, although their less powerful offspring have managed to find their way into many places of power in the Kingdom.

Orcs pose a constant threat of invasion, however the King is attempting to tame this fierce breed and several orcish clans now claim loyalty to the throne. Half-orcs can be Citizens.

Fairies come from the Land of Fairie, which is separate to Mordavia, but they are welcome to become Citizens and their nobles have diplomatic protection in Mordavia. The demon refugees entering Mordavia from the Demon Realm are treated with suspicion, although they too can become Citizens.

Gypsies are regarded with great disdain by the majority of Mordavians, and the King has recently declared that they cannot become Citizens.

# CHARACTER CREATION

If you are going to be a player at *Mordavia* you will need to create a character by following these steps.

## Step 1: Choose a Race

You can be a Human, Elf, Gypsy, Fairy, Rogue Vampire, Half-Orc or Demon. See the *Races* section for descriptions.

## Step 2: Choose an Advantage

All characters start with one advantage. You can only choose an advantage that is allowed for your race. Choose one of the following starting advantages: Magic, Noble, Armouring, Sapping, Righteous, Tough, Guild, or Wealth. See the *Starting Advantages* section for details.

Your character cannot read or write unless they have the Magic, Noble, Righteous, or Guild advantages.

## Step 3: Describe your Profession

What does your character do? Where does your money come from? Or if you don't have any money, how do you survive: hunting, trading, stealing or begging? Are you in service to anyone? Think of a profession that will accentuate the overall feel you want for your character. Having a suitable profession can add depth to your character.

If you are a retainer to a Noble then the work you do for them is probably your profession. Any money they pay you is already included in your starting income.

## Step 4: Describe your Background

Write a brief paragraph that describes your character's life up to the start of this game. Read the setting information and consider how the races, magic, the Swamp, guilds, monsters and other aspects of the setting have affected your character.

Focus on ideas that will affect your character during the game. How did you acquire your habits, prejudices, allies and enemies? Try to include events, items or people that give the GMs a hook to write plot around for your character. If you include a mystery in your background the GMs can ensure that the mystery unfolds during the games.

A good background will provide your character with a distinctive flavour that other players and crew will remember and enjoy interacting with.

## Step 5: Describe your Objectives

On your character sheet, describe your character's objectives for the game. This is a good place to come up with some ideas for plots you may create during the game. Stating your objectives also helps the GMs plan events that will happen to your character during the game. If your character is part of a group then you can create a group objective, so that the GMs can plan events for the whole group.

Don't worry if you don't know much about the game world, just invent what you need to make your ideas work. Create places, items, characters and events relevant to your objectives. During the game we'll use our crew and props to recreate the things you've written about in your background and objectives, often with a twist of our own. Make sure that your objectives provide things for you to do at the game.

## Step 6: Describe your Costume

On your character sheet, write a rough idea of the costume you will be wearing at the game. If you have purchased the Noble advantage you should dress accordingly with rich fabrics and adornments.

The easiest costume is a simple tunic belted around the waist. If you're a commoner, try to use rough materials and 'earth' colours: brown, green, grey, and black. Brighter colours like red and blue tend to be worn more by nobles and rich merchants, but there is no set rule. Loose trousers like track pants are suitable, as are leather boots. Avoid shorts, jeans, and sports shoes. Wearing a distinctive hat, hood, belt or other accessories can add visual interest to your character.



## Step 7: Choose a Name

Decide on a name for your character. If your character has any nicknames or titles, include these on your sheet. There is also a space for an image. You can attach a photo of yourself costumed as your character, or sketch your character here.

## Step 8: Buy Your Equipment

You start with an income of 60 kopeks. Nobles start with 120 kopeks. If you are a Minor Noble with less than two retainers or you have the Guild or Wealth advantage you start with 90 kopeks. This amount represents your material worth at the time of the game, including both assets and cash.

You can spend as much of the money as you like on scrolls, weapons, shields and armour (see *Equipment*). You can only spend money that is part of your starting income. You cannot share your starting income with other players.

You can also bring other equipment such as candles, backpacks, pens, and paper to the game at no cost. You should bring any income you do not spend on equipment to the game as cash on hand. See *Equipment* for how money works.

Write any weapons, shields and armour you have purchased on your character sheet. Also note the amount of cash in hand you have left for spending at the game.

## Step 9: Fill in the Player Details

Fill out your contact details so that we can get in touch with you to help develop your character or let you know about games. Also note any medical conditions that may be relevant, and any special dietary requirements such as diabetes or allergies. We always cater for vegetarians.

# RACES

The races of *Mordavia* meet at a crossroad of fantasy, history, fairytale, and gothic horror. Choose a race from those below. Characters from outside Mordavia must be human. All races start with 2 Health Points unless otherwise noted.

## Humans

Humans are the most common race. Your settlements are well established, and your roads are used by all. From rich burghers to poor serfs, from wild hill-men to ruthless slavers, humans span the whole range of medieval and fantasy lifestyles.

**Fast Learner** – you pick up new skills quickly. You gain two extra Experience Points at the end of each game.



## Elves

Elves are a graceful folk distinguished by pointed ears. Yours is a fading race, your forest homes increasingly engulfed by the swamps and your population dwindling as a result of war with the orcs.

**Iron Will** – you are immune to mind control. Abilities such as Fear, Possession, and Fairy Dust have no affect on you.

**War with Orcs** – your kind has been hunted almost to extinction by the orcs. You are in constant danger from these murderous brutes, and their numbers are growing. You have no trust in them or their half-orc brethren.



## Gypsies

Most gypsies live in the wild, roaming freely. Civilised folk consider you filthy thieves and good-for-nothings. You cannot take the Noble or Guild advantages.

**Outlaws** – the King has declared that you cannot be a Citizen, so you are not protected by the law.

**Wild Evasion** – if you are next to a plant that is taller than you, and there is no enemy on the same side of the plant as you, you can put your hands on your head and become concealed from all characters, including other gypsies. You cannot move or act until you become visible again by removing your hands from your head.



## Fairies

When you pass from the Land of Fairie to Mordavia you are enlarged from a tiny fairy to human size. Your wings stop working when you are enlarged. You can never take the Tough advantage.

**Wings** - spell packets and weapons that hit your wings affect you.

**Fairy Dust** - sprinkle glitter on the target and says "*fairy dust*" to make them do a task that doesn't involve doing physical harm to themselves or others. Effect wears off after 1 minute. Fairy dust can only be used 3 times a day starting at midnight.



## Rogue Vampires

The Vampire Lord who turned you has been destroyed or cast you off, freeing you from the mental domination of the blood-bond. You can't take the Righteous advantage or the White college of magic.

**Weaknesses** – you cannot be healed by magic. If garlic or holy water touches your skin you suffer Knock Out for 1 minute. If your skin is exposed to sunlight you lose 1 Health Point immediately and a further 1 Health Point every minute that your skin is exposed. If reduced below 0 Health points you die. A hood will shade your face, but all other skin must be covered. If a person uses Righteous in your direction, you must move away from them. You can be killed by the Holy advantage and the Extreme Unction spell.

**Drain** – by touching an incapacitated or knocked out humanoid on the neck you can kill them and return your Health Points to full. The victim cannot be undead. Your Armour Points are not affected. You can use Drain while incapacitated if can reach your victim with a hand.

**Fear** – you may use the Fear ability three times a day starting at midnight. Shout "*Run in fear!*" and gesture towards a person or group. Unless they are immune to mind control, they must run away until they are out of sight of you.

**Mist** – once per night you can turn to mist. It must be dark, with no greater illumination than candles or moonlight. Put your hands on your head to become mist. While mist you cannot be seen, touched, or affected by magic. You can remain mist so long as you are in the dark, and may move as much as you like. You can become mist while in combat.

**Immunities** – poison, Fairy Dust, and sapping.



## Half-Orcs

You are the offspring of human and orcish parents. You cannot start with Magic, Noble, Righteous, or Guild.

**Ugly** – your skin is grey and lumpy, and you have fangs in your lower jaw. Makeup and plastic fangs are suggested to augment your natural ugliness.

**Brute** - you start with 3 Health Points.

**Dumb** – while you are smarter than the average orc, intelligence and eloquence aren't your strong points. You can only use words with one or two syllables.



## Demons

Fleeing from a terrible frost that is spreading in the Demon Realm, your folk have come to Mordavia to start anew. You cannot start with the Noble advantage or take the Black college of magic.

**Demon Skin** – your skin is red with angular black markings. Magical effects, including healing, are absorbed by your skin. The only magic that affects you is Fairy Dust because it is inhaled, and alchemical brews because they are taken internally. You must wear red makeup with black markings on all of your visible skin.

**Secrets** – Not all about you is as it seems. If you choose to play a demon you will be briefed on the details.



# STARTING ADVANTAGES

You start with one of the following advantages. Choose an advantage that is allowed by your race. Characters that have just arrived from outside Mordavia cannot have the Magic, Noble, or Guild advantages. You can only read and write if you choose Magic, Noble, Righteous, or Guild.

## *Magic*

You are a Novice in a college of Magic. Select a college from the *Magic* section. As a Novice you can cast any Novice spell in your college, or any Novice Grey spell. You can only cast a spell if you have the appropriate scroll for it, but you can cast the spell as often as you like. You can buy scrolls before the game using your starting income or during the game from traders. See Equipment for the scroll prices.

## *Noble*

You are of high birth. You start with 120 kopeks. Commoners can be charged with treason if they disrespect you. Please wear an elegant costume. You cannot take the Guild or Armouring advantages. You must have 2 non-noble players as your retinue. These players should note on their character sheets that they have sworn loyalty to you. The number of retainers required may be reduced for day games.

To be a noble in Mordavia means that your family hold a fiefdom within Mordavia at least the size of a town and its surroundings. To retain your lands you pay a tithe to the King consisting of goods, money, and soldiers.

You rely on the guild houses to maintain the economic and social well being of your fiefdom. At each game you will have several contracts that you need a guild member to sign.

You begin with the title of Baron or Baroness. If you are successful in maintaining your lands you can increase your tithing and be granted more land and greater title. If you fail to maintain your fiefdom or to bring 2 retainers to the game you will be reduced to Minor Noble and only start with 90 kopeks.

## *Armouring*

You can repair armour, restoring its Armour Points to full value. You can only do this at a smithy. First collect an armouring fee of at least 3 kopeks, the amount fixed by the Artisans Guild. Keep 2 kopeks and put the other kopek in a Guild collection box at the smithy to cover materials and tax. To repair your own armour you only need to pay the Guild's kopek. Take the wearer's torso armour and roleplay repairing it at the smithy. Having Armouring doesn't make you a guild member; you are just using a service they provide. You can also acquire armour before games at half the listed price.

## *Sapping*

By hitting a person in the back of the head with a sap you can knock them out for 1 minute. They do not lose any Armour Points or Health Points. You can easily sap people when they are incapacitated. Be gentle when sapping.

To use the Sapping advantage you must have a sap. Saps can be purchased before events for 3 kopeks or during games from a trader. You cannot create a sap during the game. A balled sock inside another sock represents the sap.

Sapping has no effect if the target is wearing a helm.

## *Righteous*

You are able to channel powers of life through a holy symbol. Hold forth your holy symbol and invoke your gods to repel lesser undead creatures such as ghouls, zombies, and rogue vampires. Use the word "righteous" in your invocation to remind the target of the ability that you are using, but please use your imagination and don't just say "righteous". Avoid using the word "holy" in your rhetoric, as that word is used for the Holy ability. That ability is described under Advancement.

## *Tough*

You can endure more pain and blood loss than the average person. You have one extra Health Point. You can take this advantage multiple times, increasing your maximum Health Points by one each time.

## *Guild*

You have finished your apprenticeship and you're now a journeyman in a guild house. A successful guildsperson can often have more disposable income than a noble, without the requirement for retainers. Berium is on a major trade route, and many guild houses are sending journeymen there to sign contracts on their behalf. Your job is to make contracts with nobles who want to acquire the services of your guild house. You have an extra 30 kopeks in your starting income; however it may rise much higher from finder's fees.

You get a finder's fee for every contract you make on behalf of your guild house. This will increase your starting income at the next Mordavia event. Small, medium, and large contracts will increase your income by 10, 20, and 30 kopeks respectively. You cannot sell more than 40 kopeks worth of contracts or your guild house will be overloaded with work.

Choose one of the following guilds for your guild house to belong to: Artisans, Tailors, Masons, Mercenaries, Scribes, Artists or Merchants. You wear a badge identifying you as a journeyman of this guild. Badges will be provided. Decide on a name for your guild house and its location in Mordavia. You may only belong to one guild house.

**Artisans** include blacksmiths, weapon-smiths, armourers, potters, rope-makers, cobblers, jewellers and cartwrights.

**Tailors** manage clothing design and production. They include weavers, seamstresses, dyers, shoemakers and tailors.

**Masons** are stonemasons, woodworkers, architects, and shipwrights. They create dwellings and large structures.

**Mercenaries** take on risky jobs. This frequently involves providing a display of arms, fighting, or using stealth.

**Scribes** are highly educated workers. They include heralds, bookkeepers, scholars, bankers, and stewards.

**Artists** include musicians, painters, sculptors, actors and poets. They are paid to entertain, embellish, and enlighten.

**Merchants** buy and sell goods made by others. Many shopkeepers are members of a merchant trade house.

## *Wealth*

You have acquired a source of wealth not based on high birth or Guild membership. Invent an interesting explanation for your wealth. Your starting income is increased by 30 kopeks; however it cannot be further increased by hard work as for the Guild advantage and lacks the additional benefits of Nobility. You can take this advantage multiple times, increasing your starting income by 30 kopeks each time.

# ADVANCEMENT

You can become more powerful by improving your knowledge of the world, making connections with influential people, acquiring useful items, and gaining new advantages.

## Equipment and Income

Before each game you buy scrolls, weapons, armour, and shields with your starting income.

Equipment and money does not carry over between games. By the time the next event comes around you have spent any money gained previously, and any items that you do not purchase with your starting income have been lost or sold.

If you acquire an item not listed in these rules it will carry over between games. This doesn't include unusual spell scrolls, which must be purchased with your starting income.

Your starting income is not really the amount of cash you have before the game, it's an abstract measure of your material worth, including both assets and money. To achieve a higher starting income, take the Noble, Guild, or Wealth advantage.

## How to Gain Experience Points

You will be rewarded with Experience Points (XP) for actions that enrich the game world. Characters gain XP for the following activities:

**Turning up** – you will get 7 XP at your first event, 5 XP at your second event, 3 XP at your third event, and 1 XP for every event thereafter. This means that you will gain advantages more gradually as your character becomes more experienced and powerful.

**Having nice gear** – you will gain XP for good costuming, makeup, armour, weapons, and other props. Costumes that avoid modern clothing will be preferred.

- 0 XP: *Inappropriate gear or no gear.*
- 1 XP: *Good looking gear.*
- 2 XP: *Superb gear, avoiding fake or modern aspects.*

**Good role playing** – you can receive experience points for staying in character, displaying depth to your character, and generally impressing with your role playing.

- 0 XP: *Falling out of character.*
- 1 XP: *Good roleplaying.*
- 2 XP: *Compelling roleplaying, always in character.*

**Plot creation** – we encourage you to deepen the setting by creating plot. You will be rewarded for including good plot hooks in your background and playing out your personal plot in a way that involves other players and crew members. Taking risks with your character will also be rewarded.

- 0 XP: *Little input into the game world.*
- 1 XP: *Adding to the setting and driving new plot.*
- 2 XP: *Building gripping and eventful plots.*

## Losing an Advantage

You may choose to lose one advantage after a weekend game, for which you will get 8XP. This may represent a fall from grace in the case of Nobility, Guild, Wealth, or Righteousness, or losing an ability from disuse or debilitation in the case of Sapping, Armouring, Tough, or Magic. You must provide a compelling reason that your character would have lost the advantage. You cannot gain XP by losing abilities that are innate to your race.

## Buying More Advantages

Buying a new advantage costs 10 XP. You may buy any of the starting advantages that your race allows, except the Noble advantage which can only be bought with GM permission. The Tough and Wealth advantages can be bought multiple times. You may also buy any of the following high advantages for 10 XP. You must play an advantage at a weekend game before buying an advanced version of it.

## High Advantages

**Adept Magic** – if you are a Novice in a spell college, you can purchase the ability to become an Adept in that college. You do not immediately gain the ability to cast Adept spells, first you must train with an Adept mage of your college. The Adept will inform you when you have graduated. Then you are on the way to becoming a Master of that college.

**Attuning to a new magic college** – once you are an Adept in a magic college, you may purchase the ability to learn neighbouring colleges on the magic wheel. You will start out as a Novice in that college, while retaining your level in any other colleges you know. To become a Master of a spell college you must be an Adept in both neighbouring colleges.

**Advanced Armouring** – you must have the Armouring advantage to buy this. You only pay half price for armour, shields, and weapons before games. You can also do field repairs on armour 3 times a day. Field repairs do not require a smithy or fee and the armour does not have to be removed, but you should still roleplay repairing it. Each time this advantage is purchased allows 3 extra field repairs a day.

**Holy** – you must have the Righteous advantage to buy this advantage. You can destroy lesser undead or turn greater undead 3 times a day. To use this ability hold forth your holy symbol and make an incantation that includes the word “holy”. Please roleplay this, do not just say “holy”. You can buy this advantage multiple times to gain 3 more uses per day.

**Blooded Vampire** – you are ready to drink blood from a Vampire Lord to become a blooded vampire. Spend the 10 XP first and then seek out a Vampire Lord in game. Once blooded you will become a greater undead. You will be immune to holy water, garlic, and the Righteous advantage, and can no longer be killed by a Finishing Blow. The Holy advantage will cause you to flee, and to avoid the holy person until midnight.

**Strike Down** – you must have 6 Health Points to buy this advantage. Every blow you land with a two-handed weapon will strike your opponent to the ground. Remember to call the ability (see Strike Down in the *Combat* section for details).

**Steadfast** – you must have 5 Health Points to buy this advantage. When using a Knight's shield or Tower shield, Strike Down blows that hit your shield have no effect on you.

**Guild Master** – you must have the Guild advantage and a starting income of 120 kopeks to buy this advantage. You have acquired sufficient reputation and funds to start your own guild house. Your starting income increases by 30 kopeks, and for every contract you get signed you will receive double the income rewards of a journeyman. Wear an elegant costume to reflect your wealth and social standing.

**Greater Noble** – you may purchase this advantage if you are noble and your fiefdom is sufficiently prosperous to pay the King a higher title. Your starting income will increase by 60 kopeks, and your title and influence in the realm will increase. Each time your purchase this advantage you must increase your retinue at the game by 1 retainer.

# COMBAT

Foam weapons are used for combat. Please count your damage carefully and honestly. GMs sometimes act as referees in combat. Their rulings are final.

Do not strike with quick repeated motions, tapping or jabbing at your opponent. It is inappropriate and irritating.

## *Safety Rules*

Please read the safety rules below. We reserve the right to bar you from combat if you are fighting unsafely.

**Do not strike to the head or groin.** If you hurt another player please apologise. These strikes do no damage.

**Do not use broken weapons.** Broken weapons can be dangerous. Check the safety of your weapons regularly.

**No grappling.** Do not grab your opponent or their weapon. Do not trip, tackle, or barge opponents.

**Pull your blows.** Do not hit your opponent hard. When thrusting at your opponent be especially careful.

## *Health*

You start with a number of Health Points. These points can be lost when you take damage. If you are reduced to zero Health Points then you are incapacitated.

## *Armour*

Armour has a number of Armour Points. Damage is taken from your Armour Points first. When you have no Armour Points left, damage is taken from your Health Points.

When you lose Armour Points, your armour has been damaged. It can be repaired by someone with the Armouring advantage or by an Alchemist with the Mend Armour spell.

## *Damage*

All valid strikes do one point of damage, except sapping which does zero damage. No spell or ability will ever do more than one point of damage, although it may have other effects.

## *Shields*

Shields block all damage. They also block Poison, but they do not block the Strike Down effect or effects from thrown spell charms. Shields can never be damaged or broken.

## *Incapacitation*

If you are damaged down to 0 Health Points then you are incapacitated. You must fall down on the ground.

You are still aware of what is happening around you. However, you are in so much pain that you cannot take any action apart from moving your head, talking, or drinking an alchemical potion that is fed to you by someone else. You cannot drag yourself around, attack, cast spells, or use any special ability. Vampires cannot adjust their clothing to protect from sunlight. You can still be affected by spells or abilities.

Rogue vampires may use Drain while incapacitated.

## *Finishing Blow*

If you are incapacitated or knocked out, anyone can kill you by drawing a weapon across your torso. This can only be done once you are lying down.

## *Knock Out*

Sapping, poisoned tentacles, Sleep and Lightning all have the Knock Out effect. Holy water or garlic will also knock you out if you are a rogue vampire.

Your Health and Armour Points are not affected by being knocked out. When knocked out you must slump to the ground and close your eyes. Your character is not aware of their surroundings until they awaken. Being knocked out lasts for about one minute. Count slowly to sixty before waking up.

## *Strike Down*

Some very strong creatures may use an ability called Strike Down. The character will call out a phrase that includes "strike down", like "I'm gonna strike you down!"

Stone golems and metal golems always have the Strike Down ability. They usually cannot talk so will not call a phrase, so please try to remember that they have this ability.

Strike Down blows will do one point of damage and also strike you down. Throw yourself dramatically to the ground, flying backwards if you think you can do it safely. Once you have gone down you may rise and continue fighting.

If the Strike Down blow hits your shield you will still be struck to the ground, but you do not take any damage.

## *Poisoned Tentacles*

Certain creatures of the Swamp have poisoned tentacles. Tentacles can be blocked with shields, although they will still take effect if they wrap around and hit your body.

If you are hit with a tentacle by any creature then you take one point of damage as usual, and are knocked out for one minute. There is no cure that will wake you up. After one minute you will wake up feeling sick.

Vampires and other undead are immune to poison.

## *Unusual Abilities*

Occasionally you may encounter an opponent or ally that has an ability not covered in these rules. It may be a spell scroll that is not listed in the Magic section, or an undead or magical adversary with capabilities not covered here.

Spell scrolls have their in-game effects described in an out-of-game note at the bottom of the scroll. If you come across such a scroll please read the effect carefully and be sure to inform any targets if you cast it. Likewise, if someone casts an unknown spell on you please listen closely to the effects.

Adversaries with unusual abilities will brief you out-of-character on the effects of their powers. Alternatively, a GM may brief you when you are affected.

## *Death*

The following things will kill your character:

- **Suffering a Finishing Blow.**
- **A vampire using Drain on you.**
- **Exposure to sunlight if you are a vampire.**

Death is final. If your character is killed, do not move or talk unless a Necromantic spell is cast on you. You may wish to play your corpse for a while to allow others to mourn or investigate your death. Once you have finished and no other players are around, put your hands on your head and report to a GM. You may now create a new character or play as a member of the crew.



# EQUIPMENT

Players are expected to provide all of their own costume and equipment for events. If it's your first time and you need to borrow something let us know in advance. Here is a list of things that are good to have at weekend events:

**Warm bedding** like a sleeping bag or sheets and a duvet, and a pillow. Your bedroom is an in-game area, so if your bedding looks modern then bring a blanket to disguise it.

**Toiletries** such as a toothbrush and paste, soap, a hand towel, plasters, etc. The setting is medieval but we still need to maintain modern hygiene. Soap is especially useful for crew who frequently need to wash makeup off.

**Toilet paper** may not be provided. After you've been to the toilet would you rather use toilet paper or ingenuity?

A **towel** is very handy. You may think a day or two without showering is okay, but those around you will not, especially after you've taken a slide in the mud.

**Costume, armour and weapons** if you use them.

**Warm clothing** is needed when it gets cold at night. Bring something warm to wear discretely under your costume, and pack spare underwear, trousers, and lots of thick socks

A **plate, bowl, cup, knife, fork and spoon** will be needed at meal time. Remember that this gear is part of your costume, so don't bring plastic. Try op shops for something suitable.

**Snacks and drinks** may be a good idea if you can't live without your chocolate or chip fix. If there's something that you want to drink at meal times that comes in a plastic bottle, pour it into a wine bottle to it look more suitable. Wrap snacks in fabric to keep them in character. Bring an unbreakable water bottle for carry around, and disguise it if necessary.

**5 and 50 cent pieces** to represent your cash in hand.

**Candles and candle-lanterns** are always welcome, just make sure you're careful and don't leave them unattended.

A **torch** for light spells, preferably with a coloured filter.

**Bags** to carry all this stuff in. It pays to bring two bags, one that can pass as medieval to carry stuff around during the game, and one that you can leave under your bed with toiletries and any medication or other out of game gear in it. A small pouch that hangs from your belt is also very handy.

For items that will be visible during the game such as dining kit, please bring things that wouldn't look too out of place in a medieval tavern. You can often pick up wooden or crockery plates and cutlery cheaply in second hand shops.

## Game Money

Mordavia has a simple monetary system based on copper and silver. The copper kopek is not worth very much, and is represented a 5 cent piece. The silver crown is worth 10 kopeks, and is represented by a 50 cent piece.

You need to bring 5 and 50 cent pieces representing the money you have not spent with your starting income. Don't expect to get all the real-world coins you brought to the game back at the end, it's best to see this as a donation.

All goods in Mordavia are limited so if you plan to purchase goods at the game then you better be quick. We prefer that players bring their own armour and weapons, due to the limited supply. If you have spare gear, we would greatly appreciate it if you would donate it for others to use during the game. This gear will be used by crew and available to be purchased by other players.

## Looting

Weapons and shields at games are limited, so it's often best to just leave them on monsters that you kill. Looting in-game treasure such as money and magical items is always fine, but do not steal personal items from other players.

## Magical Items

**Spell scrolls** are required to cast spells. You can use a scroll to cast the spell written on it as many times as you like.

**Throwing charms** are small fabric bags filled with birdseed. They're in-game items used to direct magic at range.

**Potions** must be completely consumed to take effect. See the Alchemy college of magic for the available potions.

## Price Lists

Use the following prices to buy equipment before events.

Magic Item	Kopeks
Novice scroll*	10
Adept scroll*	20
Throwing Charm	1

\* Choose scrolls from the magic college list, and write them on your character sheet. The scrolls will be provided when you arrive at the game.

Armour	Kopeks	AP*	Description**
Very light	10	1	Leather torso cover
Light	30	2	Leather torso and limb cover, or torso chain
Medium	50	3	Chain torso and limb cover, or torso scale
Heavy	70	4	Scale torso and limb cover, or plate torso
Very heavy	100	5	Full plate
Helm	15	1	Metal helmet

\* AP = Armour Points. You only get protection from armour you are wearing.

\*\* Limb cover means that either the arms or the legs must be covered.

Weapons	Kopeks	Description*
Sap	3	One sock inside another. Requires Sapping to use.
Dagger	4	Up to 45 cm
Short Sword	10	45-70 cm
Sword	20	70-110 cm
Battlesword	30	110cm to 150 cm, 2-Handed
Handaxe	12	Up to 70cm
Battleaxe	23	70cm to 120 cm, 2-Handed
Spear	15	Up to 150cm, broad head
Halberd or Pike	30	150cm+, broad head
Mace or Hammer	15	Up to 70cm, not too heavy
Throwing Dagger	8	Must be padded all over
Bow	20	Low poundage practice bows only (15lb at 25" pull)
Arrow	2	Foam head must have flat surface 4 cm or more wide.

\* The lengths given are for the entire weapon, not just the blade.

Shields	Kopeks	Description
Buckler	10	Up to 30 cm diameter
Target	25	Up to 70cm diameter
Knight	35	Up to 100cm
Tower	50	Up to 150cm

# MAGIC

All spells in Mordavia must be on a scroll to be cast. Usually only characters with the Magic advantage can cast spells. To cast a spell you read the scroll aloud. The effects are described on the scroll. If you stop reading the scroll for any reason, the spell fails and you must begin again. The scroll must be visible when you read it, but you may memorise the spell chant if you wish (especially useful for the Light spell).

Magic is divided into a number of colleges. You can only cast spells from a magic college that you have learned. Grey spells are the exception; they can be cast by anyone with the Magic advantage. When you become more powerful you can learn colleges that are nearby on the wheel of magic.



Spell Colleges - The Wheel of Magic

You start out as a Novice in your college, and can only cast Novice spells. When you advance you can become an Adept in your college, and can cast Adept spells. Eventually you could become a Master of your college, and cast more powerful and lasting spells that are not listed here.

Spell scrolls can be purchased before games using your starting income or from traders during games. Adept spell scrolls are marked with the adept symbol.



Adept Symbol

## Spell Codes

**[Thrown]** You must take a spell packet and throw it at the target immediately after reading the spell. If it hits, the spell takes effect as described, otherwise it fails. A thrown spell cannot be blocked by shields, weapons or other items. If it hits any item the target is wearing or holding then it works.

**[Touch]** You read the scroll, and then attempt to touch the target for it to take effect. If the target manages to avoid being touched and goes out of your sight, the spell fails.

**[Hold Scroll]** The spell lasts while you hold the casting scroll, so long as you do not cast any other spell, take any damage, attack, or have any spell cast on you.

**[Requires x]** You must have this item to cast the spell.

**[Adept]** You must be an Adept in the college.

**[GM]** Spell requires a Game Master. You must inform a GM that you are going to cast the spell.

## Magic Colleges

Some spells from each college follow, but this is not a complete list of all the spells available. Many scrolls are believed to be in the hands of foul persons and creatures.

### GREY

*Grey spells can be cast by anyone with the Magic advantage.*

**Dispel** - Removes other novice magic. This cannot be used to *dispel* an Adept spell. [Touch]

**Light** - Creates a beam of light from your hand. Never direct this light into other people's eyes. Do not use this spell to turn on light switches, as it reduces the atmosphere. Conceal the torch in your sleeve or disguise it as a wand, and cover the end with a coloured gel. [Hold scroll, requires torch]

**Lock** - prevents a container or door from being opened. When the scroll is cast a password is set. The scroll must be left attached to the object. To remove the scroll you must either say the password or cast *Dispel*.

**Adept Dispel** - Removes other magic. Can be used to remove Novice or Adept spells. [Adept, Touch]

### WHITE

*White magic has influence over the life force.*

**Heal** - All of the target's Health Points are healed. Armour Points are not affected. The Heal spell does not work on undead or demons. [Touch]

**Bless Water** - You can bless a small vial of water. The water can then be thrown onto undead creatures. The contents of a vial will destroy a single ghoul or zombie, and knock out rogue vampires for a minute. [Touch]

**Recall** - You are teleported to an Astral Gate that you have visited in person, and can take with you three other people, or five if you are Adept. [Touch]

**Extreme Uction** - You sacrifice a magic item and use its arcane power to destroy a greater undead [Adept, Thrown]

### BINDING

*Involves circles on the ground, made of 6 meter lengths of string. Place scroll in circle after reading it. Scroll can only be removed by caster unless Dispel is used on circle. When scroll is removed spell ends. Caster can always undo their own binding without need of a Dispel, from the inside or outside of the circle. They should remove the scroll from the circle when they undo it.*

**Ward Weapons** - No weapons can enter or leave circle.

**Ward Magic** - Magic cannot enter or leave the circle. This includes magical items, spells, and beings (including characters with the Magic talent). The circle may still be dispelled with Dispel as with all binding circles.

**Flame Bind** - This is a trap spell. Any being that enters the circle takes 1 damage. When the target enters the circle, you must tell the target that the circle is there, and tell them of effect. You must be present for the spell to work.

**Circle Bind** - Target must move into circle, and is trapped there until you release them. This spell will not work on beings more magically powerful than you. You must point at the target that you wish to bind. [Adept]

**Astral Gate** - You open a magic gateway in the binding circle. Other spells can use this gateway. [Adept]

**Shroud Bind** - You are invisible while standing within the circle. If you speak, attack, use magic, or move out of the circle the spell ends and you becomes visible. You should then remove the scroll from the circle. [Adept]

## NECROMANCY

*Deals with the death force.*

**Speak with Dead** – You may ask a corpse one question. The soul of the dead being must answer truthfully. This spell cannot be used on undead. [Touch]

**Raise Zombie** - Animates dead body. Read scroll then touch corpse and give them a goal. Then put the scroll away and take out a drum. When you start drumming, the dead rise and attempt to carry out their goal. Zombies turn back into corpses if you stop drumming or if they achieve their goal. Zombies have 2 Health, and must move slowly. When they lose their Health they fall down, but you can restore them to full Health by touching them. [Touch, requires drum]

**Wither Limb** - Drains the life force from a limb of the target, rendering it useless. You declare which limb when you finish the spell. If a leg is withered, the target must hop. If an arm is withered, target cannot hold anything with it. Effect lasts until dispelled. [Thrown]

**Spirit Walker** - You enter the spirit realm, parallel to the physical world. You're visible to onlookers as a ghost, but cannot be affected by physical means, cannot affect anything in the real world, and cannot speak. If a person with the Righteous advantage holds up their holy symbol and invokes their gods, you must move away from them. Blessed Water and Extreme Unction return you to the real world. [Adept, Requires cloak of ghosting]

**Summon Haunter** - Requires an Astral Gate. Summons a ghost which you command to haunt a specific person. The Haunter takes the scroll, then seeks out and follows the target around, moving slowly. If Haunter touches the target, the target is incapacitated with fear for 1 minute or until the effect is dispelled. The Haunter continues to follow the target until it loses interest. The Haunter then returns the scroll to you and tries to find an Astral Gate to return to the world of spirits through. [Adept, GM]

## BLACK

*Involves commune with demonic powers that enter the body of your target to achieve your goal.*

**Possession** - Target is possessed by a minor demon. Read the scroll and then draw a pentacle on the incapacitated target's forehead with red paint. While the target is possessed, they will only do what you command. They will not speak or move unless you demand it. Target can be turned back by those with the Righteous advantage. Possession can be removed by washing off the pentacle with blessed water, or by dispelling. [Requires red paint]

**Siamese Curse** - Two targets must link arms. Lasts until dispelled. Packet must hit one of the targets. [Thrown]

**Shrink** - Target is shrunk, and must go to their knees. They may walk on their knees. Lasts until dispelled. [Thrown]

**Sleep** – Spell has Knock Out effect. Target spends one minute in a deep enchanted sleep, from which they can only be awakened by *dispel*. Snoring is optional. [Adept, Thrown]

**Death** – First obtain a personal item from the target, such as hair, nail clippings, or an item of clothing. Then attach the personal item to a humanoid doll, and finally read the scroll in the presence of the victim, with the doll also present. Target dies in great pain. [Adept]

**Summon Demon** - Requires an Astral Gate. Summons a random demon into the Astral Gate which may obey your commands if it feels like it. [Adept, GM]

## ALCHEMY

*Deals with creating magical objects. Kopeks or crowns used as reagents must be stored in a silver OOC pouch then given to a GM. To create a potion forfeit the coins, read the scroll, and then label the bottle clearly. All of the liquid must be drunk for the potion to take effect. A potion bottle is a small labelled bottle filled with liquid. Glass bottles should not be used for potions.*

**Mend Armour** – This spell can be used at any time to return armour to its full Armour Points. It specifically requires silver not copper as a reagent, in the exact amount present in a silver crown coin. After forfeiting the silver crown into your OOC pouch and reading the scroll you must touch the armour for it to be mended [Touch, requires 1 silver crown]

**Healing Brew** – The drinker's Health Points are returned to their maximum value. [Requires 3 copper kopeks, potion bottle]

**Warding Brew** – The drinker gains magical protection. The next blow they take will not do them any damage or have any effect such as Poison, Strike Down, or Knock Out. [Requires 3 copper kopeks, potion bottle]

**Strange Brew** – The potion has a minor effect at the discretion of the alchemist. The alchemist should discuss the effect they wish to achieve with a GM, who will tell them if it's possible and what reagents are required. [Requires copper 3 kopeks, potion bottle, GM]

**Raise Golem** - Creates a golem from inanimate material to do your bidding. Golems are tough but stupid, and usually made from clay, stone, or metal. A player Alchemist who wishes to animate a golem must provide a person to play the golem. [Adept, requires silver crowns, GM]

**Create Scroll** - Used to create spell scrolls. Requires another Adept who knows the target spell's college and has a copy of the target spell or has researched a new spell. Novice spell scrolls cost 7 kopeks to create; Adept spell scrolls cost 15 kopeks. [Adept, Requires blank scroll and writing implements]

## ELEMENTAL

*Manipulates natural forces.*

**Stone Hands** - Stone hands from the ground grab one of target's legs. This leg cannot be moved until you release them. It pays to call out "look, a stone hand has gripped their foot" if the target doesn't understand [Thrown, scroll]

**Wind Blast** - Target suffers Strike Down effect but does not take any damage. They may get up again immediately. [Thrown]

**Earth Strength** - Target is filled with the strength of two men. The target will do Strike Down with every blow that lands. [Touch, hold scroll]

**Lightning** - Bolt of lightning from the caster's hand inflicts 1 point of damage and has Knock Out effect. The target cannot be woken by *Dispel*. [Adept, Thrown]

**Wind Steed** - Carries the caster and anyone holding them up to 100 paces in the chosen direction. Affected characters should put their hands on their heads while moving. [Adept]



## EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Helen followed the path as it wound through dense forest. The only light was her flickering candle lamp. Her friend Patrick was following closely behind, muttering a spell chant to himself. His mage character Dorin wasn't much use at night unless he knew the scrolls by heart.

"Shhh, Dorin, I hear something."

"Is it him?"

"Dunno, let's check it out."

The path opened up into a wide moonlit clearing. Helen could see two cloaked figures silhouetted across the way, talking quietly. She readied her sword and shield, took a deep breath, and stepped into the clearing.

### *The Fine Art of Character Creation*

A month before, a friend had told Helen about a live role-playing game called Mordavia. Helen checked out the website. She'd done some tabletop roleplaying and wondered how it would feel to be in the situations her characters got into. She told her flatmate Patrick about it. He never liked the idea of sitting around rolling dice, but he was into costuming and drama, so he thought this might be interesting.

Helen read the website and the rules, and decided to be a religious knight that kicked ass for the Lord. She thought that her character could worship this holy lady called Erana that was mentioned in the background on the website. She emailed Mordavia organiser Ryan and described her concept. Between them they came up with the idea of the Order of Erana, a group of devotees based in Eranov in the north of Mordavia. Ryan said that a knight would have the Noble advantage. Helen decided to ditch the knight idea and concentrate on the religious aspect of her character. She took the Righteous advantage. She would be an acolyte, a lowly member of the order with great aspirations. Her name would be Iona of Eranov. She found the Romanian name Iona on the web.

Before the game, Helen was contacted by Hans, one of the game masters, to discuss her character. Helen decided that Iona had been sent to the town of Berium by the Order of Erana to research their founder's life. Hans suggested that her friend Pat could be part of the order too, even though he wanted to play an elven White magician. Hans had a separate conversation with Pat to discuss Dorin the mage.

Pat sewed up a tabard for Iona and matching coloured robes for Dorin. They bought some latex weapons from [www.paddywhack.co.nz](http://www.paddywhack.co.nz), used the equipment checklist in the rulebook, got some leather boots, and they were ready to go.

### *Strangers in the Night*

Helen and Pat approached the strangers, whose faces were hidden by deep hoods. They stopped at a safe distance.

"Who goes there?" said Pat.

"Followers of the One True God," was the hissed reply.

Pat and Helen looked at each other. People in town had told them that the One True God cult had been outlawed by the King, and it was treason to associate with them.

"Ah. So, have you seen a mage pass by here? Goes by the name of Doctor Whitetree?" said Pat. There was no response.

"Dorin, what are you doing?" whispered Helen.

"The One True God offers great blessings to those who join him, great gifts and powers," said one of the cultists.

"Like what?" said Pat.

"Yeah, does it give the power to repel the unholy? Get back in the righteous name of Erana!" yelled Helen, pulling out her holy symbol and thrusting it out towards the cultists, hoping to ward them off. But instead they stepped closer. Beneath their hoods there were no faces, only a mass of tentacles. From inside their folded sleeves they pulled swords and long tentacles, waving them menacingly.

"Oh no," said one, "you'll find that doesn't work on us."

### *Crossing the Threshold*

Helen and Pat had arrived at Motu Moana Scout Camp on the Friday night, wearing their costumes and carrying all their camping gear in canvas bags. They gathered with the other players in the car park, where they chatted with some people Pat had met on the Mordavia online forum. Everyone was briefed by a game master. Pat was also given the spell scrolls that he'd chosen for Dorin: Heal, Recall, and Bless Water.

The game master took Helen and Pat aside.

"You've travelled across the floating road that spans the Swamp, fighting off a number of ghouls on the way, and now you're approaching the town of Berium. The swamp changes to forest, and up ahead you can see lights. Get into character, and make your way down the road to Berium."

When they reached the Inn it was bustling with activity, full of interesting characters in strange costumes. Before long they were swept up in various plots, with Helen questioning everyone about the history of Erana and making notes. Then Pat heard about a master mage called Dr Whitetree, who was apparently out at some tower in the forest at the moment.

"Hey Iona, I'm keen to go find this Whitetree guy, he's a famous White mage. He might know about Erana too."

They left the Inn, and set off into the forest.

### *When Talking Fails*

Helen sliced a cultist with her sword, and it recoiled with a satisfying hiss. But then it was back, flailing at her shield with its tentacle and then hitting her in the arm with its sword. Helen was wearing Very Light armour worth 1 Armour Point and she had 2 Health Points. She remembered the first damage comes off armour, so she now had no Armour Points left.

Helen yelled in mock pain, and stepped back to get her shield ready. Behind her Dorin was casting a spell. "I call the winds of fate to play, thus step through other worlds I may..."

Helen blocked another tentacle blow with her shield, then she slashed the cultist on the leg. It fell to the ground incapacitated, screaming in pain. But she'd been flanked by the other cultist, who whipped out at her with its tentacle, hitting her in the stomach. Helen knew that all tentacles are poisonous, so she fell to the ground and started counting to sixty in her head. She also realised that the tentacle damage had taken one of her Health Points, so she only had one left.

Then she felt Pat's hand on her shoulder, and heard "Transform me into astral state, recall me now to astral gate!"

Earlier in the evening Pat had seen an Astral Gate in the Inn. When he realised that this fight was hopeless he'd decided to use his Recall spell. They put their hands on their heads to indicate they were invisible, and walked to the Inn. Helen lay down in the circle when they arrived, and finished counting to sixty before waking up and acting confused. She would need to be healed and get her armour repaired.

They had been defeated, but lived to fight another day.