

SHADOW THRONE

RULES OF PLAY





BACKGROUND

The Aclysmian Empire is crumbling. King Kyros Benteon clings to power by any means necessary. Queen Eletheria, abandoning her husband, leads a rebellion of disgruntled soldiers and conquered peoples to overthrow him. Princess Beatice has disavowed both of her parents to join the Church.

You and the other players, as members of a secret society, hold sway over Aclysmia, but your job is not to set things right. You just want to be on the winning side when the fighting ends. By weaving Machiavellian alliances and determining the outcome of crucial battles, you'll accrue influence for when the war finally resolves. In the end, the king, the queen, or the princess may wear the crown, but you will rule from the shadow throne.

GAME OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVE

You and the other players will manipulate characters belonging to different factions, determining the outcomes of battles until the war ends. Whoever collects the most influence ▼ wins.

The game takes place over the course of several *battles*. Each battle starts with an *intrigue phase*, where players gain control of characters. Each battle is fought in the *conflict phase* over four waves. Each wave, players add characters to the battle. Finally, in the *resolution phase*, players associated with the winning faction gain *influence* ▼.

The game ends when a player collects 15 or more influence ▼, usually after three to five battles.


CREDITS

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COMPONENTS & SETUP

1. Shuffle all 54 **Character cards** (18 cards from each of 3 factions) into one deck.
2. Place the 3 **Faction tokens** on the top of the **Power Track**.
3. Place the remaining tokens within easy reach of all players.
4. Give each player 3 gold .



EXAMPLE CHARACTER CARD

- Rank.** Some special rules refer to rank. Rank can also indicate how to use a character.
 - *Commoners* grant gold 🟡. They are the backbone of your economy.
 - *Elites* are powerful 🟣 and often determine the outcome of battles.
 - *Nobles* cost a lot of gold 🟡, but offer a lot of influence ▼.
- Name.** The character's name.
- Power.** The character contributes this much power 🟣 for its faction. The faction with the most power 🟣 wins the battle.
- Influence.** The amount of influence ▼ the character grants if its faction wins a battle.
- Cost or income.** You must pay this much gold 🟡 to play the character if it has a cost (🟡) or you collect this much gold 🟡 when you play the character if it has an income (🟡).
- Consolation gold.** Collect this much gold 🟡 if the character's faction loses the battle. Not all characters grant consolation gold.
- Special ability.** Special abilities occur after paying for your character. See Conflict Phase Step 4 (page 6) and the Faction Details section (pages 10–15) for more information. Not all characters have a special ability.
- Faction.** The character's faction. This is also indicated by card color. The factions are the Empire 🏰, the Rebels 🏹, and the Church 🏰.





STEPS OF A ROUND

Each round of *Shadow Throne* represents a battle with three phases: *Intrigue Phase*, *Conflict Phase*, *Resolution Phase*.

Before a battle is fought, players gain control of characters in the Intrigue Phase. Players then determine which characters fight in the Conflict Phase. Finally, the battle resolves and the winners take rewards in the Resolution Phase.

INTRIGUE PHASE












In the Intrigue Phase, players gain control over characters from the different factions by drafting cards, which represents players forming alliances with those characters. Or blackmailing them. Or kidnapping them. Or something even more nefarious. Follow these steps:

1. **Reset the Power Track.** Put all three Faction tokens on the top of the Power Track on the words *Power Track*.
2. **Shuffle the Character deck.**
3. **Deal pools.** Deal each player a *pool* of 6 cards face down.
4. **Draft from pool.** Each player looks at her pool, chooses one card from it to add to her *hand*, and passes the remaining cards to her left neighbor.
A player's hand should be kept hidden from other players, but the player can examine her own hand at any time.
5. **Continue drafting.** Repeat step 4 until all pools are gone.

CONFLICT PHASE

In the Conflict Phase, players decide which characters fight in the battle.

Each Conflict Phase has **four waves**. For each wave:

- 1. Choose characters.** Each player chooses a character card from her hand and places it face down in front of her. All players do this simultaneously.
 - ♦ Each player should place characters in later waves to the right of the characters she played in earlier waves.
- 2. Reveal characters.** Players reveal their chosen character cards.
- 3. Collect or pay gold** . Each player either collects gold  if her chosen character has an income  or pays gold  if her chosen character has a cost .
- ♦ See opposite page for special rules related to gold.
- 4. Resolve special abilities.** Activate all special abilities for characters in this wave.
 - ♦ Special abilities activate in ascending order. All  abilities trigger, then all , then all .
 - ♦ Same-numbered abilities occur simultaneously. Page 8 features a detailed example about resolving simultaneous special abilities.
 - ♦ The Faction Details section (pages 10–15) has details on specific special abilities.
- 5. Update Power Track.** For each faction, total the power  from all characters in the battle of that faction and put the faction's token on that number on the Power Track.
 - ♦ Dead  characters don't contribute power .

Note: The Power Track is used to help players keep track of which faction is ahead. Ultimately, the final count in the Resolution Phase determines which faction actually wins the battle.

Follow Conflict Phase steps 1–5 above **4 times**, once for each wave.



CONFLICT PHASE: GOLD SPECIAL RULES

Hush Money. Players don't want to be closely associated with any one faction. After the first wave of a battle, if a player plays a character of the faction she played in the **immediately previous wave**, it costs 1 more gold 🟡.

For example: Dutiful Peasant usually costs 0 gold 🟡, but it costs 1 gold 🟡 if you played an Empire 🏰 character in the previous wave.

For example: Outlaw usually provides 2 gold 🟡, but if you played a Rebel 🏹 character in the previous wave, collect only 1 gold 🟡. Do not pay 1 gold, then collect 2.

- ♦ When your character is converted 🏰 (see the Church Details section, page 14), you must pay *hush money* for its original faction, not its new faction.
- ♦ *Hush money* is not cumulative. If you play three Rebel 🏹 characters in a row, the third costs 1 extra gold 🟡, not 2.

Poor Players. If a player cannot afford her chosen card's gold 🟡 cost (or it is illegal to play for some other reason), she reveals it, turns it face down, and collects 1 gold 🟡.

The character is not considered part of the battle. The player doesn't have to pay *hush money* in the next wave.

Note: This is not a choice. If you can afford your chosen character, you must pay for it and play it; if you can't afford the character, you collect 1 gold 🟡 and turn it face down.



CONFLICT PHASE: RESOLVING SPECIAL ABILITIES

Example: In one wave, an Outlaw (Rebel ♣ commoner ○), Shepherd of the Lost (Church ♠ elite ○○ with a ♣ special ability that converts commoners ○), and Queen Eletheria (Rebel ♣ noble ○○○ with a ♣ special ability that boosts the power ♣ of Rebel ♣ commoners ○) are all played. How are the two special rules resolved?

- ✦ First, play extra cards for the special ability. *Note: Only one card, King Kyros, has a special ability that requires an extra card, so in this case no extra cards need to be played.*









- ✦ Next, determine which characters are affected by each special ability. In this case, Shepherd of the Lost affects Outlaw and Queen Eletheria also affects Outlaw.
- ✦ Finally, the special abilities take effect. If the ability affects characters, it affects the characters determined in the previous step. In this case, Shepherd of the Lost converts Outlaw while Queen Eletheria boosts Outlaw at the same time.






- ✦ In the end Outlaw has +1 power ♣ and is now part of the Church ♠ faction.



RESOLUTION PHASE



In the Resolution Phase, the outcome of the battle is determined and the victors gain spoils. Follow these steps:

1. **Total power.** For each faction, total the power  from all characters from all waves. *Remember:* Dead characters don't contribute power.
2. **Determine the winning faction.** The faction with the highest total power  wins the battle!
 - If there is a tie, all factions with the highest power  win.
3. **Collect influence.** Each player collects influence  for the characters she played from the winning faction.
 - Dead  characters only provide half their influence , rounded down.
4. **Collect consolation gold.** Each player collects consolation gold  for the characters she played from factions that did not win.

For example: If a player played a Dutiful Peasant during the battle, but the Empire  faction did not win, that player collects 3 gold .
5. **End the game?** If at least one player has 15 or more influence , the game ends! See the “Ending the Game” section below.
6. **Keep one card for the next battle.** Each player keeps one card she did not play from her hand for the next battle and discards the rest.
 - The saved card starts the player's hand in the next Intrigue Phase. Do *not* draft saved cards.
 - After the first battle, each player will save 1 card from the last battle and draft 6 more, so each player will have 7 cards at the beginning of the Conflict Phase.
7. **Form deck.** Discarded cards and cards played in the battle are shuffled back into the deck. It's time to fight another battle!


ENDING THE GAME

The game ends in the Resolution Phase when at least one player has 15 or more influence . At that point, whoever has the most influence  wins!

In the case of a tie, whoever has the most gold  amongst those with the most influence  wins!

If there is still a tie, the kingdom is in ruins and no one wins.

GAME VARIANT

For a more epic game, try playing to 20 or even 25 influence !

EMPIRE



For many generations, the Bentheons have ruled Adclysmia. They have long considered leading the kingdom both their right and duty, and have done so with authority.



Waging a series of expansionist wars to help maintain their rule, they have kept the people of the kingdom rich and content, developed a sophisticated military, and demonstrated their effectiveness as leaders. But they have also made many enemies among their diverse subjects.



King Kyros Benthion has witnessed a tipping point. Small rebellions have formed and quickly been crushed repeatedly, but the most recent rebellion has seen traditionally antagonistic groups join forces. And most significantly, his wife, Queen Eletheria, has joined them.



Kyros has not taken the challenge sitting down. He considers the crown his birthright and his duty, and will not give it up without a fight. He has only become more ruthless and now maintains control over the kingdom with superior weaponry and outright brutality.



EMPIRE SPECIAL ABILITY: KILLING

Many characters in the Empire  faction can kill  members of other factions.

- When a character is killed, put a  token on it.
- A dead character doesn't contribute power  to its faction.
- If a character is killed before its ability would trigger, its ability does not trigger.




For example: If a  ability kills a character, then that character's  ability doesn't trigger.




*Note: Because all abilities of the same number trigger simultaneously, if a  ability kills a character, then that character's  ability **does** trigger.*


- A dead character only grants *half* its influence , rounded down.
- A dead character grants consolation gold  as normal.
- When your character dies, you still have to pay *hush money* in the following wave (See Hush Money, page 7).







EMPIRE CHARACTERS

Bentheon Knights. Bentheon Knights kill  all commoners  in their wave. They do not kill Empire  characters.

Anna Lys, Widow Maker. Anna Lys kills  all elites  in her wave. She does not kill Empire  characters.

Datura, Addled Assassin. Datura kills  all nobles  in his wave. He does not kill Empire  characters.

King Kyros. King Kyros lets you play an extra Empire  card.

- ♦ Collect its income  or pay its cost  as normal.
- ♦ You do not have to pay *hush money* for the extra card.
- ♦ If you have no Empire  characters in your hand, cannot afford one, or don't want to play one, don't play another card. You don't have to tell your opponents why.
- ♦ The extra card is considered part of the same wave as King Kyros. Abilities that occurred before King Kyros' ability do not affect the extra card. However, abilities that occur at the same time as King Kyros' ability do affect the extra card.
- ♦ If the extra card has a special ability, it will occur at the same time as  abilities, even if it is a  or  ability.



REBELS

King Kyros' father, Rhynus, had one crowning achievement while he ruled Aclysmia. Some twenty years ago, he conquered Rota, a small kingdom to the south. For decades, the Rotan people had evaded Bentheon dominance, but Rhynus finally subdued them.

Though his rule lasted several more years, Rhynus was never able to live up to that accomplishment. That's mostly because Rota's young ruler, Langman Paneros, never accepted defeat. He followed in the footsteps of many of Aclysmia's conquered people and took up arms against the crown. While he never successfully overthrew Rhynus, he always managed to evade capture. Some say his persistence led to Rhynus' early death.





Langman, who became known as the Crown's Thorn, continued to vex Kyros when he took the throne. However, Kyros was able to turn his attention elsewhere, and eventually captured Picureas, the son Langman hid when Rota fell, now a brash young man. Kyros finally believed he had broken the curse of the Crown's Thorn. He locked up Picureas and, in his characteristic way, let him slowly deteriorate in the castle's dungeon. Surely Langman would not persist if it meant his son's painful death...

But Kyros did not anticipate Picureas' effects on his wife Eletheria. She had always been sympathetic to the subjugated foreigners and their never ending rebellions. It didn't take long for Eletheria to fall in love with Picureas, whose princely charms were irresistible even locked away in a dungeon. It was then only a matter of time before she was able to free him, and the two fled together.



Now, with the Queen at their lead, the many conquered peoples of Aclysmia have joined forces, and the Rebellion finally stands a chance.



REBEL SPECIAL ABILITY: EMBOLDEN

Many characters in the Rebel  faction grant extra power  to other Rebel forces.




- Place a  token on a character for each +1 power  it receives.
- If a character is killed , remove all  tokens from it.

REBEL CHARACTERS



Phabos Scouts. Phabos Scouts give +1 power  to each other Rebel  character in their wave.




Picureas, Son of Roses. Picureas gives +1 power  to each Rebel  character in the wave *after* he is played.



- If Picureas is played on the final wave of a battle, his ability does nothing.

Queen Eletheria. Queen Eletheria gives +1 power  to each Rebel  commoner  in her wave and all preceding waves.

- Queen Eletheria does not embolden characters played in subsequent waves.

Langman, Crown's Thorn. When the Rebels  lose a battle, Langman stays to fight another day. If Langman's ability triggers and the Rebel  faction loses the battle, do not shuffle him back into the deck. Leave him out for the next battle as if you played him in a wave before any others.

- Remove any  or other tokens from Langman before the next battle.
- Langman does not stay in the battle if he is killed , even after his ability triggers.
- If the Rebel  faction loses a second battle, shuffle Langman back into the deck.

Sythera the Whisperer. Sythera prevents characters from other factions in the same wave from using their  and  abilities. Treat those characters as having no abilities.



CHURCH

Before she freed Picureas and abandoned her husband, Eletheria arranged for Beatice to board with Sister Simone, Beatice's religious teacher. Leaving Beatice at Kyros' mercy just seemed too dangerous.



Kyros' reaction to Eletheria was furious. He demanded that the Church return Beatice, but Simone, fearful for Beatice's safety, refused. The king did not take the refusal lightly. He condemned the Church as traitors, effectively declaring war on them.












Beatice was scared, confused, and felt abandoned. She didn't know who to turn to. But Brother Protis was there to comfort her.

Protis, Kyros' younger brother, never had a chance for the throne, but quickly worked his way through the Church. However, he never lost sight of the crown and remained bitter. While most members of the Church reluctantly accepted the war as necessary, Protis embraced it. This was his chance to claim what he felt was rightfully his.

Protis convinced Beatice to denounce both of her parents as sinners and declare her allegiance to the Church. Now, the Church finds itself the reluctant third side of a bloody struggle to control the kingdom.

CHURCH SPECIAL ABILITY: CONVERSION

Many characters in the Church  faction convert  characters from other factions to the Church side.

- When a character is converted , put a  token on that character. The character is now part of the Church  faction and is no longer a member of its original faction.
- Dead  characters cannot be converted .
- A converted  character contributes its power  to the faction it is converted to, not to its original faction.
- A converted  character grants influence  if the faction it converted to wins the battle and grants consolation gold  if the faction it converted to loses the battle.
- When your character is converted , you must pay *hush money* in the following wave based on its original faction, *not* based on its new faction (See Hush Money, page 7).

CHURCH CHARACTERS

Shepherd of the Lost. Shepherd of the Lost converts 🏰 all commoners ○ in her wave.

Protis, Absolver of Sins. Protis converts 🏰 all elites ○○ in his wave.

Princess Beatice. Princess Beatice converts 🏰 and grants +1 power 🏰 to commoners ○ in her wave.

- Princess Beatice does not grant +1 power 🏰 to commoners ○ who were already part of the Church 🏰 faction.
- If a commoner ○ is converted to the Church 🏰 faction by another source at the same time Princess Beatice converts it, it still gets +1 power 🏰.

Simone the Sufferer. If Simone the Sufferer dies, she grants special influence ▼.

- Simone the Sufferer still grants special influence ▼ even if she dies in a wave after she is played.
- If Simone the Sufferer dying brings a player to 15 or more influence ▼, the game doesn't end until the Resolution Phase as normal.


Thavma the Revelator. Thavma gets extra power 🏰 if the player who played him has 0 or 1 gold 🟡 after paying his cost 🟠.



SHADOW THRONE

QUICK REFERENCE



SETUP

1. Shuffle character cards from three factions into one deck.
2. Give each player 3 gold .




INTRIGUE PHASE

1. Place the Faction Tokens on the top of the Power Track.
2. Shuffle the character deck.
3. Deal each player a pool of 6 cards face down.
4. Each player looks at her pool, takes one card from it to add to her hand, and passes the remaining cards to her left neighbor.
5. Repeat step 4 until all pools are gone.


CONFLICT PHASE

1. Players simultaneously and secretly choose characters to add to the battle.
2. Players reveal their characters.
3. Players collect  or pay  gold.
4. Resolve special abilities.
5. Update the Power Track.
6. Repeat steps 1–5 three more times, for a total of four waves.




DEAD CHARACTERS

- + Contribute no power .
- + Only grant half (rounded down) influence .
- + Grant consolation gold  as normal.

HUSH MONEY

- + A character costs 1 additional gold  if you played a character from the same faction in the immediately previous wave.

RESOLUTION PHASE

1. Update the Power Track.
2. Determine which faction wins the battle.
3. Collect influence  for characters you played from the winning faction.
4. Collect consolation gold  for characters you played from losing factions.
5. If any player has 15 or more influence , the game ends.
6. Keep one card in your hand for the next battle and discard the rest.
7. Add all played and discarded cards to the deck.
8. Return to the Intrigue Phase.