

## Artisans of The Dark Mirror

A game of mystical crafting in the 14th century.

By thousandheads

The black plague spreads out of control, global cooling results in reduced food supply, increased population leads to famine and revolt, and kings wage war across Europe ignoring the needs of their kingdoms. The Guilds control knowledge and supplies for crafting most goods and the Church has grown corrupt, exchanging coin for eternal salvation. It is the final days of the middle ages, possibly the final days of the human race. Will our heroes survive and perhaps even spark a rebirth of civilization before the end of days?

The PCs are craftsmen and women with the knowledge of Making- imbuing an item they've made with magic and life. They use this knowledge to make their daily bread, pretending to be members of a mundane guild. They have knowledge that makes them powerful and potentially makes them targets.

Rebel Makers have decided that it is time to exterminate humanity, the Horsemen of the Apocalypse seem to walk the land, and loss is commonplace.

Artisans of the Dark Mirror is Powered By the Apocalypse, inspired by Ars Magica, and based on my own love of history, Chaucer, and illuminated manuscripts.

The basics rules:

The game has two parts: the rules and the fiction. The fiction is anything that happens in the story of the game from a character getting sick to a town being destroyed. The rules are made up of moves the characters can make. When the fiction suggests a move, the characters may (and sometimes must) make a move.

Moves change the world and the fiction- defeating a mob of peasants, crafting the sharpest sword ever, and binding the Horseman of Death so he can never kill again are all moves. Moves are anything that a player character (PC) does that is uncertain, challenged, or important to the plot.

Some moves will require a roll. You roll 2d6 and hope for a high number.

A roll of 10 or higher is a complete success.

A roll between 7 and 9 is a qualified success that comes at a cost.

A roll of 6 or lower is a failure and the GM may do all sorts of horrible things to your character.

If you have a trait in your description that could help, you are boosted. Each boost is worth +1 on your roll.

If you are damaged in a way that impacts the roll or the situation offers particularly grave challenges, then you are diminished for that roll. Each diminish is worth -1.

Before rolling, add up any boosts and diminishes to find your total modifier.

Many moves won't require rolling. They are still significant and should be attempted with care. The most important move a Maker has is crafting an object of power.

Crafting an object of power:

Crafting an object of power is a move. Objects of Power are called "Works". When a character crafts an object of power, they do the following steps to complete it:

First chose what the object is. Describe it. Note any powers or abilities it has beyond the base object. They will need to be included in the next step.

Fill in the four categories below describing the powers and limitations of the Work.

Can:

Can not:

Must:

Must never:

Count up the words that are used to enhance the object. This is the Work's Raw Power, used when different magical artifacts confront each other.

Subtract the number of words that limit or control the object from the Raw Power to find the Work's Power. More powerful objects are more obviously magical.

The character must expend a number of experience equal to its power.

The Work will take a number of days to complete equal to its raw power. Any boosts will reduce this time by one day each. Any diminishes will increase this time by one day each.

To make a character:

The following sentences describe your character and are part of your description:

You are not healthy and strong.

You are not financially sound.

You are not socially respected.

You are not cunning, devious, or underhanded.

You are not calm in a crisis.

You are not knowledgeable and wise.

You are not creative.

You are not expertly skilled in your craft.

Add between two and five descriptive sentences of things your character isn't but that you'd like them to be.

Cross off the word “not” from five of the sentences in your description.

Select your guild.

This dictates what mundane crafting skills you know.

It also dictates the appearance of your workshop.

Choose from:

Apothecaries' Guild (makers of medicine and powders. Painters are included here as they are the main source of paint)

Armorers' & Braziers' Guild (covers makers of armor and those who work with brass, including sculptors)

Blacksmiths' Guild (covers the making of weapons, tools, and implements other than armor)

Bowyers' Guild

Brewers' Guild

Carpenters' Guild

Clothworkers' Guild (

Dyers' Guild

Farriers' Guild (covers those who shoe horses)

Fletchers' Guild (covers the makers of arrows)

Girdlers' Guild (covers makers of girdles and belts\_

Goldsmiths' Guild

Masons' Guild (primarily those who make and lay bricks but includes artists who work with stone and those who make buildings from stone or cinder blocks)

Needlemakers' Guild (including the newly discovered art of knitting)

Plasterers' Guild (including those who work with plaster)

Chandlers' Guild (candle makers who use wax or tallow)

Vintners' Guild (makers of wine)

Weavers' Guild

Your Workshop is determined by your choice of guild. You may do other types of work but these are not in your proficiency. Your workshop also gives bonuses when working your craft in it. Pick four.

Your Workshop:

Describe the basic appearance of your workshop. The following sentences are part of your Workshop's description.

Your workshop is not hidden from mortal eyes.

Your workshop is not guarded by the supernatural.

Your workshop is not locked by unnatural means.

Your workshop is not rich with magic.

Your workshop is not well supplied with fine material.

Your workshop is not equipped with exceptional tools for fine detail and precision.

Your workshop is not equipped with supplies and quarters to sleep in.

Your workshop is not portable through means mundane or mystic.

Your workshop is not supplied with fine tea and cakes for entertaining guests.

Your workshop does not have a shop staffed with an assistant to sell your lesser works

You may cross the word "not" out for four the sentences describing your workshop.

Each trait of your workshop may boost moves made utilizing the resources of your workshop, such as crafting in

Your Masterpieces:

To end your period as a journeyman or woman, you have completed a masterpiece- a work that proves you have the skill to truly represent the guild.

The guild has retained possession of the masterpiece both as a trophy and a means of blackmail.

You have two, one for your mundane guild and one for the secret guild of makers.

Your mortal guild has a mundane piece you created.

Describe it if it is important to you.

If it isn't important, describe it as an item of exceptional quality.. Replace the word item with whatever kind of object it was.

The Secret Guild has your first magic work.

Describe what makes it special.

This should showcase something about your personality, desires, or fears.

Make it fantastic, interesting, and inspiring of some sort of emotion.

Masterpieces are not limited by the rules governing the creation of a Work.

They do not start in possession of the character. They are held by the Guildmaster of the Secret Guild.

Decide if you want to regain possession of the Masterpiece or if you have accepted the guilds control of it.

You have one work that you have completed since becoming a Master Craftsman. Its power may be no more than five.

Gaining Experience:

The following moves govern the gaining of experience as well as its use in improving your character.

When you attempt a task in which you are diminished, you may gain one experience.

This applies whenever a task is diminished, even if the total modifier ends up being positive.

When you fail a task in which you were not diminished, you may gain one experience.

At any time, you may spend 5 experience to improve your character. Add a sentence to your description. This description should include the word "not" and describe something you want your character to become such as "You are not intelligent" or "You are not an excellent swimmer."

Then cross off the word not from one of the sentences in your description.

You may choose, instead, to improve your workshop instead of your character. The rules are the same.

Describe how the change makes sense in the context of the events of the game.

Damage and Death:

The following describe the dire straits your character is in. It is your damage track.

You are not ruined.

You are not excommunicated.

You are not malnourished.

You do not have a bounty on your head.

You are not delirious.

Your name is not cursed.

You are not plague-ridden.

You are not crippled.

You are not dying.

You are not dead.

When you fail a move or have a success with cost, the GM may tell you that you are injured.

When the GM tells you that you are injured, cross off one of the word "not"s in your damage track.

When telling you that you are injured, the GM may specify what you must cross off. If that is already crossed off, you may chose another.

The sentence you choose should make sense in context with the events of the game.

Healing

Healing a wound is a move.

When you are wounded, you may spend 10 experience points to heal an injury. Choose a sentence in your damage track that you have crossed off part of.

If you crossed off in pencil, you may erase it.

If you crossed off in pen, cross off the whole sentence and copy its complete text at the bottom of your damage track.

At all times you should have 10 sentences in your damage track.

Move List:

Healing

Crafting

Acting in a crisis

Acting Under Threat:

The main move of the game you will use is acting under threat. When threatened, whether by death, a mob, the taxman, or your own fears, you roll.

Add boosts and diminishes as described in the basic rules.

If your total is 10 or above, you succeed.

If your total is between 7 and 9, you succeed at a cost. The GM will either tell you or ask you what success costs you. You may choose to fail instead of paying it.

If your total is 6 or below, you fail and the GM may do horrible things to your character.

Note that if you choose to fail on a success with cost, the GM may not choose to do horrible things to your character

To Play Diceless:

When you are asked make a roll, instead total up the modifiers.

If the result is positive, you rolled between 10 and 12.

If the result is zero, you rolled between 7 and 9.

If the result is negative, you rolled between 2 and 6.

Forces who will conflict with the characters:

The Peasantry

Your Peers

The Nobles

The Church

The GM's Agenda:

Make the late middle ages seem real.

Make the players' characters' lives exciting.

Play to find out what happens.

The GM Principles:

Vivid images of the crisis of the middle ages.

Speak to the characters.

Every NPC is expendable.

Everyone has a name and a dream.

Build on player responses.

Love the players' characters.

Want to see the players' characters' suffer and win.

Disrupt their plans with logical surprises.

Keep NPCs straightforward. If they have an agenda, make it make sense. Peasants want food. Husbands want medicine for their sick wives. Nobles want soldiers for the war effort. If you have a secret agenda, make it simple as well. See the initial NPC set for information.

Horrible Things TO Do To Characters When They Fail:

Isolate them

Capture Them

Injure them

Take something from them

Make them pay for something

Kill an NPC they care for

Initial NPC Set

The Lord

The Lord is the ruler of your territory. He has been tasked by the king to raise soldiers for the war. His eldest son is away fighting in the war while his second son is safely studying at a university in the capitol. He has two desires. He wants soldiers so he can support the war and he wants to maintain his lifestyle. The second requires regular collection of taxes and food from the populace he rules. He often takes more than he needs.

The Tax Collector

The Tax Collector is one of many, a cruel man chosen because he remains unswayed by crying widows and sick children. He wants the tax owed or equivalent items. He also sends the people who take food from the peasants after they've farmed it. He isn't imposing physically but he has the weight of authority.

The Knight

The Knight was kept back from the war effort and doesn't like it. He might be cruel, he might be kind, but his primary job is leading the lord's guard to collect the food and enforce quarantines. He wants to get home so he can drink though he also wants a chance to prove how awesome he is.

The Prior

The head of the local clergy is a corrupt and obsessed with gold. He wants to make the church as beautiful as possible which requires collecting money and food from the peasants. He also sells indulgences to the wealthy if they commit crimes. He is amoral but will maintain power. He tends to support the Lord until their needs no longer align.

The Peasants

The Peasants often act as a mob. As a group they are governed by their fear and hunger. They never have enough food and medicine and are the first to die of anything bad that happens. Individually the Knight and his forces defeat them but when united they outnumber the Lord's guard and can't be defeated by them.

The Guildsmen and Guildswomen

Merchants, Craftspeople, and all the people who maintain society at a level above subsistence level. They want to remain comfortable. They want enough food and to sell their goods or services. Anything that threatens that is bad.

### The Guild Leaders

They want to control commerce and make more money.

### The Secret Guildleader

The Secret Guildleader wants to increase his power and control. He has all the mystic masterworks the pcs and will not hesitate to use them against those who threaten his interests. He wants to preserve the secrecy and primacy of the secret guild.

### Malthus, The Mad Apothecary

Malthus has come to believe that the dark times have been brought on by overpopulation in Europe. His solution is mass murder in order to reduce the population to a supportable size. Whether he is right or wrong is unknown. What is known is he has the power to control the plague with his special medicines and can disguise himself with mystic pigments. He is a direct enemy of the Secret Guildleader.

### The Horsemen

The Horsemen are representations of the forces destroying society. Whether they are also incarnate beings is unknown and up to the players and GM. Regardless some mystic elements are at least serving these ends.

War wants to drag Europe into war. He is responsible for the continued fighting abroad sapping the community.

Conquest wants the plague to spread to as many as possible. He favors Malthus and opposes healers.

Famine enjoys the oppressive Lord's gluttonous ways and loves to keep the peasants starving to death.

Death is simple. He wants people to die. He doesn't want to kill them. He wants them to die. He will set things up but will never force someone to die. It amuses him.