TAINTED GRAIL

THE FALL OF AVALON

PRE-KICKSTARTER PROTOTYPE

RULEBOOK

This island was not meant for humans. Looming on the border between our reality and the ancient power known as the Wyrdness, it was populated by a mysterious, legendary race. Humans came here anyway, with their wooden ships, their ambitious king and his fellowship of knights.

Running from a plague ravaging their distant homeland, they took the island piece by piece, raising menhirs of foreboding shape and mysterious purpose. The former masters of the island were wiped out.

Four hundred years later, not even their name remains; the people of Avalon simply call them the Fore-dwellers. The times are harsh. The Red Death is back. The menhirs are dying, and without their power, the land itself crumbles back into the Wyrdness. That's why your home- town has gathered five of its strongest and wisest heroes and sent them to find help in distant Kamelot. As these champions set out to brave the dangers of this wild land, you watch from afar.

You are *NOT* one of them.

Basic Information

Tainted Grail is a solo or cooperative survival exploration game for 1-4 players, set in a dark universe that blends Arthurian legends and Celtic mythology with the unique, dark vision of Awaken Realms artists.

Each player controls one of the Characters – accidental heroes who need to fight for their lives after stronger and wiser champions have failed. Chased by the encroaching, twisted power of the Wyrdness, fighting an uneven battle against depleting resources and challenging Encounters, the Characters set out to achieve the impossible – and die many times in the process.

Each Act of the story is set apart by many years, revealing the long-term consequences of player actions. A deep, branching storyline allows them to tackle problems in different ways, ensuring no two games play alike.

Simple Gameplay Overview

During a standard game of Tainted Grail, you will spend most of your time traversing the dangerous island of Avalon. Your Character model will **Travel** from one **Location card** to another, spending **Energy** and revealing more of the map. Often, to progress further, you will have to enable one of the guardian **Menhirs**, scattered throughout the realm. These ancient monuments go dark after some time, and enabling them requires considerable resources, so plotting your course will test your planning and logistics skills.

At any point, you may **Explore** any Location you visit. This will throw you into the middle of a non-linear, branching storyline that often changes the game world around you, **swapping** some of the Location cards for their different versions.

At the start of each day, a new **Event** card will be revealed, slowly pushing time forward and providing you with new **Tasks**.

While playing, you will also stumble upon many random combat and non-combat **Encounters**. To resolve them, you will use your **Combat** and **Diplomacy** decks, utilizing your tactical and deck building skills.

Rewards from these Encounters will help your Character advance, letting you optimize your two decks, gain interesting **Abilities**, raise your **Attributes**, and – eventually – reach parts of the island that you would not have reached otherwise until you finally arrive at the end of the Act. After that, you will be able to progress to the next **Act** of the story, with a fresh Character, in a different age, on an island that was transformed according to the exploits of your previous hero.

That is unless you first succumb to death or insanity. Their shadow will hang above you right from the start. The Fall of Avalon is not a good time to be alive, after all…

When you return, you will hopefully be wiser and better prepared – and you may even retain some powers earned during previous games.

List of Prototype Components

For final list of components, see the Kickstarter!

Models:

- 2   Guardian Menhirs
- 3   Character Models
- 5   Dials

Tokens & Markers:

- 8   Time Tokens
- 40   Universal Markers
- 3   Health Markers
- 1   Die
- 1   Guardian Die

Boards:

3 Character Boards

Cards

Locations, Events, Encounters and Secrets:
- 29 Oversized Location Cards
- 50 Event Cards
- 25 Gray Encounters
- 25 Green Encounters
- 25 Purple Encounters
- 25 Blue Encounters
- 16 small Secret Cards

Characters, Items:
- 50 Beor Combat & Diplomacy Cards
- 50 Ailei Combat & Diplomacy Cards
- 50 Maggot Combat & Diplomacy Cards
- 10 Beor Advanced Cards
- 10 Ailei Advanced Cards
- 10 Maggot Advanced Cards
- 20 small Item cards

Manual, Rulebook and Sheets:

- 1 Open & Play Guide
- 1 Rulebook
- 1 Exploration Journal – Act I Demonstration
- 3 Character Intro Letters

Image not final, everything is subject to change.

Setting Up Your Game

Important: To learn the game in the most frictionless, simplest way possible, we strongly encourage you to use the **Open & Play** guide that will explain the basics and set you off on a solo journey.

To set up any further games, including co-op adventures, please follow the steps below:

I) Choose your Character and place its appropriate Character Board in front of you.

The Character Board is used for tracking your three major survival meters, holding your resources and tracking the current level of your Attributes. Every Character also has one personal ability and one negative trait printed on their Character Board.

II) Use universal markers to mark the starting levels of Energy (**full**) and Terror (**0**) on the Character Board. Then, use a T-shaped limiter with the Health icon to mark the starting level of your Health.

The icons identifying these tracks are described in the first section of the rulebook, together with any other icons that appear throughout the game.

The T-shaped limiter is used to help you remember two essential rules: the more wounded you are, the less Energy you have to Travel or perform tasks, and the more you are likely to panic!

III) Place universal markers in the slots representing your starting Attributes – marked in gold on your Character Board.

These attributes are used to resolve Combat and Diplomatic Encounters. They are also sometimes tested in other ways. Icons identifying these tracks are described in the next section of the rulebook, together with any other icons that appear throughout the game.

IV) Place universal markers in the large slots of the Character Board to mark your starting resource levels. **Beor** begins with 3 Food and 1 Wealth. **Ailei** begins with 3 Food, 1 Magic and 1 Reputation. **Maggot** begins with 2 Food and 2 Magic.

These Attributes are used to resolve Combat and Diplomatic Encounters. They are also often tested in the Exploration Journal. The Character Board holds up to two markers for each Attribute – if you raise any of them higher, attach an Attribute card to the side of the Character Board.

Important: Your Attributes form three opposing pairs (for example Courage and Caution). Attributes from each of these pair are connected – the Experience cost of raising them goes up every time you advance either one of them. This means developing both conflicting Attributes quickly becomes very expensive!

V) Shuffle the starting Combat deck and the starting Diplomacy deck and place them close to your Character Board. Each should contain 25 cards.

These decks are your basic tools for solving the random Encounters you will stumble upon throughout your journeys. You should make sure that your starting deck does not contain any Advanced cards, distinguished by the Character name and Experience cost. These cards are used for customizing your deck later on in the game.

If there are more than 25 cards, check the decks and remove any Advanced cards that show a special Character-specific decal and an XP cost. These are acquired during the game and should not be in your starting deck.

VI) Divide all Encounter cards into four color-coded decks. Shuffle each of them.

- The **GREEN** deck is mostly used in the wilds and contains natural threats such as wild animals or legendary beasts. Many of these Encounters grant **Food** when defeated.
- The **GRAY** deck contains dangers related to the world of men, such as brigands, rogue knights or people driven to insanity. Many of these Encounters grant **Items** when defeated.
- The **PURPLE** deck contains mysterious and supernatural threats. You will have to discover its significance yourself.
- The **BLUE** deck is a special, non-combat deck. It is used every time you visit a neutral **Settlement** and contains dangerous situations, as well as personal and diplomatic challenges.

VII) Place the Cuanacht Farmhold Location card (number 101) in the middle of your play space. This is your starting point – place your model there.

VIII) Place one Menhir statue with the marker on its base pointing to an appropriate number on the dial: 7 (**1 player**), 5 (**2-3 players**) or 3 (**4 players**).

You may only reveal Locations that are adjacent to a working Menhir. If you find yourself beyond the range of one, you will suffer heavy penalties until you are in range again.

IX) Build the starting section of the map by attaching cards with appropriately numbered keys to all four sides of the Cuanacht Farmhold location.

This means Charred Conclave (104) attaches to its right edge, Warriors' Fair (105) to its left edge, Forlorn Sword (105) to its bottom edge, and Hunters' Grove (102) to its top edge.

When you visit any Location during the game, you will reveal additional, neighboring Locations as long as they are: a) connected with a matching numbered key, b) adjacent to a functional Menhir.

X) Read your Character's introductory letter. Written by your former mentor, who disappeared with the previous expedition, it will reveal more about your situation.

XI) Build your starting Events deck. You will reveal one card of this deck each day. A starting card for each Chapter instructs you how to stack the cards. For example, Events deck for Chapter 1 should contain:

- **Act 1, Chapter 1: Part I**
- 2x Random Event (1 for 2-3 players, 0 for 4 players)
- **Act 1, Chapter 1: Part II**
- 1x Random Event (-1 for 3+ players)
- **Act 1, Chapter 1: Part III**
- 1x Random Event (0 for 3-4 players)
- **Act 1, Chapter 1: Part IV**
- 8 Random Events
- **Act 1, Chapter 1: End**
- **Act 1, Chapter 1: Part V**

If you complete the first Chapter, an Event card will instruct you how to construct the next part of the deck.

XII) The first day of your journey has started! Familiarize yourself with the Icon Guide below or head directly to the Turn Sequence description further ahead – and begin your journey.

Hint: For the first several turns, please keep your Help Card handy and perform the listed steps one by one. A new player can easily forget about important actions, such as incrementing each Dial or revealing a new Event card at the start of each day.

Survival Tracks, Resources, Attributes

I) Survival Tracks

Energy – your basic resource that renews each day. Most in-game actions – from Travel to Combat and Exploration – deplete your Energy. Wounds and afflictions limit your Energy too. Limping along half-dead, you won't be able to do as much as you would when healthy and rested.

The last two slots of the Energy track are red. If the Energy marker reaches one of them, you will become **Exhausted**. This will negatively influence your performance and make you regenerate less Energy the next day. Despite that, Exhausting yourself is sometimes necessary to avoid something even worse!

Health – your physical condition. When your Health runs out, you start dying. To represent this, you will be asked to attach the "You Are Dying" card to your Character Board and enable the additional rules found on this card.

Your Health track is linked with your Energy and Terror tracks. You can never have more Energy than Health, and having more Terror than Health means you are susceptible to Panic. Don't worry if that sounds complicated for you – a special T-shaped piece you use as a Health track marker will make you aware of these two thresholds!

Terror – mental trauma, stress, and insanity. If your Terror marker reaches the two red slots, you start to go insane. To represent this, you will be asked to attach the "You Are Going Insane" card to your Character Board AND you will be plagued by destructive nightmares whenever you rest.

Additionally, if your Terror is higher than your Health, you Panic and draw 1 less card during Encounters.

II) Character Attributes

Aggression <-> Empathy

Courage <-> Caution

Practicality <-> Spirituality

These six basic attributes, divided into three opposing pairs, are what defines your Character. They are used during various Encounters and may open up different story events or solutions when Exploring Locations. After you raise any Attribute to 2, every subsequent point of this Attribute will let you choose a special, useful Ability card that attaches to the side of your Character Board, next to the Attribute.

Important: The higher the Attribute, the more Experience you need to buy another point. These costs are determined separately for each of the three conflicting Attribute pairs. This means the more points you have in Aggression, the more expensive any Empathy upgrades will become! You may find more details in the "Character Advancement" section.

III) Resources

There are many expendable resources your Character may gather and use throughout their travels.

Food – at the end of each day, your Character will consume one unit of Food. Without Food, you won't be able to rest and regenerate!

Wealth – gold, gems and other riches that may help you buy life-saving items and equipment.

Reputation – your fame and glory; if you have many Reputation points, people of the island will often go out of their way to help you!

Magic – supernatural power that might help you during Encounters and is often required to enable Menhirs.

Experience – spent on raising your Attributes and buying new Combat and Diplomacy cards that greatly increase your chance of survival.

IV) Location Card Symbols

Each Location card in the game contains up to three special Seals next to its name. They are described below.

Menhir – this Location contains a Menhir you can activate. During the game, you can only place Menhirs on Locations with this symbol!

Vision – if you end your day in this Location, prophetic Dreams (or horrible Nightmares) will come to you in your sleep.

Settlement – some actions may only be performed while in (or out of) Settlements. Additionally, when entering any Settlement other than your own, you need to draw & resolve a Blue Encounter card.

IV) Other Components

Menhir model: ancient monuments that need to be enabled to ensure safe Travel.

Grail Dial: an octagonal plastic token with numbered sides , used in multiple ways:
- Placed under a Menhir, it shows how long until it becomes inactive.
- Placed under incapacitated Characters in co-op games, it shows how long until they die.
- Placed under a Quest token, it may count down time, count up the Quest resource or represent many other quantifiable objectives.
- Some cards and skills require you to toss the Dial and do different things, depending on the results.

Turn Sequence

I) Start of the Day

- **Reduce every Dial** present on the board by 1. This includes Menhir Dials, Time Marker Dials, and Dials under incapacitated Characters (co-op only). **Skip this step during the first day of your adventure!**
- **Reveal and resolve the next Event card.** If it is an Ongoing Event (marked with a padlock icon), place it on your Ogoing Events pile, above the Events Deck. Unlike regular Events that stay active for one day, Ongoing Events remain on the table until a moment specified on their cards.
- (CO-OP) If there are any Encounters left on the map (usually creatures that were not defeated yet), roll a Direction Die for each of them and move them accordingly.
  - *See Combat Keywords: Guardian for more information.*
- (CO-OP) **Players discuss their plans for the following day.** Remember: you will win or lose together, so careful planning and logistics are necessary!
  - *Resolving Encounters or exploring dangerous Locations together can really boost your odds. Additionally, Characters in the same Location can assist each other, helping them pay any cost.*
  - *On the other hand, the more of you there are, the quicker you need to move. Parting ways may sometimes be necessary to cover more ground.*

II) During the Day:

Players perform any of the actions listed below, one at a time, in any order, until everyone passes or runs out of Energy.

- **Travel** – costs 1 Energy. Move your Character to any adjacent Location that is connected with numbered keys to your current Location. Then, check if this move reveals any new Locations or triggers an Encounter (see the "Map & Locations" chapter).

- *You can only move in straight lines. No diagonal Travel allowed!*
- *If the Locations are adjacent, but there's no numbered key between them, it means you can't Travel from one to the other (usually due to natural features such as mountain ranges, walls or wide rivers).*
- *(CO-OP) If you Travel in a Party, any automatic Encounter or Exploration triggered by your new Location has to be resolved as a Party too!*

- **Explore** – costs 1 Energy. Flip your current Location card and read the instructions on the back.
  - *Every Location contains plenty of lore, secrets, and quests. Exploration is your primary way of discovering them. Some cards are self-contained, but others will point you to specific parts of the Exploration Journal for more decisions and options.*
  - *If there are multiple models on the card, and flipping it would be impractical–you can go directly to the Exploration Journal! Every Location's Journal entry starts with the same text which you can find on the back of the card.*
  - *Whenever you reach the "Exploration ends" sentence, flip the Location card back and continue the game.*

- **Location Action** – free. Each of the Location cards contains one Action, clearly visible on its front. Activating this Action is possible whenever a Character or a Party is in this particular Location and is not involved in Exploration or an Encounter.
  - *Location-based actions are important, as they often let you gather or exchange critical resources. Try to keep an eye on them and plan your Travel in advance.*
  - *Instead of a Location Action, some Locations cards have Events that trigger automatically as soon as you enter – they are marked with a white lightning sign. There is no way to avoid these Events, so tread carefully!*

- **Enable a Menhir** – free. If the Location you're in has a Menhir icon, it contains one of these ancient monuments. Surveying it is free and will let you know what resources or special skills you need to enable this Menhir. If you decide to do this, simply go to this Location's Exploration Journal and read the Menhir section.
  - *Always keep in mind which Menhir you plan to enable next and what resources you need to gather to do this!*

- **Character Action** – cost varies per Character. Every Character has a personal Action on the Character Board, to the left of his or her name. Activating this Action is only possible outside of Encounters and Exploration. Only your Character can use this Action, but others may help pay the Energy cost if they are in the same Location. However, the Character performing the Action ALWAYS must pay at least 1 Energy.
  - *This way you can use some powerful abilities more often. For example, if three Characters are in the same Location as Beor, they can help him cover the significant cost of his Crafting.*

- **(CO-OP) Form a Party** – free. Whenever two or more Characters find themselves in the same Location, they may decide to form a Party. Put them in base-to-base contact. From now on, they Travel, Explore and resolve any Encounters together, assisting each other.
  - *If you're in a Party with another Character, you may spend your Energy or any other resource **instead of another Party member!** For example, you may help your exhausted companion Travel further, perform Exploration or even launch special attacks in Combat.*
  - *Characters in a single Party can trade Food, Wealth and Items at any time, as a free action, unless they are involved in an Encounter.*
  - *Traveling as a Party is safer and more beneficial, but when you're pressed for time, splitting might be more effective!*

- **(CO-OP) Disband a Party** – free action. Whenever any of the players decides to go on alone, the Party is automatically disbanded UNLESS it is already involved in Exploration or an Encounter. In such a case, you need to

finish this Encounter or Exploration together!
  - *The only time when a Party can be disbanded during Exploration is when one of the Characters is unable to pay the cost of progressing to the next part of the Exploration event and no one is able or willing to help them pay. For example: if an Exploration event requires everyone to pay 1 Energy and only one Party member has a point of Energy left.*
  - *In such cases, players have to choose one of two options:*
  - *Everyone ends the Exploration immediately.*
  - *Characters unable to pay the costs are dropped out of the Party. The remaining Characters proceed with the Exploration.*

III) End of the Day

The day ends every time all Characters have passed or ran out of Energy. Perform all of the following with every Character, in any order.

- **Consume 1 Food**, then restore 1 Health and lose 1 Terror. If you don't have enough Food, drop your Energy to 0 (and if it's already at 0, lose 1 Health instead).
  - *Remember that Characters in the same Location might share Food and other resources between them as a free action!*
- **Restore all your Energy.** If you are Exhausted (your Energy marker is in one of the red slots), restore your Energy up to 4, instead of "Full".
- **Advance your Character.** If you have any Experience points, you may now spend them to raise your Attributes, gain new Abilities or add new Combat & Diplomacy cards to your deck. See the "Character Advancement" section for details.
- If the Location you're in has a Visions icon, open its Exploration Journal and **read the Dream** section.
  - *Dreams often provide helpful tips or reveal more of the lore and story.*
- If your Terror marker is on one of the red slots (the „YOU ARE GOING INSANE" card is attached to your Character Board), instead of a Dream, **read the Nightmare** and apply any rules found there.

Map and Locations

When Traveling, remember that you can only Travel between Location cards connected with a number key. If two lands are adjacent, but there are no number keys on their edges, it means this route is blocked (usually by natural features such as mountain ranges, coves or steep cliffs). You have to find some other way!

Whenever you arrive in a new Location during the game:

• Attach further Location cards to the edges of your new Location, matching their numbers with the number keys visible on the edge of your Location.
  ◦ *For example: if the key on the edge of your Location shows "200", attach the card with the main number key "200" there.*

  Important: You may **ONLY** attach Locations that are adjacent (either in a straight line or diagonally) to an **ACTIVE** Mehir!

◦ *For example, when you enter a Location card on the edge of a Menhir's range, you won't be able to attach a new Location to at least one of its sides.*
◦ *This also means at the start of the game you will be limited to your hometown of Cuanacht (101) and EIGHT Location cards surrounding it. You cannot attach any other Location Cards, as they would be too far from Cuanacht's Menhir!*

• Check whether your arrival triggered an automatic Event. Location cards marked with white lightning contain an unavoidable Encounter, Exploration or other action that triggers as soon as you enter.
• If your new Location has a blue skull next to the Settlement icon, it means it contans a neutral Settlement - draw & resolve a Blue encounter after entering this Location!

1 – Your Character Model
2 – Your Travel
3 – Active Menhir
4 & 5 – Attach these Location cards as you arrive in your new Location (their Location Numbers match the Number Keys on the edges of your Location card AND they are adjacent to an active Menhir).
6 – This Location card won't be attached *(its Location Number matches the Number Key on the top ede of your Location BUT it wouldn't be adjacent to an active Menhir. This place is plagued by Wyrdness and too dangerous for Travel!)*

Wyrdness and Guardian Menhirs

Whenever a Menhir goes out (the Dial reaches 0), remove this Menhir's model and its Dial from the Location card. Then, remove any Location cards that are no longer in range of any active Menhir (they are more than 1 slot away, both diagonally and in a straight line, from one).

These parts of the land sink into primal force of the Wyrdness - except for small, isolated pockets of reality left around disabled Menhirs or powerful relics.

Any Characters present in any removed Location

If the last Menhir on the map goes out, do not remove any Location Cards. The Characters may continue to act in these Locations, but they lose 2 Health and gain 2 Terror at the start of each day – until they die or enable one of the Menhirs.

• Remember: you don't have to wait until a Menhir goes out to reactivate it. Activating a Menhir that's still on the table has the same cost as activating a disabled Menhir - and it will reset the Menhir's Dial to its starting position. Any days remaining on the Dial before

Combat

Starting (or Avoiding) Combat

In Tainted Grail, Combat begins once you draw any of the Combat Encounters, divided into three colored decks (Red, Green, Purple) – or stumble upon a Combat Encounter printed in the Exploration Journal.

Important: Throughout your travels, you may discover enemies far too difficult for your current Character to defeat. If that happens, do not hesitate to flee. You will only lose 1 point of **Energy** and receive **one** attack from this enemy. If you can't (or won't) pay the **Energy** cost, you will receive **two** attacks instead. Combat is then terminated–put the Encounter card on the bottom of its deck.

Discretion is the better part of valor! A successful adventurer knows how to assess his chances and picks his encounters carefully.

The attacks you suffer while fleeing are selected just like regular attacks during Combat –pick them from the Combat Table on the Encounter card, based on the current Value of your Combat Sequence. All of this is explained later, but it basically means it might often be beneficial to deal some hits to weaken your enemy or use some defensive cards before running away.

Combat Overview

Combat in Tainted Grail is a tactical confrontation that requires you to cleverly build a chain of cards strong enough to defeat the AI-controlled opponent, while handling the counter-moves and surviving any incoming attacks.

You and your enemy will take alternating turns. During your turn, you may play your Combat cards, connecting them with at least one **Key** to the card located before it. This creates a long chain of cards called the **Combat Sequence**. To win, the total **Value** of your Combat Sequence has to match (or be higher than) the enemy **Value**, listed on the enemy Encounter card.

During the enemy turn, the opponent will deal one attack out of several possible listed on the Encounter card. This will often **damage** your Health or **counter** some cards from your Combat Sequence, hindering your plans.

Important: Only the part of your Combat Sequence directly connected to the Encounter card is considered **active**. If any gaps open in your Sequence (usually due to enemy counters), cards located after this gap become **inactive**, until you find a way to reconnect them. **Inactive** cards do not contribute any Value. Additionally, any effects listed on them are disabled.

1 – Enemy Value (the difficulty of this Encounter – to win, the total Value of your Combat Sequence needs to reach this number)

2 – Enemy Vulnerabilities (the first card in your Sequence needs to connect with at least one of these keys)

3 – Enemy Abilities (special traits of this enemy)

4 – Combat Table (use it to determine which attack the enemy performs during his turn)

5 – Reward (what you get for defeating this enemy)

6 – Threats (these are the Keys this card can connect with)

7 – Openings (these Keys determine which cards may be placed after this one)

8 – Card Value (when attached, the card contributes this much to the total Value of your Combat Sequence)

9 – Magic (it is a special type of Key, not tied to any Attribute; whenever you attach a card using the Magic key, you need to pay 1 Magic)

Preparation Phase:

Set the Encounter card so that you have plenty of space to the right of it – that's where you will build your Combat Sequence.

Put the Item card of any Weapon, Shield, Armor or Follower you'd like to use in this Encounter under the Encounter card. One Character may only use one card with a specific keyword in a single combat (one Weapon, one Shield etc.).

I) Your Turn – Draw & Preparation Phase:

Draw three cards from your Combat deck. Lower this number by 1 for each additional player in Combat – but you should always draw at least one card.

- If you don't like your starting hand, you can discard it and draw a new hand with one less card. You may repeat this until you have only one card left in your hand - but only at the start of the Combat!

Draw any extra cards granted by card effects, Items or Abilities. Additionally, draw an extra card if you Passed your last turn.

If you have any cards with Preparation keywords and Time Tokens on them, remove these Time Tokens and perform the actions listed after the Preparation keyword.

II) Your Turn – Building your Sequence:

Players place any number of Combat cards in Sequence:

- The first Combat card you play has to match at least one of its Threat Keys (visible on the left side of the Combat card) with at least one enemy Vulnerability (visible on the right side of the Encounter card).
- Each Combat card you play after that has to match at least one of its Keys with a Key on the card before it.

- **IMPORTANT:** Any Keys representing Character Attributes that your Character doesn't have (for example [🖐🖐] Key if you only have 1 point of Courage) are inactive on the Combat cards!
  - *This means the card you play has to both connect with at least one Key to the previous card AND this Key has to be covered by your current Attribute levels.*
- If you play a card into a gap in the Sequence (often caused by an enemy counter):
  - *The card has to connect to the card on its left with at least one Key.*
  - *If the card doesn't connect to the card on its right, discard the card on the right and any other cards located after it. The card you have just played should now end your Sequence.*
- After you've successfully placed a card, its card effect becomes active. Read it & apply when necessary.
- If you can't or won't place any Combat cards in this phase, you may Pass and go to the next phase. This will allow you to draw one extra card next turn!
- At any point in this phase, you may discard the last (active or inactive) card from your Sequence, and repeat this any number of times.
- At any point in this phase, you may decide to flee (see: Avoiding Combat above).

III) Your Turn – End of Turn:

Sum up the total Value of cards in your Combat Sequence. Remember to only count the active cards and include any Ability- and Item-related bonuses. If your Value is equal to (or higher than) the enemy Value, listed on the Encounter card, YOU WIN!

- Apply any rewards listed on the Encounter card, share any loot, and then put the card at the bottom of the appropriate Encounter deck. Shuffle your Combat deck (including any discarded cards) and continue the game.

If you have not won yet, you may choose one Combat card and keep it in your hand. Discard any other Combat cards and proceed to the Enemy's turn.

IV) Enemy Turn – Choosing the Attack:

Use the total value of your Combat Sequence to find the enemy Attack in the Combat Table on the Encounter card.

- As the Value of your Sequence grows, opponents start to react differently! Some get weaker due to wounds and tiredness. Some enrage and become stronger. Others might run away after you gain a certain advantage!
- **Advice:** When growing your Combat Sequence, always have an eye on the opponent's Combat Table! It may contain attacks or counters you'd rather avoid. Simply rushing towards the highest possible Value is often not the optimal approach – you need to have the opponent's response in mind when planning your moves.

V) Enemy Turn – Attack:

Perform the enemy attack selected in the previous step.

- The enemy attack will usually deal some Damage and then counter one (or more) of your cards.
- Lower your Health by the amount of Damage received.
  - *Remember that reaching 0 Health does not kill you outright. Attach the "You are Dying!" card to your Character Board and use its rules from now on. The Combat continues until you die or decide to flee.*
- Then, remove from your Sequence any cards that have been countered.
  - *DO NOT move any other cards in your Sequence. If a card is countered, you should leave its place empty.*
  - *When resolving counters, only count the cards physically present in the Sequence (and not the gaps). For example, if the enemy "counters the 2nd card" and the second slot in your Sequence is already empty, counter the next available card instead.*
  - **Important:** *After you've selected the attack, any further changes to the Value of the Sequence do not matter! For example, if the enemy attack counters one of your cards,*

lowering your Value, do not interrupt the attack to select another one from the Combat Table!

VI) Proceed to the Start of Your Next Turn!

Magic in Combat

Magic Keys are present on both Combat and Diplomacy cards. They will help you better handle Encounters your Character might be ill-equipped to deal with (for example: Combat for non-combat Characters or Diplomacy for a combat-focused one).

Unlike any other card Keys, Magic always comes at a cost. To connect two cards using the Magic Key, you **always** have to spend 1 point of Magic.

Cooperative Combat

If a Party of more than one Character is present during Combat, the following applies:
- At the start of the turn, each player draws 1 less card (but never less than 1).
- Players construct their Combat Sequence together, playing their cards in any order.
- Any cost of the played card needs to be paid by the player who plays the card.
- Any damage or attacks apply to all players.
- This means, the total damage scales up! This is balanced by the fact that the Party has more cards, more Attributes and more flexibility.
- Resolve any counters only once – since they apply to the single Combat Sequence shared by all players.

Special Keys

Some Combat cards contain special types of Keys – you can find their explanation below.
- **Double Key:** this Key has a higher Attribute requirement and cannot be attached to a single Key. To use this key, you need another Double Key or a Plus Key (see below).
- **Plus Key:** there's a rare type of Key with a plus symbol next to the Attribute icon. This key matches any other Keys of the same type (regardless if they are single or double). Additionally, it doesn't have any Attribute requirements!

Combat Keywords

Some Combat cards and Encounter cards contain special keywords – you can find their explanation below.
- **Preparation:** Place a Time Token on this card. The effect listed after the Preparation keyword becomes active only after you remove the Time Token – usually at the start of your next turn.
- **Guardian:** This dangerous enemy will keep roaming the area even after you flee, looking for new intruders to fight. If you fail to defeat this Encounter, place its card on the Location where you have triggered it. At the start of each day, roll a Direction Die, and move the Guardian accordingly.
  - *If the Guardian moves to an unrevealed Location card, discard him.*
  - *If the Guardian stays in the same Location and there are any Characters present there, immediately start the Encounter (all Characters present in this Location have to fight together).*
  - *The Guardian will never Travel to a Settlement. If your Direction Die roll sends him off to one, the Guardian will stay in its current Location instead.*
  - *If the Guardian enters a Location with any Character (or a Character enters the Guardian's Location at any point of the game), it immediately triggers the Encounter.*
  - *Once the Guardian is defeated, discard its card.*

Diplomacy

Starting (or Avoiding) Non-Combat Encounters

In Tainted Grail, not all Encounters end in Combat. There is also a separate, blue deck for dangerous situations and diplomatic challenges your Character might have to navigate throughout the land. They play out like Combat (with one key difference described later). Each Character has a personal Diplomacy deck to handle them.

A Non-Combat Encounter begins once you draw any of the **Blue** Encounters – or stumble upon one of them in the Exploration Journal.

- Not all such Encounters might be winnable for your Character. If you're an aggressive brute with little empathy, handling the intricacies of a family intrigue or solving a crime puzzle might prove too much. In such case, you may always abandon the Encounter – simply apply the penalty listed in the "Lose" section of the Encounter card, put the card at the bottom of the blue deck and continue your game.

Diplomacy & Blue Encounters

Diplomacy in the Tainted Grail is a tactical confrontation that requires you to build a chain of cards in a way that will push the marker on the **Affinity track** of the Encounter to the "Success" slot. In the meantime, the AI-controlled opponent will push the marker in the opposite direction while performing counter-moves.

Some Blue Encounters allow for two alternative approaches or have several numbered **Stages**, each of them requiring you to "win" the Affinity track game a second (or a third time) in a row under different conditions.

- *For example: when apprehended by an enraged crowd that accuses you of murder, you might first be asked to calm the situation down using your Empathy, and then to prove your innocence utilizing your Caution.*

During a Blue Encounter, you and the opponent will take alternating turns. On your turn, you may play your Diplomacy cards, connecting them with at least one **Key** to the card located before. This creates a long chain of cards called the **Diplomacy Sequence**. Each card you add might also move the marker on the Affinity track up or down, depending on its description and the **Affinity Key** located oin the centre of the card.

During the enemy turn, the opponent will take one aggressive Action, determined by the current Stage of the Encounter. This Action will often lower the Affinity level and then **counter** some cards in your Diplomacy Sequence, hindering your plans.

Important: Only the part of your Diplomacy Sequence directly connected to the Encounter card is considered **active**. If any gaps open up in your Sequence (usually due to enemy counters), any cards located after this gap become **inactive** until you find a way to reconnect them. Any special effects listed on the **inactive** cards become disabled.

1 – Encounter Stages – (most encounters have multiple stages or alternative options; if the stage name starts with an Affinity Key and has the "Opponent" entry, it is a conflict that you will have to win using your Diplomacy cards and the Affinity track)

2 – Affinity Track (you need to win on this track to resolve each conflict)

3 – Enemy Vulnerabilities (the first card in your Sequence needs to connect with at least one of these keys)

4 – Reward (what you get for defeating this enemy)

5 – Threats (these are the Keys this card can connect with)

6 – Openings (these Keys determine which cards may be placed after this one)

7 – Affinity Key (if this Key matches the requirement of you're the current Encounter Stage, attaching this card moves the Affinity Track up by 1)

Preparation Phase:

Read the Non-Combat Encounter card. Some of them offer you a way to **Avoid** them altogether. If you decide to do so, pay any listed cost, abandon the Encounter and put it at the bottom of the **blue** deck. Then, continue your game.

Otherwise, set the Non-Combat Encounter card so that you have plenty of space to the **right** of it – that's where you will build your Diplomacy Sequence.

Mark the first stage of the Encounter (**1**) with the universal marker. If the Encounter has several alternative approaches (separated with **OR**), choose one and mark its first Stage.

Put another marker on the starting position of the Encounter's Affinity track.

Put any **Item Cards** (for example, representing your Follower), you'd like to use in this Encounter under the Encounter card. You may only use **one** card with a specific keyword in a single Encounter (one Follower, one Magic Item, etc.).

1) Player's Turn – Draw Phase:

Draw three cards from your Diplomacy Deck. Reduce this number by 1 for each additional player – but you should always draw at least one card.

- If you don't like your starting hand, you can use a mulligan and draw a new hand with **one less** card. You cannot use a mulligan if your hand size is already **one**.

Draw any extra cards granted by card effects, Items or Abilities. You also draw an extra card if you've Passed your last turn.

2) Player's Turn – Confrontation Phase:

Players place any number of Diplomacy cards in the Sequence:

- The first Diplomacy card you play has to match at least one of its Threat Keys (visible on the left side of the Diplomacy card) with at least one enemy Vulnerability Key (on the

right side of the Encounter card).

- Each Diplomacy card you play after that has to match at least one of its Threat Keys with a Key on the card before it (visible on its right side). **IMPORTANT:** Any Keys representing Character Attributes that your Character doesn't have (for example [⚔] Key if you only have 1 point of Empathy) are inactive on Diplomacy cards!
  - *This means the card you play has to **both** connect with at least one Key on the previous card **AND** this Key has to be covered by your current Attributes.*
- If you play a card into a gap in the Sequence (often caused by an enemy counter):
  - *The card has to connect to the card on its **left** with at least one Key.*
  - *If the card doesn't connect to the card on its **right** with at least one Key, discard the card on its right and any other cards located after it. The card you have just played should now effectively end your Sequence.*

After you've successfully played a card, its card effect becomes active. Read it and apply when necessary.

Then, check whether playing this card affects the Affinity track:

- Look at the marked Stage of the Encounter card. It shows which **Affinity Keys** increment the Affinity track during this Stage.
  - *Usually, the Affinity Key is one of the Attribute icons. For example, when performing delicate negotiations, progress might require adding cards with the Caution Affinity.*
  - *Cards with the "All" Key fit any requirements! They almost always raise the Affinity.*

If at any point the Affinity track marker goes down from the bottom track slot, YOU LOSE!

- Apply the penalty listed in the "Lose" section of the card, put the card on the bottom of the blue deck and continue the game.

If the Affinity track marker goes up from the uppermost slot, immediately progress to the next Stage of the Encounter.

- If it was the last Stage, **YOU WIN!** You can apply the reward listed in the "Win" section of the card, put the card on the bottom of the blue deck and continue the game.
- If it wasn't the last Stage, immediately proceed to the next Stage. Mark it and continue your turn.
  - *This changes which Affinity Key moves the track from now on! Successful diplomats always plan one step in advance!*

If you can't or won't play any Diplomacy cards, you may Pass and go to the Enemy's Turn. Passing will allow you to draw one extra card next turn!

At any point in this phase, you may discard the last (regardless whether active or inactive) card from your Sequence, and repeat this any number of times.

At any point in this phase, you may abandon the Encounter, suffering an automatic Failure.

3) Player's Turn – Discard:

You may choose one Diplomacy card and keep it in your hand. Discard any other Diplomacy cards.

4) Enemy AI Turn – Performing the Action:

Check the current Stage of the Encounter and apply the enemy Action found there.

- This will most often move the Affinity level down and / or counter your cards.

If the Affinity goes down from the bottom track slot, YOU LOSE!

- Apply the penalty listed in the **"Lose"** section of the card, put the card on the bottom of **blue** deck and continue the game.

5) Proceed to the Start of Your Next Turn (1)!

Magic in Diplomacy

Magic Keys are present on both Combat and Diplomacy cards. They will help you better handle Encounters your Character might be ill-equipped to deal with (for example: Combat for Non-Combat Characters or Diplomacy for a Combat-focused one).

Unlike any other card Keys, Magic always comes at a cost. To connect two cards using the Magic Key, you always have to spend 1 point of Magic.

Injuries, Insanity and Death

If your Health falls to 0 at any point of the game, attach the „**YOU ARE DYING!**" card to your character board. From now on, every action might turn out to be your last!

If your Terror reaches the top two, red-colored slots of the track, attach the „**YOU ARE GOING INSANE**" card to your Character board. This will open the way for destructive Nightmares and makes Exploration and Travel harder and riskier.

The „**YOU ARE DYING!**" status gives your Character additional time to recover, but at some point you will finally give out your ghost. If that happens:

- In single-player mode, the game ends (that's why the single-payer "**YOU ARE DYING**" card is more lenient, giving you more chances to recover).
- In cooperative mode, your death may or may not end the entire game:
  - *If there's an unclaimed Character left in the box, you can claim this Character and start back in Cuanacht Farmhold (101) without any Items and with your starting Resources.*
  - *If all Characters are either in use or dead, the game ends in failure, even for Characters who are still alive. This gives players an additional incentive to save each other at all costs!*

Items & Equipment

Characters in a single Location can trade Items as a free action, unless one of them is already involved in Combat, Diplomacy or Exploration.

Some of the Item cards available in Tainted Grail carry one of the following symbols:

C – Craftable – only Items in this category may be manufactured by player Characters.
- If a Crafting action or Encounter reward asks you to draw a "random Craftable Item", keep drawing cards from the Items deck until you find the first item with the "C" sign. Take it and shuffle the rest of the Items deck.

S – Secret – story related, numbered secret Items and powers discovered during Exploration that should never be a part of the standard Items deck. They don't count towards any Item limits and can never be lost, sold or traded to another Character.
- If an effect asks you to discard some Item cards, omit any Secrets. For example, if Disembodied

Voracity eats two of your Items, and you have only one regular Item and one Secret Item, discard only the regular Item card.

Additionally, some of the Item cards contain a keyword (for example: "Weapon"). You can never use more than one Item with a single keyword at the same time. If you have several Items with a certain keyword, decide which one you use and turn the others face down before each Encounter and each Exploration.
- *This means you can only have one Weapon, one Shield, one Armor, one Follower and one Magic Item active at any given moment.*

Character Advancement

Experience points are the primary means of Character Advancement. You can spend them every time you rest to raise your Attributes and gain additional Combat or Diplomacy cards. The costs are as follows:

Advanced Combat and Diplomacy Cards:

1-3 ⚜ (The specific cost is printed on each card) – choose the card you wish to buy, pay its Experience cost and then swap one of the cards from your deck for the Advanced card.
- Your decks should always contain 25 cards.
- You can swap the basic, free cards back into your deck at any point during your rest!
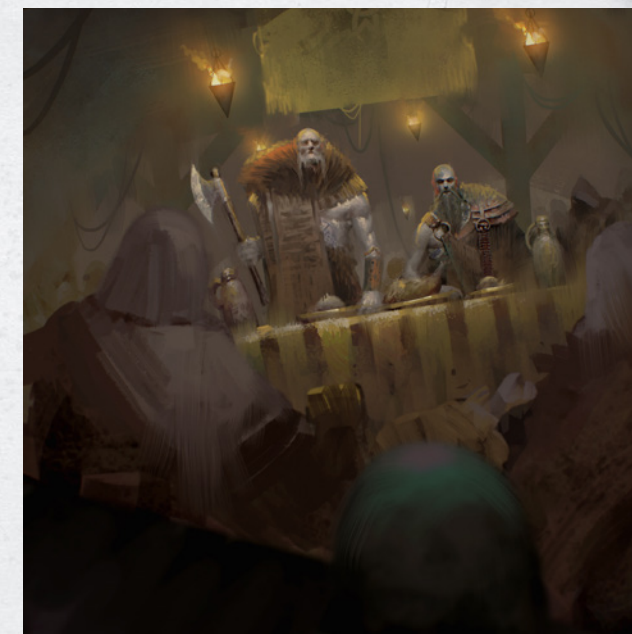
Attributes and Abilities:

1 ⚜ : 1st point in a pair of opposing Attributes.

2 ⚜ :2nd point in a pair of opposing Attributes.

3 ⚜ : 3rd point in a pair of opposing attributes.

4 ⚜ : 4th and any further points in a pair of opposing attributes.

Additionally, whenever you earn a 3rd (or any subsequent) point in any single Attribute, pick and attach an Ability card with this Attribute's icon to the appropriate edge of your Character Board. Each of these cards contains two mutually exclusive Abilities – you can only choose one!

The maximum Attribute level is 5 - this means you may attach up to 3 Ability cards to each of your Attributes.

Examples:
- If your Courage is 2, and your Caution is 0, raising your Caution to 1 is going to cost 3 ⚜ (it is a third point assigned to this pair of Attributes).
- If your Empathy is 2 and your Aggression is 2, raising your Aggression to 3 is going to cost 4 ⚜ (it is a fifth point assigned to this pair of Attributes). You will also gain 1 Ability card with an Aggression Key.

Victory Condition

Our Pre-Kickstarter Demo ends when you reach a Location or an Exploration Journal entry that says so. You can, however, keep exploring if you want to discover all the secrets and parts of the story!

Cooperative Mode

Co-op: General Information

When playing with more than one Character, the game changes in the following ways:

- The cost of enabling Menhirs scales higher.
- The time between major story Events grows shorter.
- In every Encounter where more than one player is present, players draw 1 less Combat / Diplomacy card.
- Encounter damage scales up, since every attack damages ALL players.
- The „YOU ARE DYING" card is more restrictive – to survive, you will often have to depend on the help of other players.
- Some difficult Encounters, if left undefeated, turn into roaming beasts that will slowly populate the area, unless you decide to fight them (Guardian keyword).

Co-op: Exploration

If Characters Explore alone, use the standard single-payer rules.

If Characters Explore as a Party, the following also applies:

- All cost and penalties from the Exploration Journal and Book of Secrets apply to each player separately.
  - *For example, if a Party of 3 Characters decides to climb a mountain (1 e), they need to spend 3 e in total. Since they are in a Party, they may help each other cover this cost!*
- Rewards and loot found during the Exploration have to be shared!
  - *If a Party of 2 Characters stumbles upon a Verse saying "Gain 1 ☺ and 1 ✧ and a Secret card number 48", they have to share those. If they cannot agree how, the Character with the highest Energy level picks one Resource or Item first. Then, the Character with second-highest Energy makes another choice, and they keep alternating until nothing is left.*
- All decisions made by the Exploring Party should be determined by voting. If players can't agree on a decision, the Character with the most Empathy makes the final call.