

GOLGOTHA SHOWDOWN

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SLOWLY THE SUN SETS, PAINTING THE SKY WITH RUST AND BLOOD. A HOT WIND BLOWS DUST DEVILS THROUGH CANYONS THAT WERE ONCE THE STREETS OF A THRIVING CIVILIZATION. YET ROTTING CONCRETE AND CORRODED METAL AREN'T ALL THAT REMAIN. IN THE TWILIGHT ARE THE REVENANTS, LOST SOULS WHO WAIT FOR APOCALYPTIC DOOM. IN THE DARKNESS THAT EVEN THEY AVOID, THE HARBINGERS OF THE APOCALYPSE STIR. CAST INTO OBLIVION AT THE DAWN OF TIME, IT IS THEIR TIME TO RETURN AND FORGE A NEW WORLD INTO THEIR IMAGE.

Some proclaim that the end of the world is nigh, others simply say that a dying era is making way for a new beginning. The magic of the past has begun to fade away, the technologies have started to crumble and a new vitality is returning to the land. This is the world of Golgotha Showdown, a game where players take on the role of servitors to banished immortal beings. It is their job to pave the way for their masters to come back into the world by drawing together enough followers and eliminating the servitors of other deities who hope to do the same.

REQUIREMENTS

To play this game, all that is required is a standard deck of cards and a variety of counters of at least five different colours, poker chips work perfectly in this regard. In these rules, White chips represent most followers, Red Chips represent Veteran followers, Blue chips represent Priests, Green chips represent stronghold strength and Yellow chips represent the power on active miracles. Players may choose different colours as long as everyone in the group agrees on the colours used. There are a couple of sheets to photocopy as well, but the only real other requirement is a bit of imagination, and the willingness to have a good time.

AIM OF THE GAME

Scattered across the ruins of the world are scattered settlements that have survived the wars and natural disasters that mark the passing of an age. It is in these scattered locations that the dawn of a new era will begin, and it is here that the faithful and the heroes of a new age will be born. The servitors of the immortals wage a shadowy war over the souls of these heroes.

There are hundred of people in each of these scattered settlements, but only a small percentage has the spark of divinity within their veins. At the beginning of each game, a number of these souls are allocated to the settlement, and each player's mission is to control at least half of these souls as members of their cult.

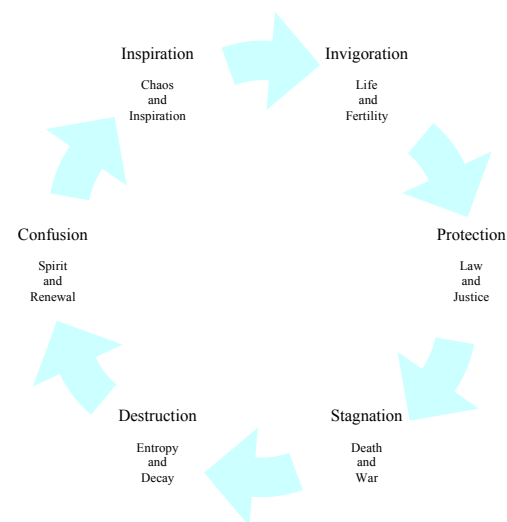
For a short game in the smaller settlements, there will be three souls, plus two per player involved. A medium length game in the larger settlements, there will be will five souls plus four per player involved. Long games in the last remaining towns and cities will have seven souls, plus six per player involved.

CREATING A SERVITOR

Throughout the course of history there have been hundreds of gods worshipped, demons feared and immortals spoken of in legend and myth. Each of these has the chance of returning to the world, and helping to forge a pantheon that will lead the world into a new era. But as powerful as they are, even more powerful forces keep them distant from the mortal realm. They need to work through their servants who have only just managed to breach reality's defenses, and thus the game begins.

The first step in creating a Servitor is to choose which deity they serve. Is it one of the traditional gods of a Greek, Roman or Norse pantheon? Is it one of the Loa of Voodoo rituals? Perhaps an angel or demon of the Judeo-Christian cycle? Each of these beings seeks to manipulate the destiny of the mortal plane, but they all require followers to do so.

After a deity is chosen, the second step is to work out where the follower lies in the primal cycle of the universe. Has the follower been chosen to empower fertility and creation? Are they known for their destructive urges? Have they been charged with maintaining the law? Each of these concepts is a part of the cycle and each of the servitors has a tendency toward a specific one of these.



The final stage in defining a servitor is to choose an elemental affinity. These affinities describe the types of powers they can give to the followers of their cults during the course of the game. There are eight elemental affinities, each of which is opposed to one of the others. These eight combine the elements found in western and eastern cultures, as well as the forces of light and darkness which are also sending their servitors into the world.

Air (Opposes Earth): Powers of Illusion and Movement
Dark (Opposes Light): Powers of Stealth and Corruption
Earth (Opposes Air): Powers of Stability and Strength
Fire (Opposes Water): Powers of Energy and Emotion
Light (Opposes Dark): Powers of Knowledge and Purity
Metal (Opposes Wood): Powers of Death and Decay
Water (Opposes Fire): Powers of Discipline and Time
Wood (Opposes Metal): Powers of Life and Healing

Once these three decisions are made, a player is ready to bring their servitor to the table.

STARTING THE GAME

At the centre of the table will be the communal pool of white poker chips representing the heroic souls in the town. Every servitor begins play by removing one of these communal white poker chips from the pool and adding to their cult a blue one representing a single priest. This is an individual in the mortal plane who has chosen to be a follower the servitor's deity (or someone who has sold their soul in certain darker cases). They also begin play with a stronghold consisting of two green poker chips.

The first turn may then commence.

ROUND SEQUENCE

INSPIRATION

From a communal deck, each player is dealt a number of cards equal to the number of followers in their cult (priests count as two followers for this). This hand of cards is called the Hand of Faith.

PERCEPTION

Three cards are dealt to the centre of the table for all players to see. These three cards are referred to as the flop.

DEVOTION

Starting with the player to the left of the dealer, each player has the chance to play a miracle clockwise around the table. Once all players have had the chance to play miracles, the cycle begins anew and all players have the opportunity to play a second miracle. This cycle continues until all players have passed.

For more information about miracles and the devotion phase, see the next page.

FORMATION

Players now form parties from their available followers. To do this, the chips representing these followers are sorted into a battle order.

Starting with the player to the left of the dealer and moving clockwise around the circle, each player assigns one of three roles to their parties; Recruitment, Assault or Defence.

Recruitment parties should be placed next to the communal pool. Assault parties should be placed forward of the player's hideout. Defence parties should be placed inside the circle representing the hideout. Once all players have assigned and placed their parties, move on to the next phase of the round.

CONFRONTATION

Starting with the player to the left of the dealer, any players who have assigned an Assault party may now choose to attack one of the other parties in play. Possible victims for this assault include any Recruitment party in play, any Assault party in play or the hideout of the player to the immediate left or right.

If another party has been attacked, each player stacks their piles against one another; if a hideout has been attacked, the attacker places their Assault party near the target's hideout.

Starting with the top follower in each pile, a random card is drawn (face down) for each side (veterans and priests may draw two cards). If a Servitor has any cards left in their Hand of Faith, the random card may be replaced by one of these. Points from active miracles are used to modify the ranks of the cards, and once all miracles have been applied, the cards are turned face up. The modified high card wins the battle. The cards are discarded, the loser is sent to the Servitor's Boot Hill and the winner is recycled to the bottom of the battle order pile.

Battle continues in this way until one player runs out of active followers or forfeits the fight.

If a fight occurs at a player's stronghold and they run out of followers in battle (or they simply failed to organise a defending party), they must then present a number of green tokens equal to their stronghold strength. These represent the final defences of the servitor; cards are played against attacking followers as though the stronghold were a follower itself (each level of the stronghold only draws a single card, though this may be substituted by cards from the Hand of Faith).

Each Servitor gets to launch one attack in this manner before play moves to the next servitor around the table. If a servitor has constructed two or more assault teams, then they must wait for all possible players to complete an assault, before play comes back to them for a second turn. Once all assault parties have performed an attack, recruitment parties may act.

If a recruitment party is still in play after the assault parties have made their attacks, they may perform recruitment actions. A recruitment party may still attempt this after being attacked, as long as there are active members remaining in the party.

Play passes around the table in the usual manner, with Servitors choosing which parties to activate. For each active member in a recruitment party, a single card may be drawn (if the Servitor still has any cards remaining in their Hand of Faith, they may play one of these instead of drawing a random card). If this is a face card a Servitor may do one of three things:

- They may draw a single follower from the communal pool and add this to the recruitment party.
- They may upgrade one of their existing followers (turning a follower to a veteran, or a veteran to a priest).
- They may increase their stronghold chips by 1.

Once all recruitment parties have drawn their cards in this manner, this phase of the round is complete.

RESOLUTION

In the final phase of the round, each Servitor gets the chance to reactivate followers who were sent to their Boot Hill.

Proceeding around the table in the usual manner, each Servitor gets the chance to draw a card for every inactive follower (veterans and priests may draw two cards). If a face card is drawn, the follower returns to the servitor's hideout for the next round, otherwise they are returned to the communal pool. Any veterans or priests returned to the pool in this manner are converted back to normal followers.

Once all Servitors have had the chance to return followers to their hideout, all active miracles expire, all cards are returned to the deck and the round finishes with the role of dealer moving one player clockwise around the table.

MIRACLES AND THE DEVOTION PHASE

While the followers wage war in the physical plane, each of the Servitors involved in Golgotha Showdown are capable of drawing on primordial energies to create miracles. These miracles may be used to benefit their own followers, or to hinder the followers of their enemies.

Servitors may draw their miracles from the immortal cycle of the gods, or they may draw powers from the elemental energies that infuse the physical plane.

From the six phases of the immortal cycle, each servitor may call on the miracle associated with their own place in that cycle, and they may also call on the two miracles from the neighbouring parts of the cycle (but with more difficulty). For example, a servitor of C can also call on miracles of E→C and C→L, but doing so is more difficult.

Servitors may also call on the two miracles associated with their element.

ACTIVATING MIRACLES

Whenever a player wants to generate a miracle, they choose two of the cards from their Hand of Faith (face down) with the intention of combining them with the flop cards on the table to make the best hand. Progressing clockwise around the table, each player may add a single card (face down) to the player performing the miracle if they want to help it succeed, or they may add a card (face down) to the difficulty if they want it to fail. Once all cards are added to the respective piles, two cards referred to as the river and turn are added to the flop cards; all cards are turned face up. The Servitor must construct the best hand they can from the five communal cards, the cards from their hand of Faith and any cards contributed from allies. The difficulty is determined by constructing the best possible hand from the communal cards and any cards contributed to the difficulty by opposing players. If the current player's hand is higher, the miracle succeeds.

Players who have just performed a miracle. must discard one of the two cards they used for performing the effect. Players who added cards to the effort (either for or against) lose the cards used in this manner.

The flop remains in play for the whole round, the river and turn are shuffled back into the deck with any expended cards. The next player now gets the chance to perform a miracle by laying down their two cards.

DEGREES OF SUCCESS

If the miracle is successful, it has a success level equal to the lowest ranked card used in the winning hand, plus 1 for every face card used in the hand. For these purposes, an Ace never counts as the lowest card in the hand, and if a face card is the lowest card in the hand, it counts as an 11.

Degree of success is compared to an inherent difficulty for the miracle. Servitors calling miracles from their chosen part of the Immortal Cycle face a difficulty of 2, while calling on miracles from neighbouring parts of the cycle face a difficulty of 6. Elemental miracles have a difficulty of 4. Any degree of success over the minimum activates the miracle and it gains a number of power points equal to the difference between the difficulty and the result. Power points are indicated by using a number of yellow poker chips. A Servitor may attempt to empower the same miracle multiple times, but each time the miracle attempt will have to overcome the difficulty before any additional power points are added to it.

USING ACTIVE MIRACLES

Any miracles which have Power Points on them are considered active. The Power Points on these active miracles may be used to affect the mortal world during the Confrontation and Resolution phases of play. In most cases, removing a power point causes a change in hand rank. Such changes occur on a 1 for 1 basis (eg. Spending 2 Power Points could effectively change a card from a 3 to a 5, spending four points could change a card from a Queen down to an 8). Miracles only affect cards at specific times as indicated in their descriptions.

In some cases, Miracles do not affect the rank values of cards. In such cases, removing a single power point from the miracle will have a specific one-off effect as specified in the miracle's description.

Once a miracle has no more power points on it, it is no longer considered active.

MIRACLES OF THE IMMORTAL CYCLE

Except where otherwise indicated, these miracles may only be played on followers of your own cult, or followers with whom your cult is currently engaged in battle.

The Miracle of Inspiration

Power points from this active miracle may be used to improve the card rank when trying to recover your troops during the Resolution phase.

The Miracle of Invigoration

Power points from this active miracle may be used to reduce your opponent's card rank in battle.

The Miracle of Protection

Power points from this active miracle may be used to negate any modifications made to a card through other miracles.

The Miracle of Stagnation

Power points from this active miracle may be used to reduce the card rank when an opponent you have faced this turn is trying to recover troops during the Resolution phase.

The Miracle of Destruction

Power points from this active miracle may be used to improve your follower's card rank in battle.

The Miracle of Confusion

Power points from this active miracle may be used to increase or decrease the card ranks of any followers in a battle where you aren't involved.

ELEMENTAL MIRACLES

Unless an elemental miracles specifically states that it must be used on your followers or cards, it may target anyone in play. Alliances can be made and broken through the game by offering helpful miracles to allies and inflicting harmful miracles on the enemies of allies.

Air – The Miracle of Illusions

By spending two power points from this active miracle, you may exchange one of your face down cards with any other face down card in play.

Air – The Miracle of Movement

By spending a power point from this active miracle immediately before a battle commences, a follower may be moved from any of your assembled parties to any of your other parties.

Dark – The Miracle of Stealth

A Recruitment party may avoid being attacked by an Assault party by spending a number of power points from this active miracle equal to the size of the party. Preventing further attempts against this party requires further expenditure from this miracle.

Dark – The Miracle of Corruption

Power points from this active miracle may be used to reduce the rank of any card used to regain a follower during the Resolution phase. If a card is reduced below 2 in this manner, the follower joins your cult instead.

Earth – The Miracle of Stability

Power points from this active miracle may be used to improve the card rank of any follower in a Recruitment or Defensive party that has been attacked by an Assault Party.

Earth – The Miracle of Strength

Power points from this active miracle may be used to provide extra stronghold chips until the end of the turn

Fire – The Miracle of Energy

Power points from this active miracle may be used to improve the card rank of any follower in an Assault party.

Fire – The Miracle of Emotion

Power points from this active miracle may be used to reduce the card rank of any follower in a Recruitment party.

Light – The Miracle of Knowledge

Spending 2 power points from this active miracle allows a member of a Recruiting party to draw an extra random card for their recruiting attempt.

Light – The Miracle of Purity

Power points from this active miracle may be used to increase the rank of any card used to regain a follower during the Resolution phase. If a card is increased beyond a King in this manner, the follower returns upgraded.

Metal – The Miracle of Death

By spending two power points from this active miracle, an additional card may be randomly drawn for any member of an Assault team who has become involved in a battle.

Metal – The Miracle of the Undead

If a follower is not regained during the resolution phase, a Power points from this active miracle may be used to increase the relevant servitor's stronghold by 1.

Water – The Miracle of Discipline

Power points from this active miracle may be used to increase the card rank of any follower in a Recruitment party.

Water – The Miracle of Time

By spending a power point from this active miracle during a battle, a follower may be skipped in the battle order pile (and immediately sent to the bottom of the pile), or a follower may avoid being sent to the bottom of the pile and repeat their turn.

Wood – Miracle of Life

By spending a power point from this active miracle, an additional card may be randomly drawn for member of a Recruitment team who has become involved in a battle.

Wood – Miracle of Healing

By spending two power points from this active miracle, a card may be drawn to regain a follower in the midst of battle (as long as a face card is drawn, the follower is returned to the bottom of the pile).



ADVANCED RULE : THE TALES OF GOLGOTHA

Once a group has played a few games of Golgotha showdown, they may be ready for a more comprehensive role-playing experience through telling stories with the rules presented. To do this, the first dealer sets up a scene with a few sentences that describe the town being manipulated by the servitors. Each player has the chance to add a single sentence with every action they perform.

At the end of each round, during the Resolution phase, all players get the opportunity to vote on the player who gave the most interesting sentence or description through the round. The player with the most votes is automatically given one of the followers from the communal pool. If two players have an equal number of votes, they draw random cards and the high card gains the bonus follower.

This can be made even more competitive and challenging in games with more than 4 players by offering two bonus followers to the player with the most votes and a single follower to the player with the next most votes.