

STAINED GLASS

A Roleplaying Game

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This game is fully playable within EIGHT HOURS (ANY NUMBER OF SESSIONS), and contains elements of GLASS, EMOTION, and COMMITTEE within its themes and design.



Setting

The Order

The Order is, in a way, a governmental body, akin to a ministry, a department, or an agency. Its purpose is to guide the moral bearing of the land. The Order is primarily a church, an organized religion, if you will; and it stands as the single officially recognized church in the land.

The Order exercises significant influence over the monarch's decisions; think of Cardinal Richelieu and his influence over Louis XIII and Louis XIV of France.

As a church, The Order possesses many ranks of priests, clerics, acolytes, and sundry other bureaucrats distributed throughout the land. So too does The Order have a caste of knights devoted to the protection of The Order, and the land.

The Knights of The Order

The knights of The Order are devoted servants of the church, land, and people. Every knight's ultimate goal is to be granted a sainthood. At the end of a long, arduous career, the grant of sainthood ensures the knight a place of honor in the afterlife.

With but a few exceptions, they are errant knights, roaming the land performing their duty according to The Code.

The Code

The Code is a set of moral guidelines by which all knights swear to live; it reads:

A Knight is sworn to Courage;
His Courage knows only Heart;
His Heart knows only Love;
His Love defends by Blade;
His Blade defends Honor;
His Honor is Wrath, undoing the Faithless;
His Faith abides in Truth;
His search for Truth is Boundless.

It is by this code that every knight is judged by The Council of the Divine.

The Council of the Divine

On the same day, every year, for a mere eight hours, a committee of angels descends the heavens and inhabit the bodies of The Order's highest ranking priests. This day is known as The Day of Saints; and the possessed priests are The Council of the Divine. Their purpose? Interview the few veteran knights chosen for their apparently outstanding service, to determine if they are worthy of sainthood. These veteran knights are known as Petitioners.

The Petitioners

Each petitioner is apportioned an equal share of the eight hour time to be interviewed by the Council of the Divine. The process ensures that only those most worthy of the honor, if any at all, are granted sainthood.

You are a veteran knight of The Order. You have been called to the High Citadel of The Order to petition the Council of the Divine for sainthood. Can you prove yourself worthy?

Prelude

What This Is

This text, as a whole, is the framework for a roleplaying game wherein you take on the role of veteran crusading knights, recounting the tales of their exploits to prove their virtuousness.

By playing, the players may explore ideals of behaviour; the game will incite discussion about morality, how it is defined, and how it is practised.

Where's the Setting Detail?

I know what some of you will think after reading the whole of this text; "where's the details about the setting"? The short answer is, there are none.

What you see is what you get. Nay, what you see is all you need; well, all you need from me. The little details about what knights look like, what they wear, what the land is like, the monarch's name, and so on; I'm leaving all that up to you, the players, to decide. I'm doing so for two reasons.

By letting you, the players, decide those details, I expect the setting will become significantly more engaging since you will be more personally invested in the setting itself. If, as a group you decide you

want to set the game in a post-modern era, where the knights' have energy weapons, plasma swords, and ride motorcycles, that's fine. If you want to set the game in a medieval period where the knights are armored horsemen, with sword and shield, that's fine too.

The second reason I intentionally left out the setting details is because many of the details of the setting that you agree upon may significantly affect the discussions, and play, revolving around the premise of 'what are the ideals of behaviour'. The setting details are part of the exploration of the game's premise, and predetermining many of them would be counterproductive to that exploration.

Required Equipment

Like any roleplaying game, there's some basic equipment needed to facilitate play; here's what you'll need:

- **Paper and Writing Tools:** You'll need paper to write up your characters, and to make notes during play. Obviously you'll need pens, pencils, markers, crayons, or whatever writing tool you prefer to write those notes and characters.
- **Dice:** You'll need lots of dice. Fortunately, this game uses only ordinary six-sided dice, just like you find in many board games. You'll probably want about a dozen or more dice per player, just to be on the safe side.
- **Glass Beads:** You'll need lots of glass beads. The beads don't actually have to be made of glass, and they don't necessarily need to be beads; though having glass beads may be more evocative of the game's underlying situation. You'll need beads in seven or eight different colors. I recommend you have about a dozen beads of each of seven

colors for every player. You should also have several dozen additional beads; they can be of an eighth color, or simply a mix of the other seven colors.

- **Containers:** You'll need containers for all those beads. You'll want some kind of bag, or box, for each player; it must be something that the players can get their hands into to draw out beads, and it must be opaque. You'll also need two bowls; one for the pool of additional beads, and a second 'tally' bowl that starts out empty.

System

The Matter of Time

The Council of the Divine convenes for only eight hours; thus, this game plays out in exactly eight hours. There are some key time constraints in which the game is structured; but otherwise you can split the eight hours over as few or as many sessions as desired.

Creating a Knight

Creating a knight of The Order is a two step process; it involves outlining seven key events in the knight's career, and then assigning an importance value to each trait.

All knights are defined by seven qualities called Traits. The traits are Courage, Heart (think Determination), Love, Honor, Wrath, Faith, and Truth.

For each of the above traits, think of an event in your knight's career that focuses on that trait, and the relevant tenets of the Code. Write a brief outline of the event; there's no need to get too detailed.

After assigning an event to each trait, decide each trait's importance to your knight; divide 60 points amongst the traits accordingly. You can assign as little as one point to a trait; but it isn't recommended.

Once you've assigned an event and a value to each trait, you then assemble your stock of beads; place a number of glass beads, in appropriate colors, equal to your character's stats, in one of the appropriate containers (be it a bag, box, or what have you). Keep this container of glass beads handy; you'll use it when it's your turn to petition the Council.

Now you're done creating your character; it's time to meet the Council of the Divine.

The character creation process shouldn't take you but about thirty minutes; you should encourage each other, and exchange suggestions during the process.

Petitioning to the Council

Subtract the time taken to create characters from eight hours; now divide that remaining time by the number of knights. The result is the time allotted for each knight to petition the Council.

Each knight, in turn, petitions the Council of the Divine for sainthood. Determine the order in which order the knights will petition the Council; you can use any method desired, to do so.

As the petitioning knight, you start by presenting any one of your key events to the Council of the Divine; thus beginning an exchange. You'll find out more about exchanges later on. You play through the exchange and, once complete, you present another event to the Council. Continue this exchange process until you've presented all seven events, or your time limit expires.

Forming the Council

While each knight petitions the Council of the Divine individually, the other players play the part of the Council.

While playing the role of a Council member, everyone can influence the exchange, sometimes even in favor of the petitioning knight, but only one Council member controls the dice pool used during the exchange; like in any other committee, this one member is called the Chair. The Council member with the highest stat relevant to the event the knight is presenting is the Chair for that exchange. If there is a tie for the highest, use any method desired to break the tie.

The Chair and all Council members use their own knights' stats to roll dice for the Council. The Chair rolls his dice, and uses them directly in exchanges. The other Council members roll their dice; but they are used differently.

The Exchange

So you've presented an event to the Council, claiming to have upheld a particular tenet of the code; by doing so you've initiated an exchange. An exchange is essentially a conflict that needs resolution, wherein the stakes of the conflict are "Are these actions worthy of sainthood?" or something similar.

Draw a number of beads equal to the presented event's associated trait from your bag of character beads. Roll a number of dice equal to the trait plus as many beads drawn that correspond to the relevant trait. Thus if the character's Courage is 8, and you draw 3 'Courage beads' from the bag, you would roll eleven dice.

Immediately place a number beads, equal to the number of beads just drawn that corresponded to the relevant trait, into your tally. Don't put the character beads into the tally; use beads from the separate pool of tally beads.

The committee members, including the Chair, roll their relevant trait's dice. Any Council member that rolls two or more sixes hands one of those sixes over to the Chair; the Chair immediately rolls that additional die and adds it to his dice pool. The Council members, other than the Chair, retain their dice, but for the sole purpose of expressing dissenting opinions; that'll be explained later.

Now that the dice have been rolled, it's time to do something with them.

After the initial setup of the exchange, you continue playing through it by expanding on the described event and advancing dice.

As the petitioning knight, you push forward two dice after you've first presented your event; this is called Advancing a Motion. You always Advance a Motion with two dice.

The Council Chair must then push forward as many dice as necessary to match or exceed the total of the two dice you pushed forward; this is called Engaging in the Discussion.

If the Chair Engages the Discussion with only one die, he has Countered the Motion; the Chair adds to the description of the event in such a way as to invalidate the knight's claim. The Chair retains the die used to counter the knight's Motion for use when advancing his own motion. Remove one glass bead from your tally.

If the Chair Engages the Discussion with two or more dice, he Acknowledges the Knight's Devotion to the Code. Add one glass bead to your tally for every die the Chair used in addition to two dice to acknowledge your devotion.

Now that you've resolved one motion, turn the tables and keep going; the Chair now Advances a Motion claiming the knight transgressed the Code, and you must engage the discussion. Continue this process of alternate motions until the dice pools are exhausted.

If a Council member other than the Chair disagrees with a Counter made by the Chair, he may advance a die to supplement your original advance. The Chair must immediately respond to this dissenting opinion by pushing forward enough dice to meet the new total.

When either of the dice pools is exhausted, the exchange is ended. If you, the knight, have any dice left, add as many glass beads as dice remaining to your tally. If the Chair has dice remaining, remove as many glass beads from your tally as dice remaining in his pool.

Now that the exchange is over, if you have time remaining, initiate another exchange by presenting your next event.

The Tally of the Knight's Worth

After you've presented all seven of your knight's events, or your time expires, count up the glass beads in your tally; if you've accumulated twenty glass beads, then your petition has been successful. Your knight will be proclaimed a saint; and his likeness will be crafted as a stained glass window, to be hung in the many great halls of the High Citadel of The Order.

If your knight has not accumulated the required number of glass beads, his petition will be rejected.

The next knight takes his turn to petition.

A Note About Participation

Throughout the game, regardless of your current role, you are encouraged, expected even, to participate fully in any discussions. You should feel encouraged to offer suggestions, opinions, and contribute in any way you feel capable of doing so.