



The Despair Wars

by

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Introduction

From the Thirteen Heavens of the Aztecs to the High Hall of Hel, the realms of the afterlife never want for tenants. Someone has to take departed souls to their final resting places and that someone is you. Your job has many names: psychopomp, guide, ferryman, ghost.

There are those who seek to take those souls for themselves and they grow bolder and more clever with each passing year. These Agents of Oblivion literally make the world a worse place. They deny the living their closure, they keep the dead from their rightful rewards or punishments, and they unbalance the metaphysical scales that keep the universe running.

Characters

1. Choose your character type.

Valkyrie

The Valkyries are all female and each one is a superlative warrior. A Valkyrie may send a soul to Valhalla, Fólkvangr (Freya's realm), or to Hel depending on the way the person lived before he or she died. In very special cases, a Valkyrie may choose one of the dead to become a Valkyrie herself.

Power: While she is performing her duties as a Chooser of the Slain, a Valkyrie may never be defeated in combat.

Ocelotl

The Ocelomeh or Jaguar Warriors are the elite soldiers of the Aztec Underworld. An Ocelotl serves Tezcatlipoca directly but any Aztec deity is likely to have a cadre of Jaguar Warriors at his or her command. An Ocelotl's primary purpose these days is to ferry a worthy soul to one of the Thirteen Heavens or to condemn it to Mictlan. Ocelomeh may be male or female.

Power: An Ocelotl may travel from any reflective surface he can see to another no matter the distance between the two as long as both surfaces are on Earth.

Erinys

Also known as the Furies, Erinyes are responsible for carrying souls to Hades. Rarely, exceptionally righteous or wicked souls may be sent to Elysium or Tartarus, respectively. Ancient tales list the number of Furies as three and that may have been the case once but now there are dozens of them both male and female.

Power: An Erinys will always be able to find anyone he or she believes to be guilty of a crime no matter where on Earth that person goes.

Akh

An Akh is a revered spirit who takes souls to the gates of Duat, the Egyptian afterlife. Once there, the soul undergoes several tests to determine its final fate. An Akh spends most of its time in an incorporeal form but may become physical at will. An Akh's physical form is identical to the one he or she had in life. An Akh may temporarily possess a mortal's body by spending a point of Despair for every day of the possession.

Power: An Akh's strength is knowledge. There is no question to which an Akh may not find the answer.

2. Choose five skills your character is especially good at.

These can be anything a mortal can normally do and they can be as specific or as broad as you wish. Any skill that makes sense for a character type to have (e.g. Research for an Akh) is considered **free** and does not need to be one of the PC's five special skills.

Any skill covered by a PC's power does not need to be listed separately. An Erinys is already supernaturally good at tracking, for example, and anything is a deadly weapon in the hands of a Valkyrie so she wouldn't need to list any combat skills.

3. Give yourself 3 points of Despair.

Despair is generated by the living and is the currency of the afterlife. A certain amount of despair is good. It keeps the dead in the minds of the living and it helps maintain the dead long enough for them to meet their fates. Once a soul goes where it is supposed to, the despair of the mortals left behind fades. When a soul does not meet its proper fate, mortal despair increases.

The Agents of Oblivion feed on Despair and they seek to make as much of it as possible. So they disrupt the cycles of the afterlife and then plague the wretched mortals who cannot properly grieve.

Your PC may use Despair to fuel her exceptional feats. She may also take Despair from mortals to keep them from succumbing to it. Every point of Despair removed from a mortal by a PC increases the PC's Despair score by one.

When a mortal's Despair score exceeds ten points, that mortal will do something drastic such as end his own life prematurely and/or violently end those of many others.

Mortals should not have a Despair score of zero, either. A complete lack of despair can lead to various forms of insanity and/or inactivity that can be as damaging to a mortal as too much Despair.

A PC is partially supernatural and may hold anywhere from **zero to twelve Despair points** without deleterious personal effects. However, the more Despair your PC has, the more he will attract the Agents of Oblivion. Despair-fueled actions work quite well on mortals but are ineffective against the Agents of Oblivion and may make them stronger.

Playing the Game

Your character sheet should look something like this:

Name: Monica Larue

Type: Valkyrie

Power: May never be defeated in combat when she is doing her job.

Despair: 3

Skills:

- Drive
 - Athletics
 - History
 - Streetwise
 - Meteorology
-

To perform any action, roll three six-sided dice and add the numbers from them together. If you match or exceed the difficulty number given to you by the game master, you succeed at the action.

If the action is covered by one of the five skills you selected during character generation or if it is something that falls in the purview of your character type (i.e. your free skills) you may add two dice to the roll. Talk to your game master about which activities make sense for your character type and may be considered free skills. For example, horseback riding is a natural fit for a Valkyrie while you can argue that an Ocelotl would know the geography of Mexico like the back of his hand.

If you spend a point of Despair while performing an action, that action **automatically succeeds**. If you spend two or more points of Despair, the action *supernaturally* succeeds and allows you to break the laws of physics or otherwise do things no normal human can.

The only thing that can prevent a Despair-fueled action from succeeding is the intervention of an Agent of Oblivion. Despair-fueled actions performed directly against Agents of Oblivion automatically fail.

When a PC uses her **Power**, it automatically succeeds and it costs no Despair. Despair may not be spent on the use of a Power.

Harvesting Despair

A PC may remove up to two points of Despair from a single mortal in a 24-hour period. A mortal may be reduced to zero Despair in this manner but this is heavily frowned upon by the other psychopomps and the deities they serve. There is no limit to the number of individual mortals a PC may take Despair from.

The process of removing Despair from a mortal varies from character to character and should be something appropriate to the character type. An Ocelotl might use military terms and strong language to keep a mortal from succumbing to Despair. An Akh would be more likely to present a logical case as she quotes facts that make her target feel better.

Difficulties

Easy – 6

Moderate – 10

Challenging – 13

Difficult – 15

Epic – 18

Impossible – 20

Agents of Oblivion

All Agents of Oblivion feed on Despair and will attack Player Characters at any opportunity in order to take their Despair from them. If an agent succeeds in an attack against a PC it will drain 1d6/2 points of Despair. Some Agents use physical attacks while others employ magic, traps, or psychic attacks. Be creative!

Valravn

These creatures often appear as red-black ravens, humans with sharp features, or unnatural bird-human hybrids. They shapeshift at will but only in the forms of humans or birds. They exist to sow chaos and sadness and they will almost never pass up an opportunity to perform some wicked deed. They are impetuous, clever, and once they are on the trail of a source of Despair, they cannot be thrown off.

Lemures

These are the physical forms of the restless spirits of those not given proper burials or other rites. They appear as gaunt, pale humans. They are more patient than their Valravn brethren and they possess physical strength well beyond that which their thin frames would seem to support.

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This game is the result of the 2015 24-hour RPG Contest on RPGGeek.com. It came from three randomly generated elements: *The Dead, Travellers, and Despair*.

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