

The Diamond-Studded Suit (And Other Lies)

Game Chef 2013

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Requirements: 4 Players, 13 Index Cards, and one Deck of Playing Cards (without Jokers)

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This is the story of our clan. Once a great nation, once a people whose weight shook the world, now only few, poor, starving, hunted and desperate. At it's peak, the nation ruled nearly half the known world, above and below ground. Even but a year ago the Clan numbered more than a hundred. Today, only thirteen remain. Our leader still wears the raiment of our ancient kings, the Diamond-Studded Suit, but long ago, longer than any can remember the diamonds were all cut out, leaving behind only gaping holes. Our past glorious, our present precarious, and our future seemed nonexistent until the youngest of the clan found and opened the first of the two Person-Shaped Doors, leading deeper into the ruins that are our last shelter. Legends speak of the dangers of the deep ruins, and of the two Person-Shaped doors, one leading into that danger and, on the other side, another, leading to a land of safety, of new beginnings. The way will be perilous, but it is the Clan's only hope.



Phase One: Character Generation

The Diamond-Studded Suit (And Other Lies) is a roleplaying game for four players, who will take on roles among the last thirteen members of The Clan. The first step to playing the game is for all of the players to agree on a name for the Clan, and the great Nation that they once ruled. The next step is to create those thirteen characters. Each character is defined by six items, which will all go onto the character's card, a 3x5 index card aligned vertically. The items are:

ROLE. This describes the character's position in the tribe. These should be written at the top of each character card before play begins. Each role corresponds with a card value in a deck of playing cards, and that value will be used to indicate that character later, so it should also be written down on the character card. The Thirteen Roles are:

A. Youth	6. Rogue	J. Heir
2. Toady	7. Mystic	Q. Matriarch
3. Rebel	8. Warrior	K. Patriarch
4. Clown	9. Healer	
5. Hunter	10. Elder	

These roles should be interpreted broadly. For example, a 'Hunter' can be any kind of provider: a thief who raids enemy camps or a plant-mage who magically forces trees to give fruit is just as valid as a traditional hunter.

NAME: The character's name. The players may want to discuss naming conventions before beginning, so that the thirteen names all sound like they belong to the same culture.

SKILL: Something that the character is extremely good at doing

DESIRE: What the character wants most

LIE: Something important that the character believes that is simply not true.

RELATIONSHIPS: The character's most important connection to another Clan member.

To complete these character cards, deal out a standard deck of playing cards evenly among the four players. Each player will then, for each of their cards, fill in one of the areas on the character card: if the card is a Club, they will give the character corresponding to the card's rank a SKILL. If it is a Heart, the character is given a DESIRE. If it is a Diamond, write in a LIE, and if it is a Spade, create a RELATIONSHIP, with any other character of their choice. Whenever a player is the first person to add to a Character's Card, they also will choose the character's NAME, and also the character's gender (other than the Matriarch and Patriarch, who are always female and male, respectively.) Players should act roughly simultaneously during this part of the game, and should avoid having any player become more than two cards ahead or behind of the others.

Relationship Advice

Players may build on facts established by earlier players on these cards, but should not do so more than once on a single character, or else the character may become too one-note. When adding new Relationships, try to target them to characters who are not currently being written on by another player, and announce exclusive relationships like marriage and kinship out loud to help prevent other players from creating a logically impossible relationship set.

Remember, the clan suffered great losses over the past year. Do not hesitate to name dead or lost Clan members in creating character Desires or Lies. Relationships, however, must be with living Clan members who have character cards.

Also, note that the Matriarch and Patriarch need not be married: one could be the parent, or even grandparent, of the other, or the two could derive authority from completely independent traditions. Similarly, the Heir is not necessarily the child of either of these people, and might have been chosen for some other reason.

After all thirteen characters are complete, go through each one's RELATIONSHIPS and add notes on the target character for each relationship to remind players that it exists. Then each player, starting with the first to have finished the previous phase and proceeding clockwise around the table, picks one of the thirteen characters as their Main Character, marking it with their name or initials.

Main Characters

There are three differences between an Main Character and the other characters. First, whenever your Main Character is present in a scene, you will always play them. Secondly, Main Characters will not die during scenes, although other bad things may happen to them. And finally, the ending of the game will be concerned with the personal future of your Main Character.

After creating characters, shuffle or otherwise randomize the character cards, then place them in a stack face-down. Then reshuffle the deck and deal it out to the four players again, keeping the cards all face down.

Character Card Format

Sample Character Card

Name:	Name: Arak Greywind (M)
Role:	Role: Hunter (5)
♣Skill:	♣Skill: Unbreakable Grip
♥Desire:	♥Desire: To see the Shimmering Ocean
♦Lie:	♦Lie: What happened to Julewin wasn't Arak's Fault
♠Relationship:	♠Relationship: Won't forgive (8) (Warrior) for what happened last winter.
←Relationship:	←Relationship: (2) (Toady) is Arak's twin brother
←Relationship:	←Relationship:
←Relationship:	←Relationship:
Notes:	Notes:

Phase Two: Scenes

The game consists of six scenes, each describing a major event in the Clan's exploration of the ruins. The first step in a scene is to determine which characters that scene will be about. Do this by turning up four cards from the character card stack. Any main characters revealed will be played by their owner, and any other characters should be distributed to the other players in any manner they find agreeable.

Each player then deals two cards from their stack onto the table, turning the first one face up and leaving the other face down without looking at it.. The person who showed the highest face-up card (Aces are low, and in case of ties, Diamonds beat Spades beat Hearts beat Clubs) becomes the Narrator, and should set a scene, part of the Clan's journey through the ruins, based on the four revealed cards.

Lists and Oracles

At the back of these rules is a section containing several lists of possible elements for use in scenes: Rooms, dangers, treasures, Lies, and so forth. If you are called on to narrate an element and don't have an idea already in mind, feel free to consult these lists and pick one, either at random or as feels interesting. Some of these lists are presented in 'oracle' form, with each item corresponding to a card rank, so that if you choose, you may allow the card that introduced the element to more fully define it. Always feel free to ignore the oracles if you think that another choice would better fit the scene.

For each Club present, the Narrator should describe a danger present in the room. If the Club matches any of the character card's rank, that character should be particularly and potentially mortally threatened by the danger.

For each Heart present, the Narrator should describe a treasure in the room, something that will be strongly of value to the Clan or the individuals moving forward. Generally, Treasures should not be described as simply lying around but require some kind of effort to acquire.

For each Diamond present, the Narrator should, in the voice of their own character, describe how the contents of the room reenforce or relate to one of the lies that all of the Clan have been raised to believe.

And for each Spade present, the Narrator should describe how the room or scene actually points to the truth behind one of those Lies. If a Spade is present with no Diamonds, then the truth should be in contrast to the Lie on the character card of one of the characters in the scene.

Narration, Lies, and Truth

This is a game with collaborative world creation and as such, each player has the obligation to constantly add detail to the members of the Clan, the ruins being explored, and the deep history of the Clan, the Nation, and the world they occupy during play, and also the obligation to maintain consistency with what the other players have established.

This is also a game about Lies, and sometimes the players will be establishing facts about history in a negative manner. When introducing a Lie to a scene, a player should use a clear narrative tag like "As every member of the clan knows...", and by introducing such a Lie they are establishing that the actual fact is something very much opposite to that. If a player introduces a lie that the Nation's leaders once had the service of three fierce Krakens, the truth should be something majorly different like that the Krakens were actually the masters, or that the Krakens were names given to large fighting ships, not something minor like that there were actually only two Krakens.

Example of Scene Setting

In the second scene of a game, the four cards revealed are the **8 of Diamonds**, the **8 of Spades**, the **Ace of Clubs**, and the **Jack of Hearts**. The player who revealed the Jack of Hearts becomes the narrator and begins to set the scene. The Oracles for lies and treasure suggest that this scene might deal with the Clan's false beliefs about the Nation's wealth, and that books of ancient magic could be present in the room. Since there is both a spade and a diamond in this scene, something to suggest the true facts about the nation's wealth should be present, and the presence of a club indicates that there should be an active danger in the room. If the character matching the Ace of Clubs, the Youth, were present for this scene, that danger would need to actively threaten that character, but in this case the Youth is not among the four characters in this scene.

The narrator decides to set the scene in an ancient treasure vault, and formulates the lie as "As all people in our clan know, our forebears had magical means to make their wealth literally multiply in their vaults, giving them riches beyond measure." The truth behind this that he has decided to hint at is that they did try to do this, by means of magic that transformed their coins into living creatures which they allowed to breed before reversing the spell. However, the creatures were vicious carnivores that cost more to keep fed through a reproductive cycle than they ended up being worth, and were a deadly threat to their keepers, especially in the final, chaotic days.

So the narrator describes the scene of a vault, with all of its trappings of securely locked doors and guard stations, strewn with skeletal remains, including farm animals in feeding troughs, more than a few human skeletons where they fell, and a scattering of rodent and other cave-dwelling animals throughout. One of the human skeletons is holding a book whose cover bears a faintly-glowing rune, but between the explorers and it is a sizable swarm of skittering, coin-shaped beetles with razor-sharp mandibles, the precious metals in their shells adulterated and rusted, and insatiably hungry for flesh.

As the other characters react to the scene as described, it is possible that one of them will deduce on their own the truth that the narrator was hinting at (in this case, that the process may have doubled their coinage but cost more to do than they gained from it.) If not, the narrator should do so through the voice of their own character. Here at the beginning of a scene, characters should be advancing the truth as theory or speculation, waiting to make a firmer decision until the time has come to Engage that particular Element.

Engaging and Revealing Elements

After the scene has been set by the Narrator, each player, including the Narrator himself, assumes the role of their character and begins playing the scene, interacting with one another, the room, and the elements in the room. Players have almost complete narrative control whenever they are acting: if they say that they are doing something, then they do it. The only exception to this rule is that they can never kill or permanently maim another character.

There are four kinds of special types of action that a character can take, and each character may (and, ultimately must) do one and only one such action during a scene. These actions are:

Acquire a Treasure, Embrace a Lie, Face a Truth, Overcome a Danger. When a character does one of these things, their player takes the card representing that element into their Fate pile while narrating how the character does this action. That player then turns over one of the face-down cards on the table.

The player who revealed the card the narrates how the new element appears in the room after that action was taken.

If the newly revealed card's rank matches any of the characters present, that character's player immediately takes that card into their fate pile. This does not count as the character's one 'Engage an

Element' action for the turn. If it is a Treasure, that character saw it first and quickly took it. If it is a Lie or a Truth, it is evidence so compelling to that character that they must immediately accept it. If it is a Danger, then one of two things happen: if the character involved is not their player's main character, than that character is killed by the danger. This can be an immediate, quick death, or a mortal, untreatable wound that forces the character to be left behind, but in any case, that character will not continue the journey and their card should be removed from the game rather than being reshuffled when the character deck is exhausted. If the character involved is a player's main character, then that character suffers a serious, permanent injury from the Danger: the loss of a limb, or an eye, a serious disfigurement, or something similarly traumatic and permanent that does not completely end the character's ability to continue the journey.

When all four characters have either died or Engaged an element, the original Narrator should end the scene by describing how the characters find an exit to allow the clan to proceed further into the ruins, or, in the unlikely event that all four characters in the scene die, how their actions allowed the rest of the Clan to proceed. In the sixth and final scene, their exit should be through the Person-Shaped door and into their promised land.

If two characters both want to engage the same element, if it is a Treasure or a Danger they should by all means role-play the conflict in character until they reach either a resolution or have exhausted the roleplaying opportunity without a firm conclusion. If this happens, or if two characters want to engage the same Truth or Lie, resolve using rock-paper-scissors.

Do not rush through scenes! Players may be tempted to quickly engage elements one after another. Try to avoid that. Take your time and interact with each other, using the Skills, Desires, Relationships, and personal Lies on the character card to let the scene breathe and develop on its own. Debate the Lies and Truths, make and reject plans to deal with Dangers, and squabble over who can claim a Treasure, and only engage the elements when the scene has made this inevitable.

Down, Forward, Up: The Arc of a Journey

The overall story of the journey through the ruins is that the Clan descends deep into their darkest depths, then finds a way forward, underground, to cover a great distance, and finally ascends back to the surface and the second Person-Shaped Door. Accordingly, progress in the first two scenes should involve going down, progress in the middle two scenes should involve going forward, and progress in the final two scenes should involve climbing upward

After completing a scene, discard all of the cards on the table. If any characters had major changes, (like suffering a wound or acquiring a useful treasure) add a note to their card. Then set aside the surviving character cards and draw four new ones for the next scene. When the character deck runs out, reshuffle the set-aside non-dead used characters to make a new character deck.

Phase Three: Fates

The Person-Shaped Door (And Other Truths)



After the end of the final scene, each player should add the final card in their deck to their fate pile and then count the cards in each suit. They should determine which two suits they have the most cards of (in the case of ties, they may pick any of the tied suits), and narrate their character's fate in the new lands by expanding on the appropriate entry below.

Lies (Diamonds) and Treasure (Hearts): You become a charismatic leader, impressing the people of the new lands with the wealth and comforting mythology of your former Clan and Nation.

Lies (Diamonds) and Death (Clubs): You become a mercenary soldier, willing to fight and kill for other people's causes.

Lies (Diamonds) and Truth (Spades): You become a hermit, sought out for your wisdom but always kept apart from society.

Treasure (Hearts) and Death (Clubs): You are able to amass wealth in the new lands, but this solitary life cannot make up for the things you have lost.

Treasure (Hearts) and Truth (Spades): You integrate yourself into the societies of the new lands, gaining power and influence while your past with the Clan becomes a nearly-forgotten dream.

Death (Clubs) and Truth (Spades): You become a successful master criminal, able to function in the rules of the new lands but not bound by them.

Lists and Oracles

Lies:

- A. The Nation's connection to the dawn of time
2. The Nation's divine favor
3. The lineage of the Clan's rulers
4. The Clan's taboos and superstitions
5. The Clan's knowledge of the nature of magic
6. The Nation's Ancient enemies
7. The nature of the underground ruins
8. The Nation's wealth
9. The Clan's current enemies
10. The Nation's military prowess
- J. The Diamond-Studded Suit itself
- Q. The lands beyond the Person-Shaped Door
- K. How the Nation fell

Treasures:

- A. Gemstones and Jewellery
2. Figurines
3. Ancient Coins
4. Trophies of Fantastic Beasts
5. Magic Items
6. Vintage spirits, perfectly preserved
7. Holy Relics
8. Historical Documents
9. Legendary Shields and Armor
10. Legendary Weapons
- J. Books of Ancient Magic
- Q. Mighty beasts, young enough to tame
- K. Symbols of Office

Dangers

- Mechanical Traps
- Swarms of vermin
- Rockfalls and Collapses
- The Mindless Dead
- Magically animated weapons
- Bottomless Pits and Chasms
- Pack-hunting Beasts
- Killer Mimics
- Twisted Magical Creatures
- Gale-force winds
- Carnivorous Plants or Fungi
- Clockwork or Magical Automata

Floods and Rapids

- Demonic or otherworldly entities
- Poisonous or Explosive gas
- Mythological Beasts
- Haunting Spirits
- Extreme Heat, Lava
- Ancient, formerly human Malevolences
- Giant Insects
- Living Shadows

Rooms

- A Shrine to some forgotten god
- A gladiatorial Arena
- A bridge across an underground river
- A shipwreck, afloat on an underground sea
- A deep pit with a staircase spiraling down or up
- A vast, natural cavern with an aging paved road
- An overrun underground garden
- An abandoned mineshaft
- A twist-filled labyrinth
- Tunnels dug by some underground burrower
- A fortress, its outer walls breached wide open
- A desecrated tomb
- A nightmare made real
- Luxury residences, fallen into decay
- A Palace carved into a glacier
- A prison, complete with torture chamber
- A bone-strewn battlefield
- A partially-collapsed cathedral
- Ancient, disused sewers
- The web of a gargantuan spider
- A massive mechanical orrery
- The decayed corpse of a gargantuan beast
- A midden heap
- A cleverly-sealed treasure vault
- A game board, scaled to human-sized pieces
- Flame-scorched military barracks
- An Alchemist's Laboratory
- A crumbling dam across an underground river
- A formerly-decadent dining hall
- Apparently endless library stacks
- A partially-collapsed tower, resting at a steep angle
- The works of a towering clock
- A towering ziggurat

Character Inspiration Lists

Skills:

Combat: Expert swordsman, crack-shot archer, relentless brawler
Magic: Plant-Singer, Bolt-Lobber, Spirit-Speaker
Movement: Sure-footed sprinter, spider-like climber,
Strength: Lift extremely heavy objects, Unbreakable grip, Crush rocks
Social: Silver-tongued persuader, Heartbreaking musician, Expert judge of intent
Finesse: Stealthful sneaker, Lockpick, Repair

Desires:

To be: Loved, Respected, Left Alone, Noticed
To get: Rich, Powerful, Knowledge, Revenge
To avoid: Discovery of a crime, responsibilities, boredom
To protect..., To destroy..., To find..., To forget..

Lies:

About Self: Is the smartest/strongest/best at (name a skill or job) in the Clan, Could quit any time, Would be reliable in a crisis
About the rest of the Clan: Is well liked, Has kept a secret, Can trust, Was born into the Clan
About the Past or Future: Is (or Isn't) responsible for something, Is destined to restore the Nation,

Relationships:

Kinship: Parent-Child (including adopted or step-relations), Siblings (including fraternal or identical twins), Cousins, Aunt/Uncle-Niece/Nephew
Love: Marriage, Illicit Affair, Unconsummated Mutual Longing, Unrequited Yearnings
Friendship: Lifelong best friends, friendly rivals, childhood friends now grown apart, former friends torn apart by a major fight, business partners
Role Models: Mentorships, Apprenticeships, living vicariously through, yearns for the respect of, Needs to get out of the shadow of
Based on Past Events: Won't forgive a transgression by, shares a secret with, knows a secret about, were rivals for the affection of someone now dead, owes a massive debt to, once nearly killed

Designer's Notes

My initial response to the picture that is the theme of this year's contest was that it was about people moving up and down, both literally and metaphorically, specifically moving through time, to the past and the future. Add to that my general impression of the Ingredient pictures as having a general theme of decay, corruption, and entropy, and I got the kernel of the idea that eventually became this game: to do something with the idea of dungeon-crawling as archeology.

I decided to focus on just two of ingredients, leaving out the apple-and-worm even though it had helped form the 'decayed ruins' aesthetic of the game. Viewing the picture that the game is named after, I liked the twin ideas of a suit literally studded with diamonds and a suit in tatters, with diamond-shaped holes where those gems had been cut out, and that started me thinking of doing a game about lies, and the idea of world-building by establishing plausible lies instead of actual truths. Finally, I took a non-obvious interpretation of another of the ingredient images, looking at it not as a shadow against a wall but as a slightly ajar door in the shape of a human being.

Inspirations for this game include Fiasco and similar games for the ending mechanics, Dwarf Fortress and its narrative extensions, and, of course, 1st Edition Advanced Dungeons and Dragons (particularly, the bit in the example of play where the party finds the elevated secret door.)

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