Shadows of Malice™

a cooperative game of epic fantasy

The Avatars of Aethos

Long ago, in the Time of Black Thickening, the shadow demon Xulthûl (zul-thool) gained physical substance and walked the Realm of Aethos, a gruesome thing of clotted darkness sheathed in a skin of malice. Before Xulthûl, no mortal could stand, no army could prevail, and Aethos descended into depravity and blight.

So vivid, however, were the horrors that Xulthûl's incarnation wrought upon the living that their anguish roused the Avatars of Aethos. Noble beings of purest Light, the avatars took pity on the mortals of the Realm. They assumed human form, secured the great strongholds of the Realm, and unsealed the Wells of the Ancients hidden within. The cleansing Light of the Wells flooded into Aethos, dissolved Xulthûl's material substance, and banished the demon once more to the Shadow Realm.

Yet even time forgets. As the decades that followed Xulthûl's defeat bled into centuries, the Wells of the Ancients faded into legend, the Guardians stationed within the great strongholds slipped into stone slumber, and the strongholds themselves fell into ruin. Memories of Xulthûl dimmed into the stuff of nightmare, for what is the cold hatred of a shadow against the warm light of reason? But banishment is not destruction. Secure in the Shadow Realm, concealed behind a veil of disbelief, Xulthûl fed upon the fears and sins and dark desires of the very mortals that denied its existence.

As Xulthûl's strength returned, its malign influence began to leak once more into the Realm of Aethos. Wispy tendrils of perversion slid over and through the Realm, gradually transforming its lands into twisted tangles and its denizens into terrible beasts. The Guardians of the Wells gradually lost the ability to distinguish Light from Shadow and rose up to destroy any creature that entered the strongholds they defended. Even the Wells of the Ancients began to fall Dark under Xulthûl's corruptive maleficence, slowly changing from channels of Light into conduits of Shadow.

It is here that you enter the story, players, as the Avatars of Aethos returned. At the start of the game, there will be sufficient Light Wells remaining to thwart Xulthûl, but their whereabouts will be unknown. It will be your task to find the strongholds that contain the remaining Light Wells, defeat their Guardians, and unseal them… and with their cleansing Light prevent Xulthûl from gaining the corporeal substance it requires to physically enter the Realm of Aethos.

But be warned: Xulthûl will act against you. It will spawn manifestations of its wickedness in the Shadow Realm and send them into Aethos with one unwavering purpose: to find but a single Light Well, and with its power provide Xulthûl the means to once again thicken the darkness into a skin of malice…

Part 1: The game objective

What's this game about?

Shadows of Malice™ is a **cooperative game** in which 2 - 8 players work together to prevent Xulthûl, the Lord of Shadow, from gaining substance and devastating the Realm of Aethos. Players control avatars, beings of Light that have taken physical form to enter Aethos and undertake an epic quest to find and unseal the Wells of the Ancients that have not fallen Dark over the centuries since Xulthûl's last incarnation.

Players move their avatars through Aethos, confront fate, battle deadly creatures, and gather the treasure and soulshards they will need to defeat the Guardians that defend the Wells of the Ancients. If the players unseal **all** the remaining Light Wells, the Light of the Wells will prevent Xulthûl's return and the players will win the game.

But Xulthûl has other plans. Shadows, living manifestations of Xulthûl's malice, have begun thickening in the Shadow Realm. If the Shadows manage to enter Aethos and reveal but a single Light Well, Xulthûl will gain a material form in Aethos. The avatars will then have to face the Lord of Shadow itself and destroy its material form before it can extinguish the Light Wells and gain dominion over the Realm.

# Part 2: The game components

What's in the box?

The game comes with 1 rule booklet, 1 Creature Generator, 1 icon guide, a map of the Shadow Realm, 4 maps of Aethos, 5 card decks, 108 soulshards, 197 tokens, and black and white dice of two sizes.

Card Decks	Soulshards	⊕ Radiance Tokens	Game Tokens
40 Ability	12 Black	3 Combat	6 Cities
40 Fate	12 Blue	3 Energy Shield	8 Dark Wells
18 Mastery	12 Green	3 Energy Surge	6 Gate Seals
40 Potion	12 Red	3 Life	24 Lairs
60 Treasure	12 Yellow	3 Luck	80 Life
	48 Colorless	3 Movement	4 Light Wells
		3 Physical Shield	6 Mystics
Avatar tokens		3 Physical Surge	6 Shadows
		3 Recovery	18 Stars
		3 Shards	1 Xulthûl
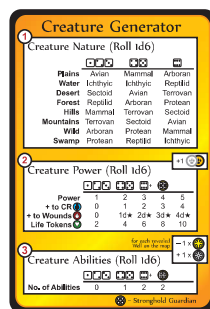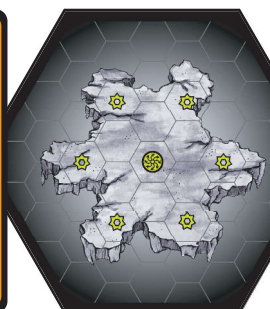
Creature Generator   Shadow Realm   Terrain Maps

Part 3: Set up the game in 9 easy steps!

Step 1: Choose the game maps

The players select 1 to 4 **terrain maps** of the Realm of Aethos to use for their game. More maps make for longer games. Two maps adjoin along a border if they share a set of common symbols along that border (e.g., ○○□). For experienced players, typical games run about 1 hour plus 1 hour per map used.

Step 2: Prepare the maps!

Set the Shadow Realm and terrain maps on the table, then prepare them for play:

Step i: Seal the Shadow Gates

Cover all the **Shadow Gates** ⚙ in the Shadow Realm with a **Gate Seal** ⊘ to denote them as sealed and inoperable at the start of the game.

Step ii: Place the strongholds

Gather one **Light Well** token ✳ and two **Dark Well** tokens ⚫ for each terrain map used in the game (e.g., a game with 3 terrain maps will need 3 Light Well tokens and 6 Dark Well tokens). Place these tokens in one pile on the table, stronghold-side-up ⊞, shuffle them together, and randomly place them stronghold-side-up on the stronghold symbols ⊞ on the terrain maps. No one should know the nature of the Well in any stronghold.

Step iii: Place the Cities

Place the 6 **City** tokens ⊕⊕⬦⊕⊕⊕ on the table, C-side-up Ⓒ, and shuffle them together. Select one City token for each terrain map in the game and put the remaining tokens away (they will not be used). Randomly place the selected tokens on the City symbol Ⓒ on each terrain map, C-side-up. No one should know the nature of any City.

Step iv: Place the Mystics

Place the 6 **Mystic** tokens ⬆⬆⊕⊕⊘⊘ on the table, M-side-up Ⓜ, and shuffle them together. Select one Mystic token for each terrain map in the game and put the remaining tokens away (they will not be used). Place the selected tokens randomly on the Mystic symbol Ⓜ on each terrain map, M-side-up. No one should know the nature of any Mystic.

Step v: Stock the lairs

Place a **stocked lair** token 🐾 on all the lair symbols 🐾 on all the maps used.

Step 3: Choose avatar tokens

Each player chooses one of 8 oval avatar tokens (e.g., ◉) to mark his avatar's position on the game maps. An **avatar** is the physical manifestation of a being of Light that can act in the Realm of Aethos.

Step 4: Give out life tokens

Each player receives 5 **life tokens** ♡ for his avatar. These life tokens represent the vigor and robustness of the avatar's physical form in Aethos.

Step 5: Draw avatar masteries

The players' avatars are supernatural beings of Light that have taken physical form to save Aethos from the threat of Xulthûl. As such, each avatar is able to shape the power of Light in a unique manner as determined by its **mastery**. Each player randomly draws one of 18 mastery cards to determine how his avatar shapes Light (e.g., Life Caster). A mastery has two parts: a primary ability that is always available to the avatar and a secondary ability that is activated by invoking a soulshard (Part 11). Abilities that target a specific avatar may be used once per avatar per turn. Mastery abilities may be used at any time and do not count as non-combat actions (Part 10d).
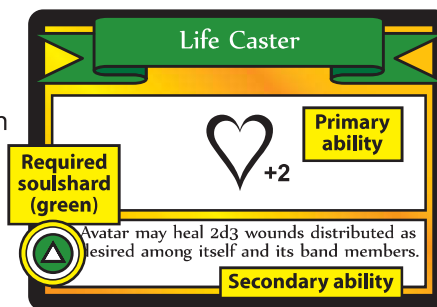
Step 6: Give out soulshards

A **soulshard** is a crystallized fragment of a creature's life energy. Each player starts play with 3 colorless soulshards and 3 soulshards of the color required to activate his avatar's secondary mastery ability (e.g., green in the case of "Life Caster").

Step 7: Give out starting treasure (optional)

Giving out starting **treasure** items is optional (Parts 12a, 12b). Starting treasure is useful in games with few players or when players want a faster game.

Step 8: Set out the troves

Shuffle the decks of cards and place them in locations convenient for play. These are the **troves**. There is a trove for Ability, Fate, Mastery, Potions, and Treasure. Anytime a player is required to "return a card to a trove," the player places the card on the bottom of the trove. In-game mechanics continually randomize the Potion and Ability Troves. Players may shuffle the Fate and Treasure Troves any time they desire.

Step 9: Place the avatars' tokens on the maps

The avatars enter the Realm of Aethos by way of its **Gates** (Part 6e). Each player places his avatar's token on a Gate hex ⚛ of his choice on any terrain map in the game. This is the avatar's **starting position** for play. Multiple players may begin the game on the same Gate and choose to begin play alone or in **bands** (Part 5d).

Part 4. How to play

4a. Factions

There are two factions: **players** and **Shadows**. The players control avatars of Light. Shadows are physical manifestations of Xulthûl's malice working against the players.

4b. Goals

The players' goal is to find and reveal **all** the Light Wells to prevent Xulthûl's return to Aethos. The Shadows' goal is to find and reveal **one** Light Well to bring back Xulthûl. There are X-many Light Wells in the game, where X is the number of terrain maps used in the game.

4c. What do players do?

Players take turns moving their avatars around the game maps, fighting creatures to gain treasure and soulshards, and visiting Cities and Mystics for support. When their avatars are strong enough, they proceed to the strongholds and battle the Guardians that defend the Wells hidden within. If they defeat a Guardian, the avatars may reveal the Well it guarded (turn over the stronghold token). The Well will be Light or Dark…

4d. Turns

Shadows of Malice™ is turn-based. Each game turn consists of the **players' turn** followed by the **Shadows' turn**. During the players' turn, all players have a **round** in which they may have their avatar **move** and perform <u>**one**</u> **action**. Performing an action ends the player's round, so all desired movement must be completed **prior** to performing an action. Actions include engaging in combat and using the services of Cities and Mystics. Once combat is engaged, blows are exchanged in a series of combat **phases** until one combatant flees or defeats the other. Players may change the order of their rounds each turn. After the players' turn ends, the Shadows get their movement and actions during the Shadows' turn.

4e. Recommended approach

The Wells are located in strongholds scattered throughout Aethos, so the avatars will have to move across the terrain maps to get to them (Part 6). The Guardians that defend the Wells are very tough; the avatars will not be able to defeat them without soulshards, potions, and treasure items. The avatars' general approach should be:

1. Reveal the Cities and Mystics so they can be used as resources.
2. Acquire treasure items and soulshards by defeating creatures in lairs. Each band member should possess a few items before attacking a Guardian.
3. Move from stronghold to stronghold, defeat the Guardians, reveal the Wells.

Part 5. Game notation and mechanics

5a. Icons

Icons are used to provide visual shorthand for game effects and are found on most of the cards.
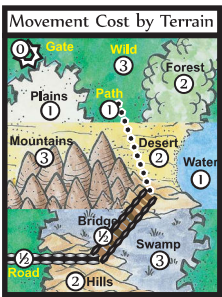
White icons (e.g., ⊕) affect the cardholder; gray icons (e.g., ⊕), affect the cardholder's opponent.

Color-code icons are also provided on cards to help players that have difficulty visually discriminating between similar colors (e.g., ✸✸).

Icon and Movement Guide

Black ◎⊗ Green ▲△ Yellow ✸✸
Blue ◩◻ Red ▽▽ Colorless ◎

Combat: Modifies combat rolls (**CR**)

Energy Wounds: Modifies wounds delivered by energy (non-melee) attacks

Physical Wounds: Modifies wounds delivered by physical (melee) attacks

Energy Shield: Reduces wounds sustained from energy (non-melee) attacks

Physical Shield: Reduces wounds sustained from physical (melee) attacks

Immunity: Immune to abilities and effects of banner (symbol) color

Life: Modifies a creature's or avatar's life token total

Recovery: Modifies the number of tokens an avatar may regain each turn

Luck: Modifies luck rolls (**LR**)

Movement: Modifies movement rolls (**MR**)

Shards: Modifies the number of **colorless** soulshards avatar may harvest from a creature

Gate Control: Removes **LR** to confirm exit Gate and grants automatic Gate attunement*

Electricity

Fire

Cold

Acid

Poison

White Icons Affect the cardholder

Gray Icons Affect the opponent

Movement Cost by Terrain

Gate 0 Wild 3 Forest 2
Plains 1 Path 1
Mountains 3 Desert 2 Water 1
Bridge ½
Swamp 3
Road ½ Hills 2

On a map, ⚙ marks the location of a Gate

5b. Generating random outcomes

d★ is a **key mechanic** in the game. A d★ is a die roll that results in a 0 or a 1. When modifying die rolls or effects, each 1d★ adjusts the roll or effect up or down by 0 or 1. For "success" or "failure," a 1d★ result of 1 designates "success" and a 0 "failure." We recommend using a low/high or odd/even approach when using dice to roll a d★ (see table). We also provide ★ tokens for players who prefer a "coin flip" approach. *Shadows of Malice*™ uses "xdy" to mean "x-many y-sided dice." For example, 2d3 means "two three-sided dice." With 1d6, we can generate the three most common die rolls: 1d★, 1d2, and 1d3 (see table).

	Outcome for...		
Die Roll	**1d★**	**1d2**	**1d3**
High/Low			
1,2,3	0	1	
4,5,6	1	2	
Odd/Even			
1,3,5	0	1	
2,4,6	1	2	
1,2			1
3,4			2
5,6			3

5c. Named die rolls

There are four **named die rolls** that players and creatures will be called upon to make during game play: **combat rolls**, **luck rolls**, **movement rolls**, and **power rolls**.

Combat Roll — **CR** — Determines whether or not a combatant **scores a hit** on an opponent. After adjustments, a combatant's **CR** must exceed its opponent's **CR** to score a hit.

Luck Roll — **LR** — Determines an avatar's success in attempts to **provoke** random encounters, **discover** treasure, or **evade** attacks. **LR**s are made against a target number (e.g., a creature's power). To be successful, the avatar's **LR** must exceed the target number. For example, a "**LR** against a 3" would succeed on a roll higher than a 3 (i.e., a 4+). To make a "**LR** against 1d6," the avatar would roll one die for its **LR** and one die for the target number to beat: the roll would succeed if the avatar's **LR** exceeded the target number to beat.

Movement Roll — **MR** — Determines **movement points** (MP) available during a turn. An avatar's base movement points are determined by **adding 2** to its **MR**. MP = **MR** + 2.

Power Roll — **PR** — Determines whether a creature uses a **special ability** or succeeds in a difficult **feat**. A creature's power roll is successful on a 1d6 roll less than or equal to its power.

5d. Bands and banding

Avatars may act individually or in groups called **bands**. When in bands, avatars suffer movement restrictions (Part 6b) and gain combat advantages (Part 10c). Two or more avatars in the same **terrain hex** (Part 6a) may form a band by stating that they are forming a band. An avatar in the same terrain hex as an existing band may join the band (with its agreement) by stating that it is joining. Forming and joining bands do not count as actions (Part 4d) and may be done at any time except during combat. An avatar may leave a band any time except when resolving events that affect the band or harvesting soulshards (Part 11). A lone avatar is a **band of one**.

Part 6. Movement

6a. Terrain

Terrain maps depict the Realm of Aethos. They are divided into hexagons called **terrain hexes** or **hexes**. Terrain types and structures are labeled on the sample maps (right). Maps adjoin along borders that share a common set of symbols and are treated as contiguous.

Swamp 3 MP	Wild 3 MP

MP (to <u>enter</u> hex)

1/2	Bridges, roads
1	Paths, plains, water
2	Desert, forest, hills
3	Mountains, swamp, wild

Water 1 MP · Launch · Gate · Bridge 1/2 MP · Same hex · Hills 2 MP · Mountains 3 MP · Lair · Path 1 MP · Plains 1 MP · Matching Symbols · Mystic · Forest 2 MP · Road 1/2 MP · Stronghold · City · Desert 2 MP
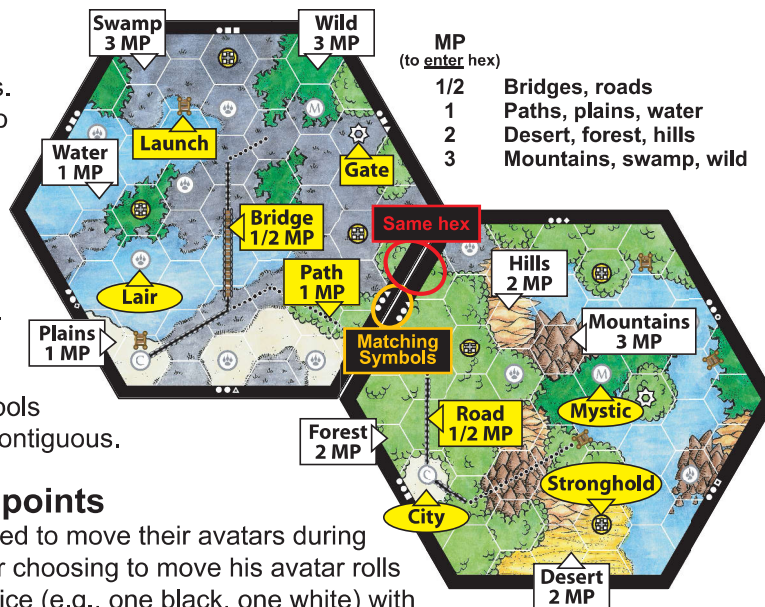
6b. Movement points

Players aren't required to move their avatars during their round. A player choosing to move his avatar rolls two **differentiable** dice (e.g., one black, one white) with one die designated prior to the roll to be the **movement die**. The number rolled on the movement die is the player's **movement roll** (**MR**). The player **adds 2** to his **MR** to determine his avatar's **movement points** (MP) for the round. For example, a player rolling a **MR** of 3 would have 3 + 2 = 5 MP. A player may still choose not to move his avatar after rolling a **MR**, but may no longer forego movement to increase his avatar's recovery (Part 9d). The MP total for a band is the **lowest** of the MP totals (or MP remaining) of all the avatars in the band. The second die rolled with the **MR** is the avatar's **fate die** (Part 7).

6c. Movement over land

Avatars use MPs to pay the cost to <u>enter</u> terrain hexes. The MP cost to enter a hex is determined by its terrain (see maps above). An avatar may not move into a hex if it has insufficient MP to pay the entry cost. Avatars must pay the terrain MP cost to enter a hex containing a bridge, Gate, path, or road. Once on a bridge, path, or road, the route-appropriate MP cost applies (e.g., ½ MP per hex along a bridge or road).

6d. Movement over water

Water hexes are impassable without a watercraft. Players may only obtain watercraft at **launches** 🛶 and may only enter a water hex by passing through a hex containing a launch. Once on a water hex, the avatar is operating a watercraft and may move freely through adjacent water hexes. Avatars traveling in a band are in the same watercraft. Avatars traveling independently may form bands if they occupy the same water hex and consolidate their watercraft. Without additional watercraft, avatars may only disband into adjacent land hexes. Any avatar moving into a land hex leaves its watercraft, but avatars remaining on the watercraft may hold the vessel for its return. Abandoned watercraft may not be "picked up" where they were "left."

6e. Movement through Gates

Gates ✦ are teleportation devices. An avatar entering a hex with a Gate may elect to use the Gate (**entry Gate**) and continue its movement from, or end its movement on, another Gate (**exit Gate**). If the player succeeds in a **luck roll** (**LR**) against a **2** after entering a Gate, the player may choose its exit Gate; otherwise the exit Gate is randomly determined (and may be the entry Gate). An avatar's relocation from entry Gate to exit Gate is instantaneous, costs 0 MP, does not count as an action, and the avatar may continue movement from the exit Gate terrain hex with any remaining MP. An avatar may use its exit Gate as an entry Gate for another teleportation; however, each **subsequent** teleportation after the first during the **same turn** drains **1 life token** (Part 9c) from the avatar. If used by a band, a Gate will attune itself to a random band member and that avatar must choose the exit Gate and make the required **LR**.

Part 7. Fate

7a. Determining fate

When a player rolls 2d6 for movement, one die is the movement die and the other is the **fate die**. If the dice match (doubles rolled), the player **must** draw a **fate card**.

7b. Fate cards

The deck of **fate cards** is the **Fate Trove**. An avatar may hold only **one** fate card at any time. If an avatar has a fate card when required to draw a new one, the fate card **cannot be used** and must be **immediately exchanged** for a new fate card. Fate cards are not transferable or tradable. Invoking a fate card is instantaneous, does not count as an action, and does not require the avatar to defend in combat (Parts 10d, 10e). Unless stated otherwise on the card, a fate card will only affect the avatar holding the card. There are three types of fate card: **instant**, **invoked**, **lasting**.

> **Instant** Instant cards have their effect the instant they are drawn and are **immediately** returned to the Fate Trove.

> **Invoked** An invoked card has its effect when the player **chooses** to use it. A player may use an invoked fate card at any time except when required to draw a new fate card. Once invoked, the effect is immediate and the card is returned to the Fate Trove.

> **Lasting** Lasting fate cards take immediate effect and their effect **continues** as long as the player holds the card.

Part 8. Creatures and encounters

8a. Creatures

Xulthûl's creeping malevolence has corrupted the natural flora and fauna of Aethos and transformed them into unique and hideous **creatures**. Consequently, there are no "standard monsters" in *Shadows of Malice*™ (e.g., no goblins, no dragons). A creature's nature, strength, and capabilities are determined when it is encountered. The encountering avatar rolls 3d6: 1d6 to determine the creature **type**, 1d6 to determine its **power**, and 1d6 to determine whether it has any **special abilities**.

A creature's **type** is its basic nature. All creatures are one of eight types (table).

A creature's **power** is a measure of its overall strength, fortitude, and prowess in combat.

A creature's **abilities** include any special capabilities it has, such as poison, exceptional ferocity, life drain, and so on. Some abilities may require activation to use (Part 8c).

Creature types

Arboran	Creatures derived from plants, vines, trees, or other vegetation or vegetal material.
Avian	All feathered, winged, warm-blooded, egg-laying creatures.
Ichthyic	All fish, cephalopods, water serpents, and cold-blooded aquatic creatures.
Mammal	All warm-blooded, hairy animals including canines, felines, primates, equines, humanoids, etc.
Protean	Creatures of slime, ooze, mold, and fungus.
Reptilid	All cold-blooded reptiles and amphibians, including lizards, serpents, crocodilians, turtles, frogs, etc.
Sectoid	All insects, arachnids, arthropods, and like creatures with exoskeletons, segmented bodies, or antennae.
Terrovan	Creatures derived from earth, mineral, rock, jewels, gemstones, or metal.

Ferocity

The creature is preternaturally aggressive and attacks with astounding brutality and relentlessness. A creature of power X gains:

$+Xd\star$

8b. Creature abilities

The **ability cards** comprise the **Ability Trove**. Creature abilities are drawn from the Ability Trove as needed for encountered creatures and returned to the trove when the encounter ends. All abilities are assigned a color illustrated by the banner of the card and a unique color icon for players with difficulty discriminating between colors. The ability card will describe the ability and list any modifiers the ability grants the creature. Some abilities have a shuffle icon (▧) in the lower right corner. When an ability with the shuffle icon is returned to the Ability Trove, shuffle the Ability Trove.

8c. Activated abilities

Some abilities require a creature to make a **power roll** (**PR**) to "activate" the ability (e.g., death gaze). If the creature fails its **PR**, it will engage in normal single combat without benefit of the ability (Part 10b). If the creature succeeds in its **PR**, it will use the ability and defend that phase (Part 10e). Creatures may only use <u>one</u> activated ability per combat phase. If a creature possesses multiple abilities that require activation, randomly determine which one it will choose to use each combat phase.

8d. Lairs

A **lair** (🐾) is a location ideally suited as a den or resting place for a creature. Lairs are <u>always occupied</u>. When an avatar enters a lair hex, it will immediately be attacked by the creature that lives there. If an avatar withdraws (Part 10h), vanquishes the creature, or drives it off, a new creature will claim the lair at the end of the turn.

8e. Stocked lairs

All lairs are **stocked** at the start of the game and marked with a stocked lair token 🐾. Stocked lairs <u>always</u> have a treasure item. When the lair's inhabitant is defeated, the stocked lair token is removed and the avatars draw a card from the Treasure Trove.

8f. Creature encounters

An **encounter** is a meeting with a creature. Avatars entering a lair hex (🐾🐾) will <u>always</u> encounter a creature and the creature will <u>immediately</u> attack. Two avatars, therefore, cannot enter a lair together to engage a creature unless they are in a band.

An avatar may seek to **provoke** an encounter on a non-lair hex when it ends its movement on a terrain hex <u>different</u> than the one it started on. To provoke an out-of-lair encounter, the avatar must succeed in a **LR** against a **4**. Provocation may be attempted only <u>once</u> per terrain hex per turn, and only by the <u>first</u> avatar to enter the hex. Although provocation counts as an action (Part 4d), the provoking avatar may still engage in combat if the provocation attempt is successful.

Players use the **Creature Generator** to determine the **type**, **power**, and **abilities** of a creature upon its encounter. For example, suppose an avatar ends its movement on a forest hex and successfully provokes an encounter. For this example, suppose the player rolls a white die for the creature's type, a gray die for its power, and a black die for its abilities. Suppose the player rolls ⚁🎲🎲. The **Creature Generator** shows...

⚁ … the creature is a **reptilid** because the encounter took place in a forest hex, and a "2" on a forest hex corresponds to a reptilid.

🎲 … the creature is **power 3**: It has 6 life tokens, +2 to **CR**s, and delivers an extra +2d★ physical wounds ⊕ when it hits an opponent. This roll would be increased by 1 to 6 + 1 = 7 in a lair hex (🐾 or 🐾).

🎲 … the creature has one ability. This roll is reduced by 1 for each revealed Light Well 🌟 and increased by 1 for each revealed Dark Well 🌑 <u>on the terrain map</u> on which the encounter occurred. To determine what the creature's ability is, the player draws a card from the **Ability Trove**. The player draws a second card if the creature has two abilities.

🎯 denotes a stronghold Guardian (Part 8g).

8g. Guardians, Shadows, Xulthûl

Guardians are forces of nature, **Shadows** are manifestations of Xulthûl's malice, and **Xulthûl** is the Lord of Shadow. Guardians and Shadows are insubstantial entities that take physical form only for combat. Players use the **Creature Generator** to determine terrain-appropriate creature types for these physical forms and draw their abilities from the Ability Trove. Guardians are <u>always</u> power **4** and have **2** abilities. Xulthûl and its Shadows **scale** with the number of avatars in play (Parts 15a, 16a).

Part 9. Living and dying

9a. Life and life tokens

Each avatar begins play with 5 **life tokens** 🟢 that designate the robustness of its physical incarnation in Aethos. Creatures also have life tokens that designate their toughness and fortitude. A creature's life token total is based on its power (**Creature Generator**, Part 8f). Avatars and creatures lose life to **wounds** and **drains**.

9b. Wounds

Wounds 🩸🩸 are bodily damage accrued from battle, traps, fate, and such. Wounds are either **physical** 🩸 or **energy** 🩸 typed. All wounds are **physical** unless otherwise stated. Energy wounds are marked to show the energy type: acid [corrosive] 💥, cold ❄, electrical ⚡, fire 🔥, poison [chemical] 🧪. A physical shield ⊕+X reduces by X all physical wounds; an energy shield ⬜+X reduces by X all energy-based wounds. If an energy wound bears an energy-type icon (e.g., ⚡), the wound is of that specific energy type. If an energy shield bears an energy-type icon (e.g., 💥), the shield is restricted to that type of energy and will not provide any defense against any other type of energy. When an avatar sustains wounds, flip over one of the avatar's life tokens for each wound sustained. Orient the token back with the word "Wound" right-side-up 🔴 to designate the loss as a wound. Wounds are carried until **healed**.

9c. Drains

Drains are direct depletion. Unless stated otherwise, drains deplete **radiance tokens** <u>first</u> (Part 13b), and <u>then</u> deplete life tokens after all of the avatar's radiance tokens have been exhausted. This order of depletion removes the avatar's ability to channel the Light from revealed Light Wells before draining away its life force. When an avatar loses a **radiance token** to a drain, return the token, radiance-side up 🌀, to the **Radiance Pool** (Part 13c). When an avatar loses a **life token** to a drain, flip the token over and orient the token back with the word "Drain" right-side-up 🔴 to show the loss as a drain. Drains cannot be healed and are carried until **restored**.

9d. Healing and restoring lost tokens

At the end of the players' turn, before the Shadows' turn, avatars may recover tokens. Avatars have a base **recovery** 💚 of **1 token per turn**, subject to modification by items and game effects. Avatars must **allocate** each recovery point to heal 1 wound <u>or</u> restore 1d★ drained tokens. An avatar with 2 recovery could <u>either</u> heal 2 wounds, <u>or</u> heal 1 wound and restore 1d★ drained tokens, <u>or</u> restore 2d★ drained tokens. If an avatar skips its **MR** and dedicates its round to recovery, it will gain +1 💚 that turn. Moving on a watercraft reduces an avatar's recovery by 1d★.

9e. Destruction and reincarnation

Avatars cannot die but their bodies in Aethos can be destroyed. When an avatar loses all its life tokens to wounds and/or drains, its physical form can no longer contain its essence and the avatar "**Returns to Light**" in a flare of radiance that consumes its physical form, destroys all its soulshards, and returns all its radiance tokens to the Radiance Pool (Part 13c). The avatar's items, however, may or may not survive its Return to Light. Roll 1d6 for each item to determine whether the item is **consumed**, **remains in Aethos**, or **remains with the avatar** for use in its new incarnation. Items that remain in Aethos may be claimed by band members. At the end of the turn, return unclaimed items that remain in Aethos to their appropriate troves.

Die Roll	Consequence
⚀	Item is **consumed** by the flare of radiance. Return the item to its trove.
⚁ ⚂	Item **remains in Aethos**. The item must be claimed by a band member or else be returned to its trove.
⚃ ⚄ ⚅	Item **remains with the avatar** through its reincarnation.

If its body in Aethos is destroyed, an avatar must spend its next turn incarnating a new one and will return to play on the following turn. If an avatar's physical form is destroyed on turn X, it will incarnate a body on turn X+1 and return to play on turn X+2. Newly incarnated avatars return to play on a random Gate hex with:

1. 5 life tokens, 1d2 of which will be drained 🔴 from the trauma of its destruction and the stress of forming a new physical body,
2. a new, randomly determined mastery,
3. 2 soulshards of a color matching its new mastery needs and 2 colorless soulshards,
4. any items that remained with the avatar through its Return to Light,
5. one radiance token, drawn at random from the Radiance Pool, for each revealed Light Well in the game.

Part 10. Combat

10a. Engaging in combat

A lone avatar will always engage a creature in **single combat**. Multiple avatars **in a band** may choose one band member to engage a creature in single combat or two or more band members to engage a creature in **joint combat**. This choice is made at the beginning of combat. Once initiated, combat continues until one combatant is defeated or **withdraws**. Combat is **futile** for a combatant if it is **impossible** for that combatant to either hit or wound its opponent. **No trades** are allowed during combat.

10b. Single combat

In **single combat**, the player rolls a 1d6 **combat roll** (**CR**) for his avatar and a 1d6 **CR** for the creature. After modifying each **CR** for any applicable bonuses or penalties, the combatant with the <u>higher</u> **CR** **hits** and **wounds** its opponent. In the case of a tie, neither combatant hits or wounds the other.

11

10c. Joint combat

Two or more **banded** avatars may engage a creature in **joint combat**. In joint combat, the creature randomly selects an avatar to attack each phase and engages that avatar in single combat. However, the selected avatar uses the **maximum** of Xd6 as its **CR** rather than 1d6, where X is the number of **non-defending** avatars engaged in joint combat. For instance, if there were 3 avatars actively engaged in the battle, the selected avatar would roll 3d6 and use the largest roll for its **CR**.

10d. Pre-combat and non-combat actions

Once a creature is encountered but before combat phases begin, each avatar may use a book, scroll, or potion to prepare for combat. During a combat phase, an avatar may take one of three **non-combat** actions: withdraw from combat, drink a potion, or read a book or scroll. Avatars engaged in non-combat actions are **defending** during the phase. Item trades are **not allowed** as pre-combat or non-combat actions.

10e. Defending

Avatars and creatures **defend** if they engage in actions other than active combat (e.g., using a gaze attack, reading a scroll). Defending combatants may still be targeted by creatures and sustain wounds and drains. Defending combatants make **CR**s at –1 and deal **no wounds** even if they out-roll their opponent. Any abilities possessed by a defending combatant that trigger on "hit" or "wound" **do not trigger**.

10f. Evading

Some abilities afford an avatar a chance to **evade** their effects (e.g., parasitic). To evade an effect, the avatar must make a successful **LR** against the creature's **power**.

10g. Immunity

Sometimes an avatar will gain **immunity** to abilities and effects of a certain color. This immunity extends only to creature and potion abilities and effects that **directly target** or **directly affect** the avatar. Use common sense when considering immunities: an avatar's immunity to black effects ⬛ will make it invulnerable to a creature's "Life Drain" (a black ability) but will not negate the physical benefits the creature gains from being "Undead" (another black ability).

10h. Withdrawing

An avatar may immediately and fully **withdraw** from combat to a randomly determined adjacent, non-water terrain hex as a non-combat action. The avatar simply leaves combat that phase and cannot be attacked. To withdraw to a <u>specific</u> terrain hex, an avatar must spend 1 combat phase **defending** as it withdraws **and** make a **LR** against its opponent's **power**. If the **LR** is not successful, the avatar cannot disengage from combat that phase. Avatars must withdraw individually and cannot withdraw as bands. All non-Guardian and non-Shadow creatures will withdraw from futile combat with a successful **power roll** (**PR**).

10i. Wounding

All avatars and creatures inflict **1 physical wound** 🔥 when they hit an opponent. Wounds from **consumable items** (i.e., potions, books, scrolls) are taken **before**

physical combat occurs each phase: creatures must <u>survive</u> these attacks <u>before</u> they can engage in combat. Wound amplification abilities, items, and effects increase the number of wounds delivered (e.g., power 2 creatures deliver +1d★ ⊕). Wound reduction abilities, items, and effects (e.g., armor) decrease the number of wounds received to a <u>minimum of **zero**</u>. Effects that trigger on a "hit" activate whenever a hit is scored, regardless of whether or not the target sustains wounds. Effects that trigger on a "wound" activate only when the target sustains at least one wound.

10j. Fighting Guardians and Shadows

If a Guardian or Shadow is engaged in futile combat, it will **defend** for one phase and re-manifest its physical form at the end of the phase with a successful **PR**. When a Guardian or Shadow re-manifests, use the **Creature Generator** to determine its new creature type and draw new abilities for it. A Guardian's or Shadow's accrued wounds and/or drains do **not** change with its new form. If all avatars withdraw from combat with a Guardian, the Guardian will re-manifest healed of all wounds and/or drains when combat is re-engaged. Shadows **cannot** heal wounds or recover drains.

Part 11. Soulshards

11a. The shard bank

A **soulshard** is a crystallized portion of a creature's life energy. The collection of soulshards in the game is treated like a common access bank: new soulshards harvested are taken from the bank and soulshards invoked are returned to the bank.

11b. Invoking soulshards

An avatar may **invoke** a soulshard at any time for its benefit or the benefit of any other avatar in the game. Invocation is **instantaneous** and fully **consumes** the shard (return the invoked shard to the common bank). Each shard invoked must be used for a specific purpose declared at the time of its invocation (see below). Soulshards may not be used to affect die rolls made by non-avatars. Invoking a soulshard does not count as an action and does not require an avatar in combat to defend. Avatars invoking soulshards may still engage in active combat.

Uses for Colorless soulshards ◇

Activate a mastery	Some secondary mastery abilities require a colorless soulshard to activate.
Attract aggression	During combat, an avatar may invoke a colorless soulshard to force the creature to attack it rather than its chosen target. An avatar may only draw aggression to <u>itself</u> with a colorless soulshard.
Modify a die roll	An avatar may invoke a colorless soulshard to modify any one **CR**, **LR**, or **MR** made by itself or any other avatar **before** the die roll is made. The beneficiary avatar gains +**X** in its favor to the die roll for each soulshard so invoked, where **X** = **1** if the beneficiary avatar is **banded** with the invoking avatar and **X** = **1d★** if the beneficiary avatar is **not banded** with the invoking avatar.

Activate a mastery   Some secondary mastery abilities require a specific color of soulshard to activate.

Modify a die roll   An avatar may invoke a colored soulshard to modify any one **CR**, **LR**, or **MR** made by itself or another avatar **before** the die roll is made. The beneficiary avatar gains +**X** in its favor to the die roll for each soulshard so invoked. If the beneficiary avatar is engaged in combat and the shard color matches the color of one or more of its opponent's abilities, the beneficiary avatar will gain an <u>additional</u> +**X** in its favor to the die roll for the shard. **X** = **1** if the beneficiary avatar is **banded** with the invoking avatar and **X** = **1d★** if the beneficiary avatar is **not banded** with the invoking avatar.

11c. Harvesting soulshards

When an avatar defeats a creature or Guardian, it may **harvest** (draw forth) the creature's life essence in the form of soulshards. An avatar may harvest Xd★ colorless soulshards from a creature with X-many life tokens, plus **one additional** shard for each ability the creature possessed. Ability-granted soulshards will be the color of the granting ability (e.g., red abilities grant red shards). Soulshards may be harvested only **once** from a creature and must be harvested immediately upon its defeat. If a creature was defeated by a band of avatars, its shards must be harvested prior to their disbanding. Soulshards may **not** be harvested from Shadows.

11d. Soulshard limitations

Soulshards may be traded and there is no limit to the number of soulshards an avatar may possess. Outside combat, an avatar may invoke any number of shards during a turn. An avatar **engaged in combat** or invoking soulshards on **behalf of an avatar engaged in combat** may invoke only <u>**1 shard per combat phase**</u>, plus 1 additional shard per phase for each **revealed** Light Well in the game (e.g., if 3 Light Wells have been revealed, an avatar may invoke up to 1 + 3 = 4 soulshards per combat phase).

Part 12. Treasure

12a. Starting treasure

Starting treasure should support the desired game difficulty. Some suggestions are:

1. **Hard** game: Each avatar starts play with only its starting soulshards.

2. **Challenging** game: In addition to starting soulshards, each player receives a draw from the Potion Trove and may remove a stocked lair token 🐾 from a game map and give his avatar a draw from the Treasure Trove.

3. **Easy** game: Same as challenging game, but in addition reveal one Well on each game map and draw 1d2 potions and 1d2 items from the Treasure Trove for each Well so revealed. Distribute these among the players' avatars. (Consequences of revealed Wells immediately come into play.)

12b. The "stewardship" scenario
Players may choose to play the "Stewardship" scenario. In this scenario, each City (Part 14a) holds a treasure item left in its trust by past avatars to be claimed by future avatars should they return to defend Aethos. The item is drawn at random from the Treasure Trove when the City is first revealed. The avatar that first reveals the City may claim the item or leave the draw for another avatar.

12c. Item types
There are five item **types**: jewelry ⬤, clothing ⬤, armor and shields ⬤, books and scrolls ⬤, weaponry ⬤. In addition, there are potions (mini-cards). Potions, books, and scrolls are **consumed** upon use and returned to their troves. Jewelry, clothing, armor and shields, and weapons remain in play until destroyed or discarded. Destroyed and discarded items are returned to the Treasure Trove. Each item card has two parts that show the **general** and **condition-specific** effects granted by the item. Potion cards also note usage and effect duration.

Fossilbranch Staff

+1d ★

Against Terrovans and Arborans, the avatar gains: ⬤ +1d2

12d. Acquiring items
Other than starting items and items available from "Stewardship" Cities, treasure items may **only** be acquired from **lairs** and **strongholds**. Creatures outside of lairs will **never** have treasure. Shadows will **never** have treasure.

At the start of the game, all lairs are covered with a stocked lair token 🐾 and have a treasure item hidden inside (Part 8e). When the creature in a stocked lair is defeated, the avatar draws a card from the Treasure Trove and removes the stocked lair token from the map, revealing the (unstocked) lair icon beneath 🐾. Lairs are **always** occupied (Part 8d) and unstocked lairs are still lairs – they are just no longer guaranteed to have treasure. An avatar that defeats a creature in an unstocked lair may still be fortunate enough to find an item (perhaps one just acquired by the lair's new owner). The avatar makes a **LR** against a **5**. If the **LR** is successful, the avatar may draw a card from the Treasure Trove. Only one **LR** is allowed per creature dispatched. If a creature is dispatched by a band of avatars, the **LR** must be made before the avatars disband.

Strongholds do **not** repopulate. Once a Guardian is beaten and its Well is revealed, the stronghold no longer attracts creatures. Defeating a Guardian will grant **1d2** draws from the Treasure Trove **and** **1d2** draws from the Potion Trove.

12e. Trading items
Avatars in the same terrain hex may trade items at any time **except** during combat. No trades are allowed during combat. Avatars may trade items through Gates if each avatar is on a Gate hex and both avatars are able to choose the other's Gate as their "exit Gate." Trading items does not count as an action.

12f. Item limitations
An avatar may hold only **one** item of a given type at any time (e.g., one weapon, one jewelry item). Items of the same type have the same card color and item symbol. An avatar may hold **two** potions at any time, but they must be of **different** colors.

Potions may be freely traded. If an avatar is under the effect of a potion and gains immunity to the color of that potion, the potion effect will be immediately nullified. If **two or more** potions are consumed by the **same avatar** in the **same turn**, each potion after the first will nullify the prior potion's effects and drain a <u>cumulative 1 life token</u> from the avatar (i.e., the 3rd potion consumed drains 2 life tokens).

If an avatar obtains an item of a type it already holds, it must either:

1. return the new item to the Treasure Trove,
2. keep the new item and return its existing item of the same type to the Treasure Trove,
3. keep the new item and give its current item of the same type to a band member,
4. give the new item to a band member.

Part 13. Wells and radiance

13a. The Wells of the Ancients

When an avatar defeats a Guardian and unseals the Well it protected, turn over the stronghold token and **reveal** the Well as **Light** ✳ or **Dark** ✸. Revealed Light Wells bring Light into Aethos: they provide avatars with **radiance tokens**, increase their ability to invoke soulshards, decrease Xulthûl's recovery, and reduce the chance that creatures will have abilities. Dark Wells have been corrupted by Xulthûl's malice and have become conduits of Shadow. Revealed Dark Wells increase Xulthûl's recovery and increase the chance that creatures will have abilities.

13b. Radiance tokens

There are 10 types of **radiance token**, each granting an avatar a unique benefit (see below). Each time a Light Well is revealed, its Light is refracted into the 10 types of radiance and one complete set of 10 unique radiance tokens becomes active in the game. Each player randomly draws one radiance token from this new set of 10 to determine how the Light enhances his avatar's capabilities. The enhancement gained from a radiance token persists as long as the avatar possesses the token. Radiance tokens are not transferable or tradable.

Combat: Add +1 to all **CR**s

Luck: Add +1 to all **LR**s

Energy shield: Reduce total wounds sustained from **all** energy attacks by 1

Energy surge: Increase by 1 the total wounds delivered by **all** energy attacks

Physical shield: Reduce total wounds sustained from **all** physical attacks by 1

Physical surge: Increase by 1 the total wounds delivered by **all** physical attacks

Movement: Add +1 to **all** band members' **MR**s

Life: Count as +1 additional life token

Harvest: Add to harvests +1 soulshard of avatar's choice of allowable color

Recovery: Add +1 to tokens recovered each turn

16

For example, if an avatar drew the radiance token it would gain +1 to **CR**s as long as it held the token. If an avatar drew the radiance token it would reduce by 1 wound all physical (melee) wounds it sustained for as long as it held the token.

13c. The Radiance Pool

After each player has drawn a radiance token from the new set of 10 added to the game, the remaining radiance tokens are turned face-down and form (or add to) the **Radiance Pool**. The Radiance Pool acts as a common bank for radiance tokens active in the game. When an avatar loses a radiance token (e.g., to a drain), the token is turned face-down and shuffled into the Radiance Pool. Restored radiance tokens are randomly drawn from the Radiance Pool. If a revealed Light Well is made Dark, all avatars lose a random radiance token and one complete set of 10 radiance tokens is taken from the Radiance Pool and removed from the game. If a complete set of 10 is not available, take any extra tokens necessary to complete a set of 10 from the avatars (randomly if possible). After removing a complete set of 10 from the game, turn face-down and shuffle the tokens remaining in the Radiance Pool. Any avatars that lost extra tokens to complete the removed set of 10 may then draw replacements for the extra tokens lost from the new Radiance Pool.

13d. Attuning masteries

While on a terrain hex with a revealed Light Well, an avatar may use its action to **attune** itself to the Light. The avatar sets aside its current mastery, all its items, and all its soulshards, then steps into the Light Well and becomes "one with the Light." At the end of its attuning, the avatar reconstitutes a new physical body with all its wounds healed, all its drains restored, and a new, randomly determined mastery. The avatar then returns its old mastery to the Mastery Trove and may reclaim the items and soulshards it set aside prior to attuning.

Attuning a mastery may take up to two actions. At the end of the first action spent attuning, the avatar makes a **LR** against a **3**. This **LR** may not be modified in any way. If the **LR** is successful, the avatar completes its attuning and returns to play; if unsuccessful, the avatar must use its next action to complete its attuning.

13e. Attuning soulshards

While on a terrain hex with a revealed Light Well, an avatar may use its action to **attune** colorless soulshards to its mastery. This changes colorless soulshards into colored soulshards. The avatar may designate as many of its colorless soulshards as it desires to be attuned in a single action.

If the avatar's secondary mastery ability requires a **specific color** of soulshard to activate, attuning will change the avatar's colorless soulshards into soulshards of **that color**. If the avatar's secondary mastery ability requires a **colorless soulshard** to activate, attuning will change the avatar's colorless soulshards into soulshards of the **avatar's choice of any** <u>one</u> **color**. If the avatar has a choice of color, it may choose a different color for each attunement. It could, for example, use one action to change 3 colorless soulshards into 3 red shards and a second action to change 2 colorless soulshards into 2 yellow shards.

Attuning soulshards does not require a **LR**.

Part 14. Cities and Mystics

14a. Cities

Cities are large, permanent settlements that offer **special services** to avatars at no cost. A City's special service is revealed when an avatar first moves through the City's terrain hex and turns its token face-up. An avatar is not required to end its movement on a City in order to reveal the City.

An avatar wishing to use a City's service must use its action to do so and must end its round on the City's hex. An avatar recovering tokens at the end of the turn gains +1 to its recovery if it is on a City hex.

An avatar may only use **one** City service per turn.

City of Alchemy. Avatar may trade a potion or acquire a potion. To trade, the avatar puts one of its potions up against one drawn at random from the Potion Trove and chooses which one of the two to take. To acquire a potion, the avatar surrenders 2 colorless soulshards to the City, then cuts the Potion Trove and receives the potion revealed by the cut. Trading and acquiring potions are two **different** services.

City of Destiny. Avatar may choose to draw a fate card. Normal rules for fate cards apply.

City of Gateways. Avatar may use any Gate to teleport to the City of Gateways without a **LR** and may use the City of Gateways to teleport to any revealed City or Gate without a **LR**.

City of Life. Avatar may heal all its wounds and recover all its drained life tokens. Drained radiance tokens are not recovered.

City of Merchants. Avatar may offer one of its non-potion items for trade. The avatar puts one of its non-potion items up against one drawn at random from the Treasure Trove and chooses which one of the two to take.

City of Shards. Avatar may trade 1 colored soulshard for its choice of any 1 colored soulshard, 2 colorless soulshards for its choice of any 1 colored soulshard, or 1 colored soulshard for 2 colorless soulshards.

Brew Potions. **All** Mystics can brew potions. The avatar surrenders to the Mystic 1 colored soulshard, then cuts the Potion Trove and receives then next potion of a color that matches the color of the soulshard surrendered. The Mystic uses the surrendered soulshard to brew the potion.

Cleanse. A Mystic with the cleanse ability will remove an avatar's curse. Return the curse card to the Fate Trove.

Heal. A Mystic with the heal ability will heal all of an avatar's wounds. This will not restore drained life or radiance tokens.

Restore. A Mystic with the restore ability will restore all of an avatar's drained life and radiance tokens. This will not heal wounds.

14b. Mystics

Mystics are mysterious, hermetic folk that provide helpful services to avatars at no cost. All Mystics can **brew potions**. In addition, each Mystic can provide a **special service** that is revealed when an avatar first moves through the Mystic's terrain hex and turns its token face-up. An avatar is not required to end its movement on a Mystic's hex to reveal the Mystic.

An avatar wishing to engage the service of a Mystic must use its action to do so and end its round on the Mystic's hex.

An avatar may only use **one** Mystic service per turn.

Part 15. The Shadows

15a. Shadows

Shadows are wispy manifestations of Xulthûl's malevolence, phantoms of its malice given substance by the sheer power of its wickedness. A Shadow's power, number of abilities, and spawning life tokens are determined by the number of avatars in the game. Shadows exist for one

Shadow characteristics						
	Number of avatars in play					
	2 or fewer	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7** or more
Power	3	3	3	4	4	4
No. Abilities	1	2	2	1	1	2
Spawning Life	1	1	2	2	2	3

purpose: to find and reveal a Light Well. If a Shadow finds a Light Well, it will use the Well's power to thicken into a skin for Xulthûl. The Shadows' turn follows the players' turn and has two parts: actions in the **Shadow Realm** and actions in **Aethos**.

15b. Shadows in the Shadow Realm

The first part of the Shadows' turn takes place in the **Shadow Realm**, a pseudo-solid dreamspace of ill intent. Events in the Shadow Realm proceed in the following order:

1. If possible, unseal a random sealed Shadow Gate ⊘ in the Shadow Realm.

2. If there is a Shadow 👹 in the Shadow Realm, **add** 1 life token to it and move it one **adjacent land hex** in a direction determined by a 1d6 roll. If the roll would not move the Shadow onto an adjacent unsealed Shadow Gate ✡ and if there are **revealed** Light Wells in the game, re-roll the 1d6 to give the Shadow another chance to reach the Shadow Gate. Do this up to one time for each **revealed** Light Well. If the Shadow fails to reach an unsealed Shadow Gate, it must move in the direction determined by its last 1d6 roll. If it moves onto the **Spawning Pit** 🌀 **add 1 life token** to it; if it moves onto a sealed Shadow Gate, **remove 1d2 life tokens** from it (remove it from the game if it ever has no life tokens); if it moves onto an unsealed Shadow Gate remove it from the Shadow Realm and place it on the Gate hex of a randomly determined terrain map that contains at least one **unrevealed** Well.

3. If there was not a Shadow in the Shadow Realm at the beginning of the Shadows' turn, place a Shadow token on the Spawning Pit with life tokens equal to its **Spawning Life** (table, Part 15a).

15c. Shadows in Aethos

The second part of the Shadows' turn takes place in **Aethos**. **All** Shadows in Aethos get their own round to move and act (players decide the order). Once on a terrain map, a Shadow will target and move <u>directly</u> toward the nearest stronghold with an unrevealed Well. Shadows have 1d2 MP per turn, move freely over water, and pay only 1 MP to enter any hex. Shadows in Aethos cannot use Gates, do not access fate cards, and cannot heal wounds or recover drains. If a Shadow moves into the same hex as a second Shadow, it will absorb the second Shadow (add the absorbed Shadow's life tokens to its own and remove the absorbed Shadow's marker from the game) and continue on its way. Shadows will ignore avatars unless attacked. If attacked, a Shadow will manifest a physical form and engage in combat. Players use

the **Creature Generator** (Part 8f) to determine a terrain-appropriate creature type and draw its abilities from the Ability Trove (table, Part 15a). Wounds that avatars sustain from Shadows count as drains (Part 9c). A Shadow engaged in futile combat will re-manifest into a new creature type with new, randomly determined abilities (Part 10j). A Shadow's life tokens and any accrued wounds and/or drains do **not change** with re-manifestation. A Shadow with no life tokens dissipates and its token is removed from the game. Shadows yield neither treasure nor soulshards.

15d. Shadows and strongholds
Shadows do not trigger stronghold Guardians to manifest. If a Shadow reaches its targeted stronghold, it will use its own life force to unseal the stronghold's Well. Roll 1d6 for the Shadow's action. If the die roll is **less than or equal** to the Shadow's current life total, the Shadow unseals and reveals the Well. If the die roll is **greater than** the Shadow's current life total, the Shadow loses 1 life token and will attempt to unseal the Well on its next turn. Trying to unseal a Well ends the Shadow's round.

If a Shadow reveals a Dark Well, it will randomly target another stronghold with an unrevealed Well on its current or an adjoining map. If there are none, the Shadow will dissipate (remove it from the game), otherwise it will move toward its new target on its next turn. If a Shadow reveals a Light Well, it will use the Well's power to destroy the Well's Guardian, render the Well Dark, and transform into Xulthûl (Part 16).

Part 16. Xulthûl

16a. Xulthûl
When **Xulthûl** takes form in Aethos, Shadows **cease spawning** in the Spawning Pit and all Shadows dissipate. Remove **all** Shadow tokens from the game. Xulthûl's power and number of abilities are determined by the number of avatars in the game: the more avatars, the greater the demon.

Xulthûl's characteristics

	Number of avatars in play					
	2 or fewer	3	4	5	6	7 or more
Power	4	4	4	5	5	5
No. Abilities	2	3	3	2	2	3

Once Xulthûl enters Aethos, there will no longer be sufficient Light Wells remaining to banish it and the players will have to defeat the demon before it can win the game (Part 16d). When Xulthûl manifests, it thickens the substance of its Shadow into a terrain-appropriate creature type with life tokens commensurate for its power (e.g., 8 life tokens at power 4) and a number of randomly drawn abilities determined by the number of avatars in the game (table, Part 16a). Unlike its Shadows, Xulthûl cannot re-manifest: its form and abilities are assigned expressly and permanently to it.

16b. Xulthûl in Aethos
In Aethos, Xulthûl has 2d2 MP each turn, may move freely over water, and treats all terrain hexes as paths. Xulthûl does not access fate cards. Xulthûl can use Gates in Aethos and can control its exit Gate on a successful **PR**. Xulthûl has a base recovery of 2, increased by 1 for each revealed Dark Well on its current terrain map and

decreased by 1 (to a minimum of zero) for each revealed Light Well on its **current** terrain map. If more than ½ of Xulthûl's life tokens show wounds and/or drains at the beginning of its turn, it will recover that turn with +1 💚. If more than ½ of Xulthûl's life tokens show wounds and/or drains while attacking a stronghold or attempting to extinguish a Light Well (Parts 16c, d), it will withdraw (Part 10h) to a random adjacent hex and recover for that turn. Xulthûl will **never** withdraw from combat with avatars.

16c. Xulthûl and strongholds

Upon entering Aethos, Xulthûl will seek to **extinguish** the Light Wells (Part 16d) to secure its permanence in the Realm, beginning with revealed Light Wells. If there are no revealed Light Wells, Xulthûl will randomly target and move toward a stronghold with an unrevealed Well. If a Light Well is revealed while Xulthûl is traveling to a stronghold with an unrevealed Well, it will change course to target the newly revealed Light Well. If Xulthûl passes through a terrain hex containing a City or a Mystic, roll a **PR** for Xulthûl. If successful, the City or Mystic is destroyed (remove its token from the game). If Xulthûl passes through a terrain hex occupied by avatars, it will ignore the avatars unless attacked. If attacked, it will fight.

Make a **PR** for Xulthûl when it reaches a stronghold with an unrevealed Well. If the **PR** is successful, Xulthûl destroys the stronghold Guardian and reveals the Well; if unsuccessful, Xulthûl loses 1d2 life tokens and will make another attempt on its next turn. If Xulthûl reveals a Dark Well, it will ignore it and choose another target. If Xulthûl reaches or reveals a Light Well, it will attempt to extinguish it (Part 16d). If a Light Well is revealed while Xulthûl is attacking a stronghold with an unrevealed Well, it will cease its attack and move to extinguish the newly revealed Light Well.

16d. Extinguishing Light Wells

Xulthûl **extinguishes** a Light Well by overwhelming the Well's Light with the force of its hatred. To do this, Xulthûl must succeed in a **LR** against a **5**. If Xulthûl fails its **LR**, it will lose 1d2 life tokens and make another attempt on its next turn. Xulthûl gains a cumulative +1 to its **LR** to extinguish a Light Well on each attempt after its first (e.g., +1 on its second attempt, +2 on its third attempt, etc.). If Xulthûl extinguishes **all** the Light Wells in the game, the players lose the game and Aethos falls to Xulthûl!

Part 17. An example of game play

Turn 0 (game setup)

Two players, Bryan and Charlie, decide to play a game using two adjoining terrain maps. They place the terrain maps and the Shadow Realm on the table and prepare them for play. Bryan chooses the 🔴 token for his avatar and Charlie chooses the 🔵 token. Next, they each take five life tokens and draw a mastery for their avatar. Bryan draws "Battle Strategist," which uses **blue** soulshards for its secondary ability and Charlie draws "Time Dancer," which uses **black** soulshards for its secondary ability. For their avatars' starting soulshards, Bryan takes 3 colorless and 3 **blue** soulshards from the shard bank; Charlie takes 3 colorless and 3 **black** soulshards. After a little discussion, Bryan and Charlie decide to start the game with each of their avatars having 1 randomly drawn potion and 1 treasure item looted from a stocked

lair. They each draw a random potion from the Potion Trove. Bryan gets "Nightshield Elixir" and Charlie gets "Liquid Life." Next, they each select a lair to loot, remove its stocked lair token, and draw a card from the Treasure Trove. Bryan draws "Cloak of Defense" and Charlie draws "Scalebane." They decide to start play on different Gate hexes to quickly reveal Mystics on two maps. After setup, the game looks like this:

Bryan

Charlie reveals this lair

Charlie

Sealed Shadow Gate

Bryan reveals this lair

Spawning Pit

Land Mass
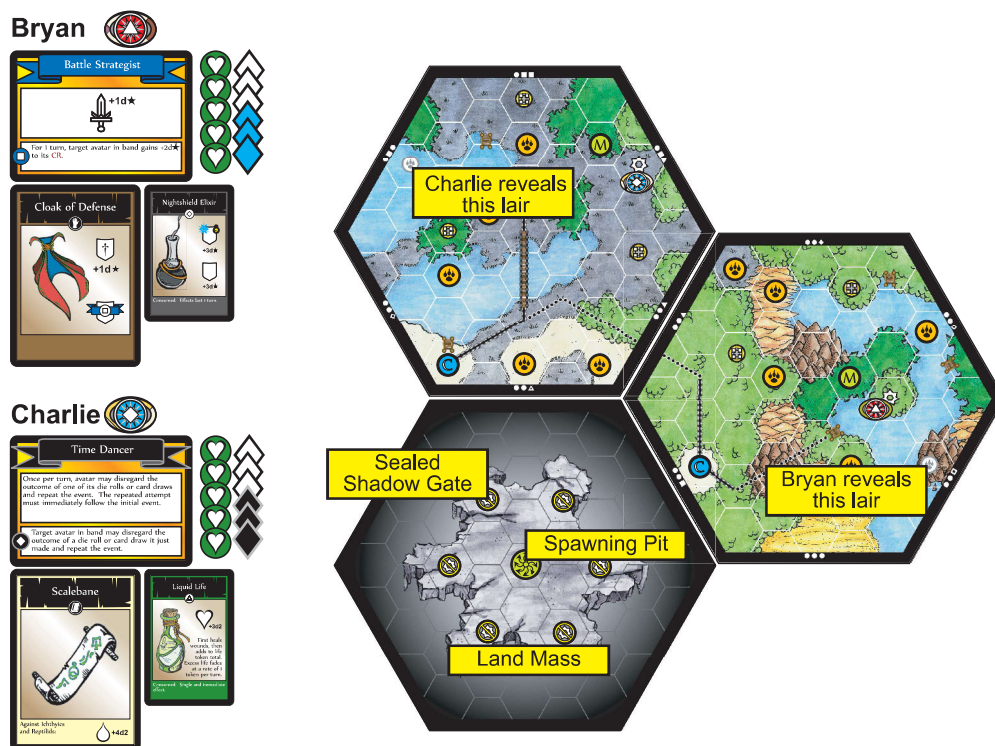
Turn 1

Charlie decides to take his round first and rolls a white die for movement and a black die for fate. He rolls a 1 for his **MR** and a 3 on the fate die. He did not roll doubles, so he does not draw a fate card. His MP = **MR** + 2 = 1 + 2 = 3. That's enough to get to the Mystic, but Charlie would like to use the Gate to rejoin Bryan as quickly as possible, so he decides to use his "Time Dancer" primary ability to reroll his **MR**. This time he rolls a 5 for his **MR** and a 2 on the fate die. Again, he did not roll doubles, so he does not draw a fate card. But now his MP = **MR** + 2 = 5 + 2 = 7. Charlie uses 3 MP to enter the wild hex with the Mystic, reveals the Mystic (turns its token over) to be a **Cleanser**, and uses another 3 MP to enter the swamp hex with the Gate. He uses the Gate. He needs to make a **LR** against a 2 to control the Gate (must roll > 2). He rolls a 6 and successfully chooses his destination Gate – the one on Bryan's map! Charlie ends his round on the Gate hex on Bryan's map with 1 MP remaining.

Bryan decides to roll his **MR** before deciding what action to take. He uses a white die for his **MR** and a black die for fate. He rolls a 2 for his **MR** and a 6 on the fate die. His movement die roll did not match his fate die roll, so he does not draw a fate card. Bryan has MP = **MR** + 2 = 2 + 2 = 4. He has enough MP to move into the wild hex to

reveal the Mystic on his map, but not enough to continue moving since all land hexes adjacent to the Mystic have a MP cost of 2 or 3 to enter and he would have only 1 MP remaining. Bryan decides to pay 3 MP to enter the wild hex. He reveals the Mystic to be a **Healer** and uses one of his **blue** soulshards to have the Mystic brew him a **blue** potion. He receives an "Elixir of Restoration" and ends his round.

After the players end their turn, the Shadows get their turn. The players first unseal a randomly determined Shadow Gate in the Shadow Realm. There are no Shadows in the Shadow Realm, so the players spawn one on the Spawning Pit with 1 life token (spawning life tokens are noted on the table in Part 15a).

At the end of the first turn, the avatars have moved and revealed a Cleanser and a Healer. The avatars and maps look like this:
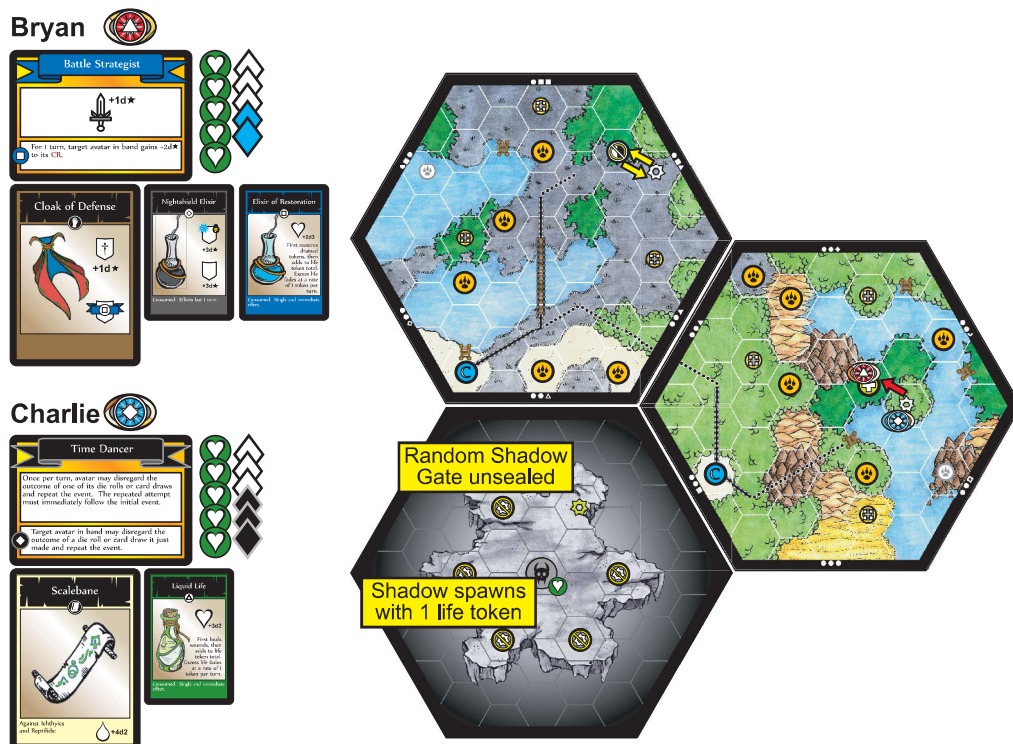
Turn 2

For the players' second turn, Bryan decides to go first. Bryan rolls a 1 for his **MR** and a 2 on his fate die, so he does not draw a fate card. His MP = **MR** + 2 = 1 + 2 = 3. He decides to move one hex into the wild hex below the mountains, to make his way toward the nearby City. Bryan attempts to provoke an encounter when he enters the wild hex. He needs to succeed in a **LR** against a 4 to have an encounter (Part 8f). He rolls a 3 and does not have an encounter.

Charlie rolls his **MR**. He rolls a 4 for his **MR** and a 4 on his fate die – they match, so he _must_ draw a fate card. Charlie draws the "Brutal Assault" card which can be invoked in time of need. The card will affect him (icon is white) and increase his **CR**

by 2d2 for one entire turn. Since it lasts a whole turn, its effects will last for an entire combat. However, if Charlie's **MR** matches his fate die again before he uses the card, it will immediately return to the Fate Trove and be replaced by a new fate card.

Charlie's MP = **MR** + 2 = 4 + 2 = 6. He decides to spend 3 MP moving into the Mystic's hex. Having the Mystic brew a potion would end his round, so Charlie decides against it and spends 3 more MP to move into Bryan's hex. Charlie cannot attempt to provoke an encounter because Bryan was the first avatar to enter the terrain hex and already exhausted that option for the turn. The two avatars declare that they wish to form a band and end their turn (as a newly formed band).

The Shadows get their turn next. Since there are sealed Shadow Gates in the Shadow Realm, the players unseal one at random. Because there is already a Shadow in the Shadow Realm another Shadow will not spawn. The players add 1 life token to the Shadow in the Shadow Realm and move it 1 hex in a random direction on the land mass. The players roll a 6 for the Shadow's destination hex.

At the end of the second game turn, the avatars and the maps look like this:

Bryan

Charlie

Shadow gains 1 life token and moves 1 hex on land mass
(Rolls 6 on 1d6)

Charlie and Bryan's avatars move into same hex and form a band

Random Shadow Gate unsealed
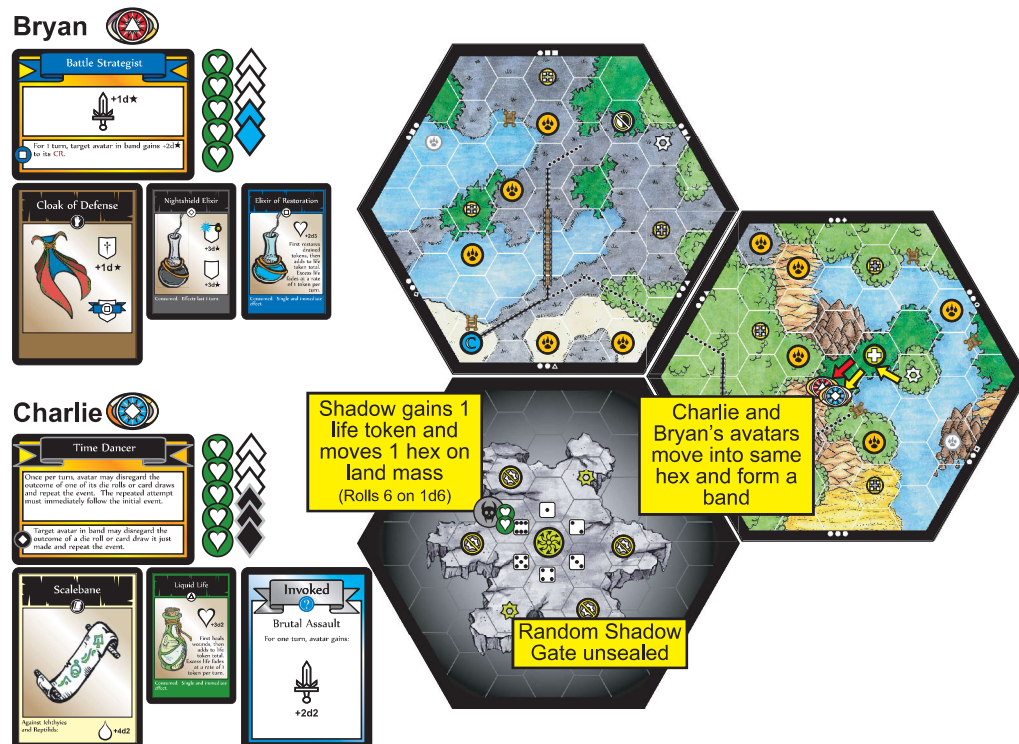
Turn 3
Now in a band, the players decide to attack the lair in the forest to the southeast, near the southern stronghold. Each rolls his **MR**. Bryan rolls a 6 for his **MR** and a 1 on his fate die; Charlie rolls a 3 on both dice. Since Charlie rolled doubles, his "Brutal Assault" fate card **instantly** returns to the Fate Trove and he must draw a **new** fate card. He draws "Curse of Missteps" and suffers a lasting penalty to his movement!

Bryan has MP = 6 + 2 = 8 and Charlie has MP = 3 + 2 – 1(for the curse) = 4. A band's MP is the lowest MP of all its members, so the band has 4 MP. It costs 2 MP to enter a forest hex, so they have just enough MP to move across one forest hex (2 MP) and into the second forest hex (2 MP) to reach the lair! When they enter the lair, its inhabitant attacks! We'll use the creature rolled up in Part 8f: a power 3 reptilid with 1 ability. The players draw the "Glacial" ability card from the Ability Trove: all wounds the creature delivers count as cold energy! Armor won't help the avatars – they need cold shields ⬡ to reduce cold energy wounds. Their positions are:

Pre-combat Phase
Once combat is joined, we go into **combat phases** (Part 4d). Bryan and Charlie both decide to engage the creature in **joint combat** (Part 10c). Bryan also decides to drink his "Nightshield Elixir" prior to entering combat. The potion's effects last 1 full turn, and will therefore last for the entire combat.

Combat Phase 1
The creature randomly chooses to square off against Charlie's avatar this phase. Because Bryan and Charlie are both active combatants engaged in joint combat, Charlie gets to roll 2d6 (one for himself and one for Bryan) and take the higher die roll as his **CR**. He rolls a 3 and a 5, so uses the 5 for his base **CR**. The creature rolls a 4 + 2 (for its power) = 6. Because 6 > 5, the creature hits Charlie's avatar and deals it 1(base) + 2d★(power) wounds. Charlie opts to use the high/low die roll method for the d★ rolls and rolls 2d6. The creature delivers 1 + ⚁ ⚁ = 1 + (1 + 1) = 3 wounds. Because of "Glacial," all 3 wounds are cold energy. The combatants' positions are now:

Combat phase 2

Bryan's avatar invokes a **blue** soulshard to activate its "Battle Strategist" secondary ability to give Charlie's avatar +2d★ to **CR**s for 1 full turn (since it lasts 1 turn it will last the entire battle). Invoking soulshards does not require an action, so Bryan's avatar does not need to **defend** (Part 10e). The creature rolls a die and chooses to attack Charlie's avatar. Charlie invokes a colorless soulshard to give himself a +1 to his **CR** (Part 11b). Neither avatar is required to defend, so both are active combatants and Charlie may roll 1d6 for each avatar and use the highest roll as his **CR**. He rolls a 3 and a 5, so uses the 5 for his base **CR**. Charlie then adds 2d★ for the "Battle Strategist" effect that Bryan conferred upon his avatar and adds an additional +1 for his invoked soulshard. His modified **CR** = 5 (base) + 🎲🎲 + 1 = 5 + (1 + 1) + 1 = 8. The creature rolls CR = 5 + 2 (power) = 7. Since 8 > 7, Charlie's avatar hit the creature for 1(base) physical wound. The combatants' positions are:

Bryan   **Charlie**   **Creature (power = 3)**

Combat phase 3

Bryan's avatar uses a colorless soulshard to draw the creature's aggression, so the creature will attack his avatar this phase. Charlie's avatar is an active combatant, so Bryan rolls 2d6 for his **CR** and uses the larger die roll for his **CR**. He rolls a 1 and a 4, so his adjusted **CR** is 4 + 1d★ (for his "Battle Strategist" primary ability). Bryan rolls a 4 + 🎲 = 4 + 1 = 5. The creature rolls a 6 + 2 (power) = 8 and hits Bryan's avatar. For wounds delivered, the creature rolls 1 (base) + 🎲🎲 (power) = 3 wounds, all cold energy! Because the wounds are not physical, Bryan's "Cloak of Defense" does not prevent any wounds. Bryan's "Nightshield Elixir," however, provides a 3d★ shield against all energy types plus an additional 3d★ against cold and poison. Since the attack is cold energy, Bryan has an energy shield of 3d★ + 3d★ = 6d★ per attack! Bryan rolls 6d6 and gets 🎲🎲🎲🎲🎲🎲 = 1 and suffers 3 − 1 (energy shield) = 2 wounds. Charlie, however, doesn't want Bryan's avatar to take such a hit, so Charlie's avatar uses a **black** soulshard to trigger its "Time Dancer" secondary ability to enable Bryan's avatar to re-roll a die roll it just made. Bryan re-rolls the 6d6 potion energy shield effect and this time rolls 🎲🎲🎲🎲🎲🎲 = 5. Bryan's avatar suffers 3 − 5 (energy shield) = 0 wounds! The combatants' positions are now:

Bryan 🔴 **Charlie** ◇ **Creature (power = 3)**

Combat phase 4

Since the creature is a reptilid, Charlie decides to **defend** and use his "Scalebane" Scroll to deliver 4d2 direct wounds to the creature. Charlie rolls 4d2 and gets ⚀⚅⚅⚀ = 1 + 2 + 1 + 1 = 5. The creature suffers 5 wounds and dies. Because creatures must **survive** any wounds from consumable items in order to engage in combat (Part 10i), the creature cannot attack. The combatants' ending combat positions are:

Bryan 🔴 **Charlie** ◇ **Creature (power = 3)**

Post-combat phase

Charlie's scroll has been consumed and returned to the Treasure Trove, Bryan's potion expires at the end of the turn and is returned to the Potion Trove, and Charlie's avatar recovers 1 wound. Since the creature had 1 yellow ability and 6 life tokens, the avatars harvest 1 yellow soulshard and 6d★ colorless soulshards. They roll ⚄⚅⚅⚀⚅⚄ = 4 colorless soulshards for their harvest. The creature was encountered in a stocked lair, so the avatars receive its treasure item via a draw from the Treasure Trove. They draw "The Red Sword of Rending" and distribute the shards and weapon among themselves…

With the end of combat, the player's turn ends and it is the Shadow's turn once again. There are sealed Shadow Gates in the Shadow Realm, so the players unseal one at random. There is a Shadow in the Shadow Realm, so it gains 1 life token and moves in a random direction on the land mass. The Shadow rolls a 2 and does not land on a Shadow Gate (it would have to re-roll on a 6 to stay on the land mass, Part 15b).

At the end of the third game turn, the avatars and the maps look like this:

Bryan

Charlie

Random Shadow Gate unsealed

Shadow gains 1 life token and moves 1 hex on land mass
(Rolls 2 on 1d6)
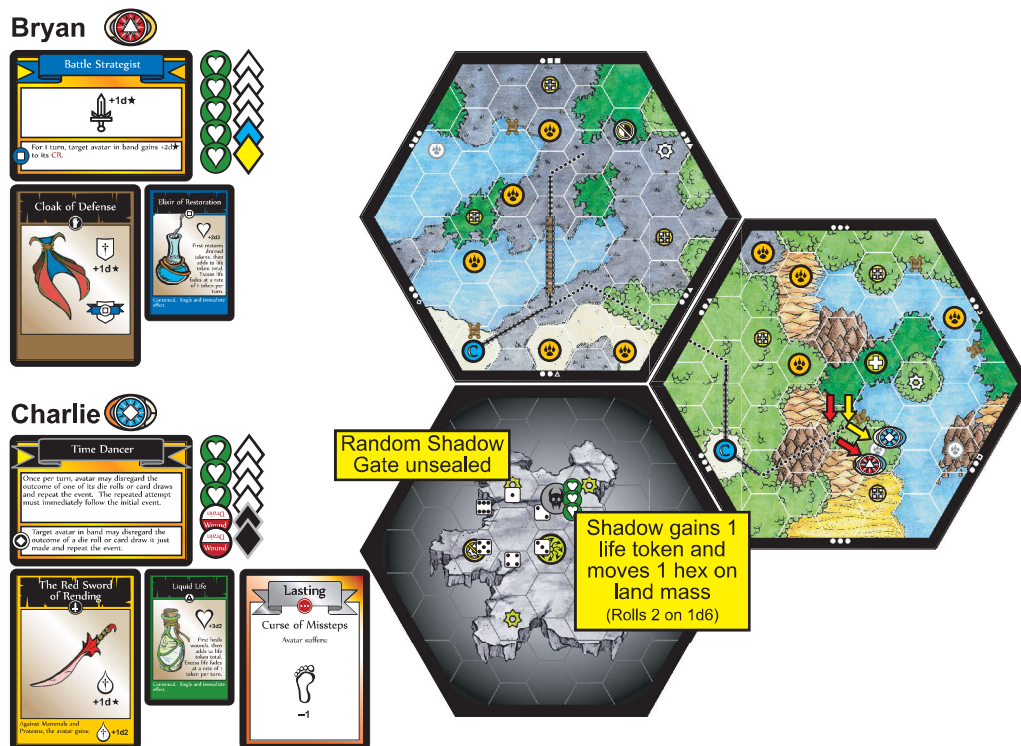
Next, its off to the city for our intrepid avatars, to see what helpful resources they have on their quest... as the Shadows slowly thicken.

Part 18. Credits

18a. Game design
All storyline, game design, component design, and original artwork by Jim Felli.

18b. Playtesters
Special thanks to our most valiant and patient playtesters: Chris and John Andersen; Nick Cerda; Jeff Chandler; Paul Cornwell and his Guy's Night Game Group; Roger Daugherty; Kevin DeFord; Bryan Everly; Chris and Zac Felli; Chip Harner; Tracy Jarrett; Joe, Joey and Adam Johnston; Mark Jones; David Klinestiver; Charlie and Ethan Krone; Bill and Wes Miller; Hal Moore; Bill Morrison; Dan and Nathan Mytelka; Victor Nieto; David Radke; Karl Simmons; J Spalding; J Teller and the Kokomo Area Board Game Association; David and Jace Thompson; Craig Ulander; Adler, Alek, and Devin Weismantel... and everyone else I've bothered for input! Thanks!

Creature Generator

① Creature Nature (Roll 1d6)

	🎲 (1·2·3)	🎲 (·4·5)	🎲 (6)
Plains	Avian	Mammal	Arboran
Water	Ichthyic	Ichthyic	Reptilid
Desert	Sectoid	Avian	Terrovan
Forest	Reptilid	Arboran	Protean
Hills	Mammal	Terrovan	Sectoid
Mountains	Terrovan	Sectoid	Avian
Wild	Arboran	Protean	Mammal
Swamp	Protean	Reptilid	Ichthyic

② Creature Power (Roll 1d6)

+1 (modifier box with icons)

	🎲1	🎲2	🎲3	🎲4	🎲5
Power	1	2	3	4	5
+ to CR ⚔	0	1	2	3	4
+ to Wounds 💧	0	1d★	2d★	3d★	4d★
Life Tokens ♥	2	4	6	8	10

③ Creature Abilities (Roll 1d6)

− 1 × 🟡 (grid)   + 1 × (grid)

for each revealed Well on the map

	🎲	🎲+	🎲 (grid)
No. of Abilities	0	1	2	2

(grid icon) = Stronghold Guardian

Permission granted to copy this image for use in game play.

Icon and Movement Guide

Color key: ⬤◇ Black ⬤□ Blue ▲△ Green ▽▽ Red ✹✸ Yellow ◯ Colorless

Combat: Modifies combat rolls (**CR**)

Energy Wounds: Modifies wounds delivered by energy (non-melee) attacks

Physical Wounds: Modifies wounds delivered by physical (melee) attacks

Energy Shield: Reduces wounds sustained from energy (non-melee) attacks

Physical Shield: Reduces wounds sustained from physical (melee) attacks

Immunity: Immune to abilities and effects of banner (symbol) color

Life: Modifies a creature's or avatar's life token total

Recovery: Modifies the number of tokens an avatar may regain each turn

Luck: Modifies luck rolls (**LR**)

Movement: Modifies movement rolls (**MR**)

Shards: Modifies the number of **colorless** soulshards avatar may harvest from a creature

Gate Control: Removes **LR** to confirm exit Gate and grants automatic Gate attunement*

⚡ **Electricity**

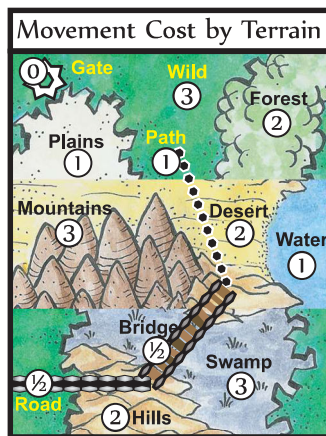🔥 **Fire**

❄ **Cold**

☣ **Acid**

☠ **Poison**

White Icons Affect the cardholder

Gray Icons Affect the opponent

Movement Cost by Terrain

Gate 0 · Wild 3 · Forest 2 · Plains 1 · Path 1 · Mountains 3 · Desert 2 · Water 1 · Bridge ½ · Swamp 3 · Road ½ · Hills 2

*On a map, ⚙ marks the location of a Gate

A **Devious Weasel**™ game