

# *The Saint's Golem* & *The Devil's Dragon*

*A 24h RPG Alpha draft*

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## *Introduction:*

### *What this is all about*

*This is a draft of a role playing game. You and your fellow players take on the role of saints, prophets, in the struggle of 'Man' vs. 'Evil' and their symbols, 'Mud' and 'Dragon'. And - one of you will be the Dragon.*

*The Dragon, ancient symbol of evil, called Satan, Leviathan, and a host of other names, has risen. His goal: Apocalypse. His method: manifestation as a many-headed Dragon, each of his 9 heads attacking one of God's Commandments, perhaps in the process revealing signs of the apocalypse. Attack until reality and mankind can take no more, and the final cataclysm is upon the earth and mankind. These manifestations may be in the physical realm (yes, Dragon-fire in the sky, Dragon-bile clotting the streets) or in the metaphysical realm – the Dragon attacking the concept of man and his capability to do good, god's service. The Dragon is represented by just one player, and his is the momentous power of evil to fell great swathes.*

*Man is Mud through the way he was shaped - kneaded by God from mud and dust - and the way he tries to harness like powers to benefit fellow man<sup>1</sup>. Much of God's knowledge and power has come down to man through mystical writings & religious Doctrines – the Sefer Yetzirah is an example, but many other mythical texts may be of service. Another example: The Maharal of Prague, and his creation of a Golem to keep his flock safe. All the non-Dragon players are Man and Mud – more numerous, basic, humble, and possibly resilient.*



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<sup>1</sup>Talmud (Tractate Sanhedrin 38b) and mentioned in Christian eulogy.

## *Being a text of ...*

*“The Saint’s Golem and the Devil’s Dragon” was conceived as a mud+dragon entry to the November 2005 ‘Ronnies’ competition. See the 24-hour-RPG website and the Forge.*

*As such, it is custom to describe some thoughts of the designer and stuff left to do. Feel free to skip this section if you could not care less.*

*This 24h RPG alpha draft has little time for color text and fleshing out of the setting (yet), unfortunately. Otherwise many of these points (mystical texts, happenings, setting (era), noteworthy people, religious underpinnings) could be touched upon in text by a period-appropriate speaker, but for now, lists, hints and system will have to do.*

*It is an explicit goal to NOT define which religion or religious rules are right – the making of these choices among the players, and their fortunes - as dictated by the dice and player’s choices - will hopefully allow a peek in the mind and values of other players. Stress between Christianity, Judaism and Islam and their symbols (example: considered that Christianity had the ‘Dragon’ as a symbol for the Ottoman Empire, leading to the founding of the Order of the Dragon and ‘Vlad Tepes’ - one of that order - atrocities) may in the game be a good thing. Images and sources of inspiration are plenty – St. George and the Dragon being one example. I live on St. George Street. I like that example. :)*

*Wikipedia was a source for many texts – the reader may find interesting and inspiring information there.*

*Google picture search turned up many of the pictures.*

*Coffee was the (natural) beverage of choice – the work computer being the place all the text was written, the 2 train trips the place for hammering out mechanics. Dinner was skipped and replaced by 2 stacks of Pringles.*

## *Setting Creation:*

*The setting for this game is flexible, but most of all should allow for the appropriateness of 'mud' (and from it, 'Golem') and 'Dragon' as themes, and the possible interaction between prophets/avatars/saints of differing beliefs.*

*Basically, it depends on the suspension of disbelief the players are capable of. If you are more capable of doing so in a Balkan/Eastern European setting around the time of the Maharal, or Vlad Tepes, and the Holy Roman Empire's struggle against Islam, with Jewish people uprooted all over the place, that is fine.*



*If you prefer other options (fantasy-future, or an edgy modern vibe with more metaphoric use of Dragon & mud, and incorporating current events), that is cool too! The bare bones version that this text is assumes the Balkan setting mentioned.*

## Character Creation:

### *The matter of man*

*If you are a Man, shaped by your Creator out of mud: Your character is a highly religious creature of his time (and as such you should sketch out some basic information on his looks and past), but with something to set him apart – when the Dragon awoke, he found his studies of more power than ever before. Some aspects of his belief have become Doctrine – since he is a saint/prophet, these may be fairly accepted Doctrines, or new ones. A successful Doctrine is like an immunity for him and his flock, and a conserved rite with power – one that allows him to manipulate an actual Golem should the Dragon manifests physically, one that allows him to sway his flock of Man if the Dragon attacks metaphysically. He too is a shaper of Mud – and Men.*

*Whether your character is basically Christian, Jewish or Muslim, 'generic' belief in this game assumes that the "10" commandments (different interpretations exist on the number) are followed to a degree by all mankind. The 10 commandments concern proper behaviour concerning a number of subjects, generalising to the following:*

- *Fate (Heaven?)*
- *God*
- *Truth*
- *Worship*
- *Family*
- *Life*
- *Sex*
- *Property*
- *Law*
- *Knowledge (Wisdom?)*



*You, however, have more specific, more strict rules for your people in mind. As such, you pick 5 commandments you have a deviant Doctrine for; write down these Doctrines and the ways they **restrict** your flock's behaviour (tempting them to break the rule) and **protect** them from the Dragon's attacks on these pillars of virtue. Also write down why your character preaches these specific Doctrines. You are encouraged to write down (some) Doctrines that have meaning to you, the player.*

### *Example*

*St. Adam, a prophet, has been given Doctrines of Life, Family, Fate, Truth and Property. This is his Doctrine of Life: "Thou mayest only take the life of an infidel that hath sinned against thee, and not lacking thy effort to bring him to salvation first".*

*After everyone has written down their 5 Doctrines (with possible discussion), everyone reads them out (starting with the Fate Doctrine, everyone that has one reads it out, then the God Doctrine, etc. etc. etc.).*

*During play, you will have your Doctrines tried and tested, either allowing you and your flock to withstand the Dragon's attempts to break you down, thus proving the Doctrines' worth, or watching them crumble as they fail to help your people (or perhaps your people rebel or subvert it – nobody said they liked their prophet!). You may need to become a martyr for your faith. You may not want to drink that bitter drink from the cup before you. You may try to rely on other prophets, saints, from other beliefs – if your Doctrine and theirs are not too hostile and prevent you from helping each other! The choice is yours.*



## *The conflagration that is Dragon*

*If you are the one chosen to be the **Dragon** player, you create no character. Your sole purpose and power is death, destruction, mayhem.*



*You wield the big die while the Men of Mud merely have their puny resources to fall back on. You are a supernatural powerhouse - but you are also a pre-ordained evil cog in the celestial machine.*

*So you have much less freedom than they – your only decision is **WHERE** to apply your power. As such, revel in your role make the most of what you have – be the glutton of destruction, the destroyer of worlds, the narrator of Man's greatest fall; hit them where they are weak, play them against each other and watch them fall.*

## *Playing the game*

### *The Dragon strikes*

*There are 9 rounds – one for each head the Dragon has. At the start of each round, the Dragon attacks **all** players simultaneously. To determine the power of the attack for this round, the Dragon rolls a 1d10.*

*The Dragon then looks at his cheat sheet (see the end of the document), and selects one of the 10 possible areas of Doctrine to ‘attack’. This attack effects each player equally, in principle. The Dragon player narrates this attack – anything from clouds filled with Dragons, breathing fire over the world, to insidious rumours, wretched feelings, people chafing at their restrictions.*



### *Example*

*The Dragon rolls an 8 – a powerful attack. Having taken a particular disliking to Adam’s Doctrine of Life, he decides he will attack the players in a place where Adam has no Doctrine – Law, for instance.*

*“Dark clouds boil, lightning flashes between them, as a monstrous figure tears from the sky, lightning arcing from its wings and speeding down to earth – to all the courthouses in the grand city.”*

*For inspiration, the page containing the dragon's cheat sheet lists the seals and some trumpets of the apocalypse. Note that your attacks need not be at this scale – small injustice can be just as savoury as mass destruction.*



## *The world quakes – but some are sealed*

*Every prophet that has a Doctrine in that area is immune from the attack. The flock's practises are safe – people rejoice in their leader. Those players that are immune may (in order) give a quick, few-sentence narration on how they (prophet and flock) overcome the trials before them.*

### *Example*

*St. Bartholomew DOES have a Doctrine of Law. It reads “Trust not in the icons and places of Man that dispense Law – follow the Scripture and be prepared to surrender your soul to Divine Mercy.” Bartholomew can easily narrate how this Doctrine would help his flock from the Dragon's attack.*

### *Man strives ...*

*Those Men who do not have Doctrine in the area under attack are vulnerable. Their religious belief do not provide their flock with a prepared way to resist this assault. But perhaps the other Doctrines, together, provide a solid enough framework?*

*Opposition is possible through ‘trying’ Doctrines. Every player may choose to try any of their Doctrines (once each per Dragon attack), in any order, to resist the attack. For each tried Doctrine, that player flips a coin. If it comes up heads, the Dragon head is too strong – the Doctrine gains a level of ‘wanting’ (on the character sheet) and provides no solace.*

*If it comes up tails, the Doctrine has contributed to resisting the attack – reduce the attack power by 1. The player may now give a quick narration (roughly one ‘fact’ or ‘happening’) that protects him and/or his flock from the Dragon's attack. If the attack is still stronger than 0, the Dragon then automatically narrates an escalation of the attack – which the player may try to resist again by trying another Doctrine he has not yet tried during this attack.*

### *Example*

*Adam tries his Doctrine of Property – perhaps the courthouses will not be hurt too badly, or they can be rebuilt. The coin comes up heads, unfortunately, so Adam’s Doctrine of Property gains a level of wanting. He then chooses to try his Doctrine of Truth, and the coin comes up Tails. He quickly narrates how the destruction of the courthouses is a blow to the flock, but his Golem strikes the Dragon with his massively oversized fists, clamping his jaw shut on the forked tongue - and how his follower’s Doctrine on Truth compensates for the loss of the courthouses quite well. The Dragon’s attack is still above 0 power and the Dragon player escalates to a new attack...*

*If the Dragon’s attack is a physical one, that player’s successful moments of resistance are due to Doctrine-related texts and the mystical power they impart to the Golem that player summoned to combat the Dragon. Every Doctrine allows the Golem to manifest a special feature (rock-hard skin, wings, etc.) in the fight against the Dragon, that the player **must** incorporate into his narration.*



*After that player has activated any & all Doctrines of his choosing, the remaining damage is taken straight from that player’s health (see next section) – unless that player **accepts** a Doctrine in that area already possessed by another player as truth (and copies it to his character sheet – see further on). That player may then narrate his prophet’s and flock’s misfortune. After this, move on to the next player, unless two players choose to not stand alone (see further)*

*... for good reason ...*



*To the extent the Dragon's attack is unopposed by each Man, that player loses a number of slots (icons) from their health bar equal to the number the Dragon rolled. If the player loses his last 'face' icon (and thus has only skull*

*icons left), either he has perished, a martyr to his flock - or his flock has perished to such a degree the faith is no longer viable, and he flees them - he is alone.*

*If the player loses his last skull icon, he is removed from the game - a failed prophet of a forgotten faith (but some of his teachings may live on in other faiths).*

*... but needs not stand alone*

*The odds are bad for a Man by himself. Therefore, you may choose to stand together with another prophet and his flock against the Dragon. To be allowed to do so, both players must **not have tried** differing Doctrines in the same area (two differing 'sex' Doctrines, for instance) - because those faiths are then relying on incompatible teachings.*

*Those Doctrines that they are free to test, both players gain the benefit from. It thus pays to try to live together with compatible teachings. Any identical Doctrines in the same area may be tested - once.*

### *Example*

*Adam and St. Christobal both have (differing) Doctrines on Family and Fate. Their remaining Doctrines (Truth, Property and Life for Adam, Sex, God and Worship for Christobal) may be shared by them both as they are not in conflict with each other. In this manner, they have six Doctrines to both fall back on, instead of the five they would normally have.*

### *Accepting Doctrine*

*In this case, for each point that would be lost as damage, the following rule stands:*

- the first point is lost,*
- the second point is given to the player 'donating' the Doctrine (note that this is the only way to gain health, in the game),*
- and the third point is not lost after all (saved).*

*If there are more than 3 points of damage, start the cycle over again. To be allowed to accept this Doctrine from another player, the donating player must agree, and a short conversation is held between those players on how that Doctrine is taught and incorporated (onto the character sheet of the accepting player). A shared Doctrine may, as mentioned, be tested once if two players work together to resist the Dragon and is no hindrance to cooperation.*

### *Example*

*If Adam and Christobal do end up taking a lot of damage from the Dragon, they could each separately choose whether or not to copy Bartholomew's Doctrine on this subject to their character sheet.*

### *Divine inspiration – forming Doctrine*

*If there were no players with Doctrine in the area the Dragon attacked, every player may spontaneously form a Doctrine in that area (some protection is needed, after all!) To form such a Doctrine, the same rule adopting a Doctrine from another player is lost, except the second point is lost, instead of given to a donating player.*

### *Tried Doctrines ... found wanting*

*Sometimes, trying your Doctrine just does not help. When the coin comes up heads, your Doctrine gains a level of 'wanting' (fill in one of the figures on your character sheet). If it ever gains the third level, your Doctrine has proved to be unworthy and is renounced by both you (crisis!) and your flock (more crisis!). Erase that Doctrine from your character sheet and lose an additional icon from your health track,*



### *... or successfully tested*

*You Doctrine can recover from being wanting if it is at level 1 or 2. All levels of wanting are removed if:*

- the Dragon attacks that specific Doctrine (your flock is protected and immune and appreciates the value of the Doctrine)*
- you try your Doctrine, and it works (coin comes up tails)*

## *Ending the game*

*The game ends after the Dragon has attacked 9 times.*

*Has anyone 'won'?*

*You could ask yourself how the Mud has hardened in the Dragon's flames.*

*What does the Dragon's destruction (of everything, perhaps) mean? Have both your prophet and his flock survived? At what cost? How much Doctrine have you had to impose on your flock? Have you tried your Doctrines – and found them worthwhile? How many alien Doctrines did you have to incorporate to survive? How did the other prophets and their Doctrines do, compared to you?*



*Every dead prophet is a **martyr***

*Every lost flock is a **forgotten creed**.*

*The living prophet(s) with ...*

- *the most health are **rocks***
- *the most doctrines are the **lawgivers***
- *the lowest number of Doctrines copied from others are the **pure***
- *the least health are the **brave***
- *the most taught Doctrines are the **teachers***

## The Character of a Man

<i>Name and description:</i>		
	<i>Your Doctrines</i>	<i>Wanting</i>
<i>Fate</i>		☹☹☹
<i>God</i>		☹☹☹
<i>Truth</i>		☹☹☹
<i>Worship</i>		☹☹☹
<i>Family</i>		☹☹☹
<i>Life</i>		☹☹☹
<i>Sex</i>		☹☹☹
<i>Property</i>		☹☹☹
<i>Law</i>		☹☹☹
<i>Knowledge</i>		☹☹☹
<i>Health</i>	😊😊😊 😐😐😐 😞😞😞 ☠☠☠	

## *The Goals of the Dragon*

		<i>Player: ...</i>	<i>Player: ...</i>	<i>Player: ...</i>	<i>Player: ...</i>
		<i>....</i>	<i>....</i>	<i>....</i>	<i>....</i>
<i>Head (d10)</i>	<i>Doctrine</i>				
1	<i>Fate</i>				
2	<i>God</i>				
3	<i>Truth</i>				
4	<i>Worship</i>				
5	<i>Family</i>				
6	<i>Life</i>				
7	<i>Sex</i>				
8	<i>Property</i>				
9	<i>Law</i>				
	<i>Knowledge</i>				

### *Example: Seals and Trumpets*

*A great earthquake. The sun turned black, The moon turned blood-red. The stars (meteorites) fell. The sky was rolled back as a scroll. Earth's population was terrified. A third of the earth, a third of the trees and all the green grass were burned. A third of the sea became like the blood of a dead man. A third of the fish perished and a third of the ships sank. A third of the rivers of water were made bitter and many people died. The sun, moon and the stars were then darkened by a third.*