

CHARLES THE BALD IS SUPERF*ED**

It's a fine day in the mid-9th century. Charles the Bald, king of West Francia, isn't happy. His grandfather Charlemagne made an empire. His dad Louis managed to keep it together. But now it's all falling apart. His oldest brother Lothar, that twat, inherited the empire. So Charles and his two other brothers (well, half-brothers, really - they all have the same mum, except for Charles) had to plot, scheme and declare a few wars to get their fair share.

It all seemed to work out in the end. Lothar got the Holy Schmoly Roman Emperor title, Pippin got the lands of Aquitaine, Louis got East Francia, and Charles got West Francia. Far away from those eastern barbarians. With a ready-installed, good old-fashioned feudal structure complete with vassals and everything.

“Breton vassals.” Why did Lothar and Louis giggle when they said that?

Apparently, the Bretons were hell-bent on independence, the right to run their own lives etc etc. Well, kings don't usually give away bits of their land for free, and Charles wasn't about to. But then the Breton leader Nominoë started getting nasty. Charles had given him some limited power to grease him, but that didn't work as planned. To the contrary - he started grabbing land and winning battles over the Franks. “Not enough grease?”, thought Charles, and tried making him a Duke.

Then, the Bretons decided that Nominoë's son Erispoë should be king. King of the Bretons.

“Perhaps I've been greasing in the wrong place?”, thought Charles. He started bribing Erispoë's cousin and foster brother Salamon with land. That should have made the Bretons fight among themselves, but the result so far is that Salamon just wants - that's right - more power.

A fairly stable, fucked up situation. His brothers ignored him, his vassals hated him; all in the life of a medieval king. Then the Normans arrived. Barbarian invaders are mostly all the same - they make a lot of noise at your borders, you beat them with overwhelming force and do nasty things to their leaders' corpses, they go away. But the Normans didn't stop at the borders. They just sailed straight up the rivers in their low boats and sacked and pillaged. On holy days, always, so they could be sure that all the Frankish soldiers were in a church somewhere, which the Normans proceeded to burn.

And then they took Paris. Cost a hell of a lot of gold to buy it back.

Charles the Bald isn't happy.

In fact, Charles the Bald is superf***ed.

THE GAME

The game is played in scenes, where players compete at narration. It lasts for 10 scenes. After that, you choose a winner.

Who narrates what?

At the start of a scene, each player decides what group he wants to narrate this scene. At the same time, all players show a sign corresponding to their chosen group.

Franks	Paper
Bretons	Stone
Normans	Scissors

Several players may choose the same sign; this means they want to narrate the same group. Later, they'll compete to see who gets narration.

Order of narration

Compare the signs the players make. As usual, scissors win over paper, paper wins over stone, stone wins over scissors. If all three signs are made, the sign that the most players make wins.

Example: Four players. A and B choose stone, C chooses scissors, D chooses paper. All three sides are represented - but stone has the most players, so stone wins.

Narrate in reverse order of victory. That is, the side that loses has to narrate first; the side that wins gets to narrate last.

Example: Paper lost, so has to go first. After that, scissors. Stone narrates the end of the scene.

If the same group is chosen by several players, they compete for narration when that group's turn comes. The players involved once again choose a sign (paper, stone, scissors). The losers don't get narration. The winner gets narration, but has to narrate how the side they picked does something to help the group they first chose. He may *not* use *any* narrative schticks (see later). If he places tokens on the map (see later), they're placed in the box of the group he first chose.

Example: A and B, who both chose stone, have to fight to see who gets to narrate the Breton side. A chooses stone (still wants to narrate Bretons), B chooses paper (Franks). B wins, and narrates how the Franks do something stupid that ends up helping the Bretons. He can't use any schticks. Any tokens he places are placed in the relevant Breton box.

Placing tokens on the map

The map is divided into sections (Rennes, Nantes, rivers etc). Each section has three boxes: Breton, Frank and Norman.

After narrating his turn, a player may place tokens on the map. These are placed in the box of a group that player has narrated success for, in a region mentioned in narration. These tokens are taken from the player's personal pool. The first player in a turn places 1 token, next one 2, next one 3 etc.

Example: After D narrates the Franks (paper), he may place 1 token. Since he narrated how Charles paid a visit to the Spanish Marches, he places his token on the F (Franks) box on the Spanish Marches.

Awarding tokens to players

At the end of each scene, all players take a number of tokens from the central pool equal to the number of players. They don't get to keep these tokens; they're allocated to other players as a reward for good narration.

You can give as many or as few (even zero) tokens to others, but you have to use them all. You can't give tokens to yourself.

Allocation is secret. To allocate a number of tokens to a player, pick that number of tokens of that player's colour from the central pool.

Example: The four players each have four tokens to give away at the end of the scene.

- A allocates two to D, one to B, one to C.
 - B allocates two to D and two to C.
 - C allocates one to D and three to B.
 - D allocates two to B and two to C.
- Total: A gets zero (no narration!), B gets 6, C gets 5, D gets 5.

Schtick narration

Each group has a signature narrative event called a schtick.

- For the Normans it's Invincibility. They tend to win any battles, or escape unscathed.
- For the Bretons it's Accusation. They tend to bicker amongst themselves a lot, and create intrigues by pointing fingers at whoever's not there; a bishop, a cousin, a brother-in-law's trusted vassal etc.
- For the Franks it's Companions. They try to get allies in all sorts of ways - marriage, giving away land and titles, bribery with gold.

When you narrate a group, you *may* include their schtick in narration. If you don't, you get one token instantly once you're done narrating. If you do use the schtick, *and the player after you uses his group's schtick*, you get *three* tokens. If you're the last player, you may ask for bribes to influence your decision to use the schtick or not.

Example: D narrates the Frankish schtick of Companions. C narrates the Norman schtick of Invincibility. B is last; if he chooses to use the schtick, he gets nothing, and B gets three. If he doesn't use it, he gets one, and B gets nothing. B gives C a look, and C immediately offers a bribe of 2 tokens if B narrates.

Example II: D narrates schtick, C doesn't. D gets nothing, C gets one. B doesn't narrate either, and gets one.

End-of-game scoring

At the end of the game (after 10 scenes), find the victorious group in each region - the group with the most tokens. Remove the tokens in the non-victorious boxes. Victorious tokens are *tripled* and returned to their players.

Example: In Bordeaux, the Franks box has 2 blue and 3 red tokens. The Normans have 1 red token. The Bretons have 1 orange, 2 green and 1 black token. The Franks, with a total of 5, win Bordeaux. Blue player gets back $2 \times 3 = 6$ tokens, red gets $3 \times 3 = 9$ tokens. All other tokens (from the Norman and Breton boxes) are lost.

Players count their tokens - both those they've been awarded for narration (and haven't spent), and those earned from end-of-game scoring. The player with the most tokens wins.

FRANKS

Charles the Bald
King of West Francia

Ermentrude
Charles' wife

Louis the Stammerer
Charles' four-year-old son

Louis the German
King of East Francia
Charles' older half-brother

Pippin II
King of Aquitaine
Charles' nephew

Lothar
Holy Roman Emperor
Charles' oldest half-brother

Louis II
King of Italy
Lothar's oldest son

Lothar and Charles
Lothar's younger sons

Drogo
Bishop of Metz
Charles' uncle
Charlemagne's illegitimate son
Patron of the arts

BRETONS

Nominoë
Rebellious Breton king
Count of Vannes

Erispoë
Breton prince
Son of Nominoë

Conan
Erispoë's son

Saloman
Breton noble
Nominoë's nephew and foster son

Lambert
Count of Nantes and a competent army leader
Neustrian aristocracy

Gurwant
Count of Rennes

Pascweten
Count of Vannes
Saloman's son-in-law

Almaric
Saloman's murderous vassal

Robert the Strong
Marquess of Neustria
Warrior

Conwoïon
Abbot and founder of the abbey of Redon
Noble, possibly Nominoë's brother

Anweten
New bishop of Quimper after Nominoë kicked out the Frankish ones and replaced them with Bretons

Courantgen
New bishop of Vannes

Retwaalar
New bishop of Aleth

Cltwoïon
New bishop of Saint-pol

NORMANS

Ragnar Lodbrok
Earl of Denmark and Sweden
Pagan, pirate and raider

Ragnar's armies
5000 warriors and 120 ships

Aslaug Sigurdsdatter
Ragnar's wise, cunning and beautiful wife

Hvitserk
Ragnar's chess-loving son

Bjørn Jernside (Ironside)
Ragnar's son

Sigurd Orm-i-auga (Snake-eye)
Ragnar's son

Ivar the Boneless
Ragnar's vengeful son

Godfrid
Independent raider and settler

Sigtryggr
Independent and treacherous raider

LINKS

Charles the Bald: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_the_Bald

Nominoë: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nominoe%2C_Duke_of_Brittany

Erispoë: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erispoe%2C_Duke_of_Brittany

Normans: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normans>

Map of Bretagne: <http://www.map-of-france.co.uk/map-of-bretagne.htm>

Franks and Vikings (babelfish translation):

http://babelfish.altavista.com/babelfish/trurl_pagecontent?lp=fr_en&trurl=http://www.guipry.com/lire/chap4.htm

Arms and armour: <http://www.deremilitari.org/RESOURCES/ARTICLES/coupland.htm>

A Frankish warrior: <http://miniatures-online.de/docs/pd-809517562.htm>

Carolingian costume: http://www.siu.edu/COSTUMES/COSTUME2_INDEX.HTML#Plate12

Charles' coins: http://ventesuroffres.free.fr/images/monnaies/vso/v07/v07_0671.jpg