

THE KINGDOM OF GLASS

This is a story about the ancient history of a mighty civilisation.

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Author: Ben Wright

Theme: Timed in 3 session of 3 hours.

Ingredients: Ancient, Emotion and Glass.

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History

“Listen close, my child, and I shall tell you the story of how the Kingdom came to be. It is a story of blood and honour, and it shall teach you why we pledge our lives to the King, and why outsiders are worthy of neither our respect nor our compassion.”

- Elder Temmut

The story lasts several centuries, although we will only hear parts of the story from the three most important times in the Kingdom's history.

The Era of Posterity

The Kingdom was not always a mighty empire. It grew from one powerful tribe among many. During this era, the Kingdom was founded.

The Bleak Desert is a horrible place, where even the hardest desert folk struggle to survive. The rich lands near the Great River are home to many tribes that live a bronze-age existence. The river rises in the inhospitable Claw Mountains, and snakes through flood plains to the coast. The sea is known for its fearsome currents and deadly storms, and is colloquially known as the Lash. The sea and the desert mean that the tribes of the Great River are cut off from the rest of the world almost totally.

The greatest of these tribes lived next to the delta at the mouth of the Great River. They were rich and powerful to begin with, having such prime land, but their wise men made a discovery that would shape the future of the whole region.

They created glass.

Although mere trinkets, they were much sought after. They could buy mercenaries, food, and peace. Before long the Tribe of Glass was on the verge of uniting all of the other tribes underneath it.

The Era of Prosperity is a story of those few critical months when the Kingdom was founded.

The Era of Turmoil

Two hundred years have passed. Most of the tribes of the Great River now owe fealty to the Glass Crown. The Kingdom is a military power unchallenged around the Great River. However, there are many threats to the stability of the Kingdom that must be met for it to prosper.

The glasswrights have made improvements to their craft. Glass tokens are used as currency, and clear glass makes its first appearance in the windows of temples and palaces.

Not all is well, however. Desert barbarians have found routes through the Bleak Desert and covet the fertile lands and wealth of the Kingdom of Glass. Tall ships capable of braving the Lash have appeared on the coast, containing arrogant foreign barbarians and their alien iron weapons.

Not all threats are external, either. Religious authority is starting to challenge the crown, and the distant parts of the Kingdom are threatening to rebel over a series of poor harvests and a number of plagues.

The Glass Crown must endure, and the Era of Turmoil is a story of struggle to keep it rich and prosperous.

The Era of Enlightenment

Three hundred years have passed. The Kingdom of Glass extends all the way from the Lash to the Claw Mountains. Iron deposits have been found in the mountains, and the wealth of the Kingdom is so great it can buy what it cannot make itself. As the foremost mercantile power in the world, the Kingdom runs caravans all across the Bleak Desert, and its seamen have mastered the rigours of the Lash.

The Glasswrights have reached the pinnacle of their art, creating elegant clear and coloured glass artefacts that are prized all over the world. They have also started to make scientific apparatus, which has caused the superstition of alchemy to fracture into the sciences of metallurgy, chemistry and medicine.

For all its wealth, the Kingdom is troubled. Refugees from less noble nations are pouring across the borders, and some envious foreign crowns are starting to call for war. The Kingdom has grown so large that it has become almost impossible to control all of it, and the ancient laws and authority are starting to crumble. Increasingly people look to the glasswrights for advice and judgement.

Worse still, some of the immigrants carry a deadly plague, one that might decimate the population if left unchecked.

The Era of Enlightenment tells the story of the last days of the Kingdom of Glass, before it became the Republic of Steam.

“We are lucky, brother mine. Lucky to have been born into this Kingdom and lucky that it stays good for us. Let me tell you how the Kingdom came to be, if you have the time, and how our fathers made peace with their neighbours so that we might work together for the good of all.”

- Bardmaiden Hemmeth

Playing Kingdom of Glass

“On the fifth hour of the third day, the High Priest decrees that the barbarians from the sea are unclean. Good men should not deal with them. This follows the decree from the King that they be denied anchorage. Their foul and corrupt tools should be cast back into the sea wherever they are found. Should a house of low women consort with them the doors and windows should be shut on them and the house put to flame so they do not pollute us with their vile progeny.”

- From the Scrolls of the Law of the High Priest

Players

You will need between 4 and 9 people to play, although 5 is recommended. One will be the Game Moderator, who should ideally have a firm grasp of the rules and will need to remain as impartial as possible as they moderate the game. Other players are encouraged to make suggestions to the GM, but should remember that the GM's word is final.

The game consists of three sessions of approximately three hours each.

The Goal

Each character is the chosen of one particular god. Their goal is to see to it that the Aspects of the Kingdom match that god the most closely at the end of the third session.

More generally, the entire group has an opportunity to create the history of an entire kingdom over five hundred years. It is an exercise in collaborative creation. The outline history above imposes some restrictions, but within that structure the players have complete freedom as to how the kingdom develops.

The Three Aspects

There are three Aspects in the world of the Kingdom of Glass. Each Aspect represents one group of concepts.

The Kingdom itself has a number rating in each of the Aspects that fluctuates as the game is played. This represents how strong that Aspect is in the life of the Kingdom.

Characters also have the three Aspects, that act as skills for them. Character creation is performed at the start of the first session.

There are also three High Offices of the Kingdom, each of which is associated with one of the Aspects.

A description of the Aspects is provided in the following table.

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>High Office</i>	<i>Kingdom Aspect</i>	<i>Character Skill</i>
Ancient	The power of authority and law, passed down through the ages. Also encompasses physical or military strength.	King	How well law is respected in the borders of the Kingdom, and how its laws are employed by those in charge.	Strength of arms and the wielding of authority.
Emotion	Passion and determination, arising from both social and religious concerns.	High Priest	The overall piety of the Kingdom, and how expressive of their emotions its people are.	Negotiation and other forms of social interaction not reliant on authority.
Glass	Discovery and intellect, the prizing of the new and novel. The Aspect of science and progress.	Chief Glasswright	How much intelligence and craft are valued in the Kingdom, and the abundance of their fruits.	Solving abstract or mechanical problems.

The Pantheon

There are eight gods in the pantheon of the Kingdom of Glass. Each has either a presence or absence of each of the three Aspects, which determines their nature. The presence or absence of these Aspects in the Kingdom determine which god is the chief god at that time. The gods and their Aspects are given in the following table.

<i>God</i>	<i>Aspects</i>	<i>Nature</i>
The Void	None	The absence of all virtue and the desire to destroy or despoil everything.
The Judge	Ancient	The embodiment of law, justice and tradition above all else.
The Lover	Emotion	That which seeks to destroy all restrictions on desires and passions, and acts without restraint.
The Craftsman	Glass	That which pursues the advancement of craft and knowledge above all else, without regard to the true cost.
The Hierophant	Ancient and Emotion	One who seeks a return to a romantic idyll, founded on order and nature and antithetical to craft.
The Contemplative	Ancient and Glass	The embodiment of unemotional conduct, founded on law and intellect without permitting love or hate.
The Anarchist	Emotion and Glass	The proliferation of arts, crafts and humanity outside the restrictions of laws or codes of behaviour.
The Balance	All	The presence of all virtues in equal measure, holding equality more important than excellence.

You will need cards or something similar to assign gods to the players. Simple scraps of paper will do if you're pressed. A player's god is kept secret from everyone (even the GM) until the end of the game.

Accomplishing Tasks

As you play the game, your character will encounter situations where your skills are put to the test. Whenever this happens, the GM determines which of your Aspects is most appropriate for the task at hand, and how difficult the task is (including appropriate circumstances). You then roll a number of dice equal to your Aspect and count how many dice land as 5 or more.

If this number of dice is equal to or greater than the number the GM has determined to be the difficulty, then you have succeeded at the task. The GM narrates a sensible outcome of your task, with your help and suggestions.

If you failed at the task, the GM narrates your failure. Note that your character, being the chosen of a god, cannot die, although failure at the task may have consequences for the Kingdom.

The margin of success or failure has no direct impact, although it can be incorporated into the narration of the outcome and the GM may consider it when adjudicating the crisis.

Should a player fail at a task, that specific task may not be attempted again in that session, even by another player. Characters may, however, attempt tasks to achieve the same goal through different means.

The GM should determine the difficulty of a task based on these broad categories:

<i>Difficulty</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Chance of Success</i>			<i>Examples</i>
		Average person	Skilled person	Highly skilled	
1	Relatively simple but non-trivial task. Skilled characters should seldom fail.	70%	91%	96%	Fighting an enemy with a superior force. Having an unfriendly person accept a gift. Spotting an obvious clue at the scene.
2	Reasonably complex task that is worthy of skilled characters, although average characters still have a chance.	26%	65%	80%	Winning an evenly matched battle. Negotiating a fair trade with an unfriendly person. Navigating correctly by the stars with no tools.
3	Challenging task that only the skilled have a realistic chance of succeeding at.	4%	32%	53%	Scoring an heroic victory on the field of battle. Hoodwinking an enemy into an unfair deal. Devising a fool-proof battle plan.
4	Task so difficult that even the most skilled fail frequently.	0%	10%	26%	Holding a bridge against an army with only a small force. Talking an enemy into surrendering a valuable item. Inferring a barbarian's name from their dress and accent.

Help and Hindrance

Other character may offer support or opposition in a task. To do so, they must describe exactly how their character is doing so. Each character who offers help grants the helped character an extra dice to roll. Each character who hinders removes one dice that would otherwise be rolled. A character can find themselves reduced to no dice at all.

The Sands of Time

Although the characters are the chosen of the their god, the divine inspiration is only in them for limited periods of time. These occur infrequently and briefly and are the game sessions that are played. The characters must act swiftly and decisively if they are to serve their god well.

Although the sessions and the eras they represent are hundreds of years apart, the characters are constant. They are not the literal same characters, of course, but their spiritual inheritors. They may also happen to be descendants of the previous characters, although this need not be the case.

Each session is divided into three parts, or 'phases'. They should be strictly timed and last exactly 1 hour. After 50 minutes of the third phase, normal play stops to draw together the events of the session.

In each session, one of the Aspects is ascendant. This means that any character performing a task with that Aspect gets a bonus die to roll. This does not change their own Aspect, just their effectiveness at the task in hand.

<i>Session</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Aspect</i>
1	Era of Posterity	Ancient
2	Era of Turmoil	Emotion
3	Era of Enlightenment	Glass

In the same way, each of the three phases of a session will grant another bonus die.

<i>Section</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Aspect</i>
1	0:00 – 1:00	The Dawn	Glass
2	1:00 – 2:00	The Noon	Emotion
3	2:00 – 3:00	The Dusk	Ancient

So, during the first phase of the first session, tasks using Glass or Ancient will be easier to complete. During the second phase of the second session, attempts to complete Emotion tasks will have two bonus dice.

The total number of dice rolled when attempting a task is therefore:

Character Aspect + bonus dice from the Sands of Time + help – hindrance.

Have something (such as an alarm clock) to time the lengths of the phases. Whenever the time is up, the phase changes immediately, including the bonus dice. If a player was about to roll when the transition occurred, they must adjust their dice before rolling. If they had rolled, but the result had not been narrated, then they either gain or lose *successful* dice, as appropriate. If narration is in

progress, then there is no adjustment.

Towards the end of the third phase of each session, the game enters a special phase called 'The Night' where preparations are made for the next session (in the first two), or the game is concluded (in the last). The precise tasks the GM must carry out are given in the in-depth sequence of play in the next section.

Crises

A crisis is some important problem facing the Kingdom that needs to be overcome. Players and the GM can make new crises during the course of play. Crises should follow these principles:

- The crisis should reflect the current position and power of the Kingdom.
- The crisis should be important to the well-being of the Kingdom, relative to its current size and power. Thus, a missing child may be a crisis in the first era, but will not be important enough in either of the others unless the child's parents are important political figures.
- The nature of the crisis should be readily inferred from its name.
- The crisis should be able to be resolved (positively or negatively) in a number of different ways, using different Aspects. Different ways of solving the crisis should yield different difficulties.
- The crisis should not be trivial- it should take around 3 or 4 tasks to complete, but this may vary considerably.
- The crisis should not restrict which characters may participate in its resolution.

Only one crisis will be dealt with at a time, and all the players may participate in its resolution. As the characters attempt to resolve the crisis they can be called upon to make task checks. As these checks succeed or fail, so does that attempt to resolve the crisis.

Picking a Crisis

Crisis resolution begins when a player picks a crisis to be the one the characters will deal with next.

The GM frames the crisis in a few simple sentences, introducing the principal location and non-player characters associated with the crisis. This sets the scene for crisis resolution and should provide some inspiration as to how to address it.

The characters then arrive at the scene of the crisis, and take it in turns to describe what they will do to resolve it. The player who picked the crisis gets the first opportunity to resolve it, and play proceeds clockwise around the table. Players may interject with their characters' reactions to an event, but do not influence the sequence of play or the task at hand.

Taking a Turn

The current player then narrates what their character will do to try and resolve the crisis. If they attempt a specific task, then they make the appropriate task check. They may opt to skip an attempt, and go straight to Following Up.

Other characters have one opportunity per crisis to help or hinder. They choose whether they are doing so for this action. Helping or hindering in this way both use the same single opportunity to interfere.

Once the GM has narrated the outcome of the task, the player may Follow Up.

Following Up

The player will likely have some reaction to how his task went. He may also state what he is starting to do following the task, in response to it. This has no effect in itself, but if another character later in the sequence performs a task that takes advantage of this follow up, then the first character may offer a bonus help die. This bonus help die does not count as the single help or hindrance die each character gets. However, a character may not combine a bonus help die with their normal help die, and the bonus die must be help and not hindrance. This bonus help die can only be used once, and does not carry over if the character receives another turn before it is used.

For example, while investigating the theft of a valuable glass vase, character A asks around to try to see if anyone saw anything. Following the task check, he states that he's going to look around the scene of the crime for clues as his follow up. Later in the turn sequence, character B decides to comb the vault for clues. Because of character A's follow up, character B will get a help die. Character A still has his normal help or hindrance die to use later in the crisis.

Resolving the Crisis

The crisis is considered 'resolved' whenever there is nothing more that can be achieved. This may be because successful task checks have defused the crisis, or it may be that there have been sufficient failed rolls that nothing more can usefully be done. It may be even be because the outcome of a previous task check has rendered the crisis moot. The GM narrates the conclusion of the crisis after the last task check is made.

When a crisis has been resolved, the GM determines which Aspect or Aspects of the Kingdom were exercised, and whether this was in a positive or destructive way. The Aspects of the Kingdom will change based on the ruling. Each Aspect may only change by at most one point, but there must always be some change when a crisis resolved.

The GM should keep a note of the outcome of the tasks attempted and how each individual attempt will influence the Kingdom. When the crisis finishes, he should decide what the aggregate change is in the Kingdom. Task attempts will usually influence the matching Aspect in the Kingdom, although they can be different. The maximum number of Aspects that may change depends on the session and phase numbers, as presented in the following table.

<i>Session</i>	<i>Phase 1</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>	<i>Phase 3</i>
Era of Posterity	1	1	1
Era of Turmoil	1	1	2
Era of Enlightenment	1	2	3

Here is a guide on how to adjudicate character actions in terms of Aspect adjustments.

<i>Adjustment</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Increase Ancient	Heroic victory in battle, exercising the law with fairness, using personal strength for good.
Decrease Ancient	Slaughter, enforcing blind obedience to authority, losing a battle.
Increase Emotion	Promoting tolerance and friendship, keeping promises and deals, presenting religion as a constructive force.
Decrease Emotion	Rank betrayal, spreading outright lies, presenting religion as a destructive force.
Increase Glass	Solving problems with lateral thought, building noble works and defensive buildings, encouraging education.
Decrease Glass	Subterfuge and laying traps, creating or employing torture devices, creating poisons or highly destructive weapons.

Wherever the turn sequence had got to this crisis, the next player to select a crisis will be to the left of the player that selected this one.

An Example Crisis

In the Dawn of Era of Posterity, there is the crisis: 'Barbarians are threatening to invade a town'. Kehmet is the next character to select a crisis.

GM: A group of belligerent barbarians have appeared near to the Tribe of Glass. They are threatening a medium-sized town on the edge of the desert. The town itself consists of mud single-storey houses. The hillside where the barbarians are camped is clearly visible, which is causing much consternation among the townsfolk.

Kehmet, the respected warrior who chose the crisis, arrives at the scene. He is followed by Askutem, a woman of the tribe, and Rutek the glasswright.

Kehmet: How large is this force of barbarians? Could we just beat them?

GM: If you rallied all of the warriors of the Tribe, you could beat them, but it would cost many lives. You'd also have to leave the other borders unguarded.

Askutem: Is the barbarian camp organised or disordered? Do they look like they mean business?

GM: It's difficult to tell too much from this distance, but it looks fairly disorganised. From what you've heard they're more desperate than anything else.

Kehmet: I'd like to gather a band of fierce warriors for a show of force and see if I can encourage the barbarians to move on. I'll assemble them at the foot of the hill with banners and spears.

Kehmet's player chose this crisis, so gets to act first. He rolls Ancient to cow the barbarians. He has Ancient 4, and the era gives him another Ancient die. No-one offers to help him. He rolls 5 dice against a difficulty of 3. He fails.

GM: The barbarians are not impressed. They seem confident in their numbers.

Kehmet: I'll keep the band of warriors around, to protect everyone else and to fight a rear-guard action if the barbarians attack.

GM: Okay, that's your follow-up. Askutem, what do you do?

Askutem: If they're desperate, maybe we can buy them off. We brought some glass beads with us, so I'll take some other women and present them to the barbarians to persuade them to move on.

GM: Okay. Kehmet's warriors will accompany you, but they're not any use in the task at hand to they don't count as help.

Rutek: I'll go along with her and present some of my finest glasswork.

Askutem's player goes next. She rolls Emotion to have the barbarians accept the gifts. She has Emotion 5. Rutek donates his one help die this crisis. She rolls 6 dice against a difficulty of 1. She succeeds.

GM: The barbarians are impressed with these tokens, but some among them are insisting that it would be better to attack and take all the trinkets for themselves. Overall they seem less hostile, though.

Askutem: I'll try to make friends among the barbarians. If any of them want to lay down their arms and join the town, I'll let them.

GM: Rutek, what do you do?

Rutek: While I'm on the hill, I notice that the pattern of winds suggests a sandstorm is on the way. Without alerting the barbarians, I'll gather everyone indoors in the town. We'll let the storm lash them and see what's left.

GM: Right. Some of them may come seeking shelter, so Askutem's follow-up will kick in for an extra die.

Kehmet: I disapprove of this dishonourable approach, so once I get wind of it I'll send a messenger to the hill to try and warn them.

GM: Okay, that's your one hindrance for this crisis.

Rutek's player rolls Glass to correctly predict the coming of the sandstorm. He has Glass 5, and it is the first phase so he gets an extra Glass die. Askutem's bonus help gives him another die, but Kehmet's hindrance takes it away. He rolls a total of 6 dice against a difficulty of 3. He succeeds.

GM: Around a quarter of the nomads surrendered, with another quarter perishing. The remainder toughed it out. Some of those decide to cut their losses and leave, but the most belligerent ones have remained.

Rutek: I'll keep watch on those that surrendered so they don't cause trouble.

GM: Fair enough. Kehmet?

Kehmet: Now their numbers are much reduced, I'll gather the warriors and rout them.

Askutem: I'll help him pick out trouble-makers I learned about when I was talking to the barbarians.

GM: You can make that your help die for the crisis, because the one before was free.

Kehmet rolls Ancient to fight the barbarians. He has the same 5 dice as before, but adds another one for Askutem's help. He has 6 dice total against a difficulty of 1. He succeeds.

GM: The remainder of the barbarians are routed, and the glassware they had been given recovered to boot.

The crisis is over. The GM considers how to adjudicate it. Kehmet's two tasks were both in the Ancient Aspect, but the failure and the success more-or-less cancel one another out.

Askutem's action presented Emotion in a positive way. It's more difficult to decide whether Rutek's action was positive or negative, although Askutem's help probably makes it the former because some were saved. Askutem's action was more clearly positive than Rutek's so the GM decides:

GM: I'll say that Askutem's persuasion was the most significant, so increase the Kingdom's Emotion by one point. She also gets to pick the next crisis, as she's after Kehmet.

If the crisis has occurred in a later session, the GM would have had the option to change more than one Aspect. In this example, he probably would have chosen to increase Glass by one as well.

Well-stated crises will reflect the state of the Kingdom in the current era, and may well draw on previous crises or outstanding crises for motivation.

If a crisis involves an element of mystery, such as finding a murderer, then the crisis should not state the solution to the mystery. The solution is built as the players attempt tasks until the GM determines that the crisis has been resolved.

“When the barbarian king arrived with his forces, he found the gates of the city open. Peasants lined the streets from the gate to the palace, looking on as though at a procession. The Barbarian king was puzzled, for he had expected stiff resistance. He led his men through the streets, past the glorious temples and towers. When he arrived at the palace he saw the great hall lined with tables for a mighty feast, with the King Memek and his advisors already sat down ready to eat. The barbarian king thought himself so great that the Kingdom of Glass had surrendered. Servants brought food and wine in great quantities, and the barbarians soon put down their weapons to eat. After the barbarian king has eaten his fill, the King Memek spoke. He said that if the barbarians wished to live in such luxury, all they had to do was swear fealty to the Glass Crown. The barbarian king looked around and saw that the servants were in fact soldiers with spears at the ready, and that his own men were too full of wine to fight properly. He realised that for all his strength and cunning, the Kingdom was greater and wiser still.”

- The Story of Memek

Sequence of Play

“A clear day. In most aspects the experiment was a success. One of the mirrors had subtle imperfections that prevented its effective use, and the bearings on the mounting of a second failed and left it in a fixed position. The third, however, behaved admirably. Its range was not as great as we had expected, but its effects were devastating, particularly on the enemy's morale. The burns inflicted by the parabolic mirror were substantial, even where the target survived. The experiment had to be cut short because the barbarian army fled in terror. The device seems to bear out the promise of the smaller-scale mirrors in the trials on slaves. This afternoon I shall examine one of the survivors to see how deeply into the flesh the burns were inflicted.”

- Journal of Maramet Khana

The sequence of play for the game is given below by session and phase. For convenience, reference sheets specific to each session are provided later.

In some circumstances, two or more players will be tied for a role or some privilege. Whenever this happens, determine the player who receives the benefit randomly from within the candidates.

When play passes from one player to another, it passes clockwise. The GM is not part of this sequence.

Phase 1: The Dawn

0:00 – 1:00

Bonus to Glass

Crises resolved in this phase will affect exactly one Aspect of the Kingdom.

Character Creation (Only in Session 1)

The players must create their character. They are assigned a god at random to serve. There may be no duplicates, and this god is kept secret until the very end of the game. From there, they must arrive at a personality for the character, and the role they fill in the Tribe of Glass. They must have some seniority within the tribe, so that they may act on the tribe's behalf in the crises that will follow. Players should discuss their ideas with each other and the GM, to avoid duplication, before settling on their character. Then they assign ten points to their Aspects, with a minimum of one point in each Aspect. This assignment need not reflect the Aspects of their god.

Character creation should not take long- certainly no longer than 10 minutes.

Character Reintroduction (Sessions 2 and 3)

The players briefly describe the stations their characters have in the current era, as related to the offices awarded in the previous session. They also describe in what way the character is the successor of their previous character, be it through inheritance,

reincarnation or simply similar goals and skills.

Character reintroduction should only take a couple of minutes.

Create the Kingdom

Create the Kingdom- it has number ratings in each of the three Aspects. At the start of the first session, these all start at 4. In future sessions, they start where they were at the conclusion of the previous session. Use poker chips or dice to show the current ratings on a convenient piece of paper where no-one will pick things up off it unwittingly. There should also be space on the Kingdom or a separate piece of paper to write in the outstanding crises for this session.

Initial Crises

The GM and the players create a number of crises facing the Kingdom, as given in the following table:

<i>Era</i>	<i>Compulsory crises</i>	<i>GM crises</i>	<i>Player crises (each)</i>
1	Founding the Kingdom, Selecting the King	4	1
2	Desert Barbarians Attack, Northern Barbarians Land	4	1
3	The Plague	1	2

The compulsory crises are always present in their era, and are summarised below:

Founding the Kingdom- The surrounding tribes must be made to join the Tribe of Glass, by whatever means necessary. If this crisis is unresolved, the Glass Aspect of the Kingdom drops to 0.

Selecting the King- The putative Kingdom must devise a means of selecting its King. The actual selection need not be played out, but the Tribe must be made to agree on what the process shall be. If this crisis is unresolved, the Ancient Aspect of the Kingdom drops to 0.

Desert Barbarians Attack- Nomads are harassing the fringes of the Kingdom. Something must be done. If this crisis is unresolved, all three Aspects of the Kingdom drop by 1.

Northern Barbarians Land- Strange ships have come across the Lash. How shall the Kingdom deal with them? If this crisis is unresolved, the Emotion Aspect of the Kingdom drops to 0.

The Plague- A deadly contagious disease is threatening to sweep throughout the Kingdom. Can it be contained? If this crisis is unresolved, all three Aspects of the Kingdom drop by 2.

The GM writes in his crises next, chosen as he sees fit. The other players may then add theirs, in whatever order they wish, as inspiration comes to them. The compulsory crises may only be attempted in the third phase of the session.

Start the First Turn

Once the crises have been written, the starting player will take the first turn. The starting player will be the current King. In the first session, where there is no King, the character with the highest Ancient Aspect will be the first player.

The starting player selects a crisis from anywhere on the list (apart from a compulsory one), and the players begin to resolve it. When the crisis is resolved, one way or the other, it is crossed off the list and the next player in sequence selects the next crisis. Continue in this way until the next phase.

Phase 2: The Noon

1:00 – 2:00

Bonus to Emotion

Crises resolved in this phase will affect exactly one Aspect of the Kingdom, except in the third session where one or two may be affected.

Continue Play

Play continues as in phase 1, except that if there are less than 8 outstanding crises a player may add a crisis instead of selecting one to deal with. The next player then has their turn.

Should the last outstanding crisis be resolved, the GM must supply a new one.

Phase 3: The Dusk

2:00 – 2:50

Bonus to Ancient

Crises resolved in this phase can affect a maximum number of Aspects of the Kingdom equal to the session number, with a minimum of one.

Continue Play

Play continues as in phase 2, except that new crises may only be introduced by players if there are less than 4 outstanding crises. Compulsory crises may now also be attempted.

Phase 4: The Night

2:50 – 3:00

Bonus to Ancient

Adjudicate Outstanding Crises

The current crisis finishes immediately. If the GM was narrating the resolution of the crisis when phase 3 ended, then he continues to do so and adjust Aspects as though in phase 3 before considering the remaining crises. If the players were still in the process of resolving the crisis, it is counted as being unresolved, although the progress made may influence the GM's adjudication of it.

Unresolved crises change the Aspects of the Kingdom in an appropriate way given that they weren't even attempted. They may only affect one Aspect each, or may affect none, at the GM's discretion. Compulsory crises come with fixed penalties for being unresolved, use these instead.

Assign Offices

The offices of the Kingdom are assigned to the characters in the order given below. Once a character has been given an office they are not considered for any more. In this way, most players will receive an office. There are 3 High Offices and 3 Lesser Offices.

King- the character whose Ancient Aspect matches the Kingdom's Ancient Aspect the closest becomes King. Where two or more characters are equidistant, favour the higher. If there is still a tie, the character with the highest Glass Aspect becomes King. The character receives two permanent points in their Ancient Aspect.

High Priest- the character whose Emotion Aspect matches the Kingdom's Emotion Aspect the closest becomes High Priest. Where two or more characters are equidistant, favour the higher. If there is still a tie, the character with the highest Ancient Aspect becomes High Priest. The character receives two permanent points in their Emotion Aspect.

Chief Glasswright- the character whose Glass Aspect matches the Kingdom's Glass Aspect the closest becomes Chief Glasswright. Where two or more characters are equidistant, favour the higher. If there is still a tie, the character with the highest Emotion Aspect becomes Chief Glasswright. The character receives two permanent points in their Glass Aspect.

General- the character with the highest Ancient Aspect becomes General and gains one permanent point in their Ancient Aspect.

Bard- the character with the highest Emotion Aspect becomes Bard and gains one permanent point in their Emotion Aspect.

Scribe- the character with the highest Glass Aspect becomes Scribe and gains one permanent point in their Glass Aspect.

Final Adjustment (Only in Session 3)

The King may adjust the Ancient Aspect of the Kingdom one point in either direction. The High Priest may adjust the Emotion Aspect of the Kingdom one point in either direction. The Chief Glasswright may adjust the Glass Aspect of the Kingdom one point in either direction.

Determine Pre-eminent God

The GM sees which Aspects the Kingdom currently has rated at 5 or more. These Aspects are considered 'present' in the Kingdom, and the others 'absent'. The god with the same present and absent Aspects becomes the chief god of the Kingdom. In sessions 1 and 2 this is only for background flavour for the next session.

Reveal Gods (Only in Session 3)

Each player reveals the god they were serving. If a player was serving the newly-determined chief god, they have won the game. If no players had that god, then no-one wins. Players with gods that differ from the pre-eminent god in only one Aspect tie for second place- even if there was no winner.

Of course, in reality everyone wins if they enjoyed themselves.

Ready for Next Session (Sessions 1 and 2)

The GM records the current Aspects of the Kingdom, and keeps the list of crises for future reference if needed. The players make sure their character sheet is in good order and take it with them. Remember to bring it next time.

Between sessions the players have time to come up with ideas for new crises.

“Although a man of intellect, I find myself continually drawn to pray in the face of this calamity. Scores are dying here in the sanatorium every day, despite our efforts. All our devices have failed, and news has reached us that the first few victims have succumbed in the capital. The bush my assistant brought down from the mountains, that the Empek scrolls suggested was a cure, is one known to be highly poisonous. It would be unethical to test it on one of my patients, even if they are sure to die anyway. Now that the first sores have appeared on my hands I shall test its efficacy on myself. May the gods watch over me.”

-Diary of Beklem Wen

Tips for Players

When selecting the initial Aspects for your character, there are several strategies you can try. If you make a balanced character, you will have equal influence over all 3 Aspects of the Kingdom and thus the best flexibility. If you base your Aspects on those of your god, then pursuing your god's agenda will also make it more likely that you receive a High Office. If you make your Aspects opposed to your god's, then if things are going badly then you are more likely to receive a High Office and will be well-placed to correct matters.

When considering how to handle a crisis, remember that withholding help can be as good as attempting an opposite task or hindering. If you try to undo the good work of others too often you will lack help when you need it.

Look to see which other players seem keen to help you in certain Aspects, the chances are their god shares the presence or absence of that Aspect with yours and thus you can count on them to help in that Aspect in the future.

If leaving a crisis unresolved will help you, don't pick it! Creating crises that will help you if unresolved can be a sneaky tactic to follow. As is creating crises that suit your agenda when tackled.

You can ask the GM for his opinion on what Aspects of the Kingdom will change in response to events.

After the first session, your character may have some authority over the Kingdom. If so, you need not even intervene personally in affairs and instead send assistants or groups of people to carry out your will. You may even save the Kingdom without ever leaving the palace!

Tips for the GM

Be as consistent as possible when deciding how to adjust the Kingdom.

Just because a crisis can affect more than one Aspect of the Kingdom at this stage of the game doesn't mean it has to.

Give feedback to the players about how you will adjudicate their actions and outstanding crises.

Make sure that interested players have opportunity to participate in the current crisis. Prevent players from monopolising the early tasks by directly asking other players what they want to do.

You don't know what the players' gods are, so you can't really cheat.

You can use the number of tasks in a crisis as a way to balance the speed of play. If the players are providing rich descriptions of the tasks then you can reduce the number of tasks per crisis, and vice versa. Don't let the mechanics get in the way of good roleplaying.

The Crisis Matrix

Here is a table of crisis ideas, sorted by era.

<i>Era of Posterity</i>	<i>Era of Turmoil</i>	<i>Era of Enlightenment</i>
A missing man	A heretic speaks	Theft of the Crown Jewels
Brother against brother	Bandits in the hills	An attack of ergotism
One of our pyramids is missing	A traitor in our midst	Our children are ignoring the old ways
An invading tribe	Who killed the eunuch?	The people demand more say
The Beast of the mountains	The northerners bring syphilis	A dangerous invention
A sudden rain of fish	A serial murderer is at large	The glasswrights defy the King
A neighbouring tribe is causing trouble	Cultists strike at a ceremony	A province demands independence
The well is dry	We have too few soldiers	Corruption in high places
An arsonist at large	Holy visions	An old tomb is discovered
Two men wish to fight a duel to the death	Two powerful nobles are on the brink of waging war on each other	Our trade caravans are being attacked
A village chief's daughter is kidnapped	Cholera	A country is threatening our glass monopoly
Townfolk say their leader is a tyrant	The priesthood want a share of power	A philosopher has written a controversial scroll
A neighbouring tribe want blood money	Someone influential has gone mad	A country has declared war on us

Author's Note

The idea that glass is a significant factor in the rise of science is discussed in the book 'The Glass Bathyscaphe' by Alan MacFarlane and Gerry Martin and published in the UK by Profile Books in 2002. While I don't think it was quite as important as the the book contends, it's certainly a seductive idea and one I used extensively in the background for the Kingdom of Glass.

Session 1 Play Guide

Phase 1: The Dawn

0:00 – 1:00

Bonuses to Ancient and Glass

Crises resolved in this phase will affect exactly one Aspect of the Kingdom.

Character Creation

The players must create their character. They are assigned a god at random to serve. There may be no duplicates, and this god is kept secret until the very end of the game. From there, they must arrive at a personality for the character, and the role they fill in the Tribe of Glass. Then they assign ten points to their Aspects, with a minimum of one point in each Aspect.

Create the Kingdom

Create the Kingdom- it has number ratings in each of the three Aspects. At the start of the first session, these all start at 4. Use poker chips or dice to show the current ratings on a convenient piece of paper where no-one will pick things up off it unwittingly. There should also be space on the Kingdom or a separate piece of paper to write in the outstanding crises for this session.

Initial Crises

The GM adds the following crises:

Founding the Kingdom

Selecting the King

The GM then adds 4 crises of his choice.

Each player then adds 1 crisis.

Start the First Turn

Once the crises have been written, the starting player will take the first turn. The starting player will be the character with the highest Ancient Aspect.

The starting player selects a crisis from anywhere on the list (apart from a compulsory one), and the players begin to resolve it.

Phase 2: The Noon

1:00 – 2:00

Bonuses to Ancient and Emotion

Crises resolved in this phase will affect exactly one Aspect of the Kingdom. Players may introduce new crises if there are less than 8 available.

Phase 3: The Dusk

2:00 – 2:50

Double bonus to Ancient

Crises resolved in this phase will affect exactly one Aspect of the Kingdom. Players may introduce crises if there are less than 4 available. Compulsory crises may be attempted.

Phase 4: The Night

2:50 – 3:00

Double bonus to Ancient

Adjudicate Outstanding Crises

The current crisis finishes immediately. If the GM was narrating the resolution of the crisis when phase 3 ended, then he continues to do so and adjust Aspects as though in phase 3 before considering the remaining crises. If the players were still in the process of resolving the crisis, it is counted as being unresolved, although the progress made may influence the GM's adjudication of it.

Unresolved crises change the Aspects of the Kingdom in an appropriate way given that they weren't even attempted. They may only affect one Aspect each, or may affect none, at the GM's discretion. Compulsory crises come with fixed penalties for being unresolved, use these instead.

Assign Offices

The offices of the Kingdom are assigned to the characters in the order given below. Once a character has been given an office they are not considered for any more. In this way, most players will receive an office. There are 3 High Offices and 3 Lesser Offices.

King, High Priest, Chief Glasswright, General, Bard, Scribe

Determine Pre-eminent God

The GM sees which Aspects the Kingdom currently has rated at 5 or more. These Aspects are considered 'present' in the Kingdom, and the others 'absent'. The god with the same present and absent Aspects becomes the chief god of the Kingdom.

Ready for Next Session

The GM records the current Aspects of the Kingdom, and keeps the list of crises for future reference if wanted. The players make sure their character sheet is in good order and take it with them. Remember to bring it next time.

Between sessions the players have time to come up with ideas for new crises.

Session 2 Play Guide

Phase 1: The Dawn

0:00 – 1:00

Bonuses to Emotion and Glass

Crises resolved in this phase will affect exactly one Aspect of the Kingdom.

Character Reintroduction

The players briefly describe the stations their characters have in the current era, as related to the offices awarded in the previous session. They also describe in what way the character is the successor of their previous character, be it through inheritance, reincarnation or simply similar goals and skills.

Create the Kingdom

Create the Kingdom- it has number ratings in each of the three Aspects. At the start of this session they start where they were at the conclusion of the last.

Initial Crises

The GM adds the following crises:

Desert Barbarians Attack

Northern Barbarians Land

The GM adds 4 crises of his choice.

Each player adds 1 crisis.

Start the First Turn

Once the crises have been written, the starting player will take the first turn. The starting player will be the current King.

The starting player selects a crisis from anywhere on the list (apart from a compulsory one), and the players begin to resolve it.

Phase 2: The Noon

1:00 – 2:00

Double bonus to Emotion

Crises resolved in this phase will affect exactly one Aspect of the Kingdom. Players may introduce new crises if there are less than 8 available.

Phase 3: The Dusk

2:00 – 2:50

Bonuses to Ancient and Emotion

Crises resolved in this phase can affect a maximum of two Aspects of the Kingdom. Players may introduce new crises if there are less than 4 available. Compulsory Crises may be attempted.

Phase 4: The Night

2:50 – 3:00

Bonuses to Ancient and Emotion

Adjudicate Outstanding Crises

The current crisis finishes immediately. If the GM was narrating the resolution of the crisis when phase 3 ended, then he continues to do so and adjust Aspects as though in phase 3 before considering the remaining crises. If the players were still in the process of resolving the crisis, it is counted as being unresolved, although the progress made may influence the GM's adjudication of it.

Unresolved crises change the Aspects of the Kingdom in an appropriate way given that they weren't even attempted. They may only affect one Aspect each, or may affect none, at the GM's discretion. Compulsory crises come with fixed penalties for being unresolved, use these instead.

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Ready for Next Session

The GM records the current Aspects of the Kingdom, and keeps the list of crises for future reference if needed. The players make sure their character sheet is in good order and take it with them. Remember to bring it next time.

Between sessions the players have time to come up with ideas for new crises.

Session 3 Play Guide

Phase 1: The Dawn

0:00 – 1:00

Double bonus to Glass

Crises resolved in this phase will affect exactly one Aspect of the Kingdom.

Character Reintroduction

The players briefly describe the stations their characters have in the current era, as related to the offices awarded in the previous session. They also describe in what way the character is the successor of their previous character, be it through inheritance, reincarnation or simply similar goals and skills.

Create the Kingdom

Create the Kingdom- it has number ratings in each of the three Aspects. At the start of this session they start where they were at the conclusion of the last.

Initial Crises

The GM adds the following crisis:

The Plague

The GM adds 1 crisis of his choice.

Each player adds 2 crises.

Start the First Turn

Once the crises have been written, the starting player will take the first turn. The starting player will be the current King.

The starting player selects a crisis from anywhere on the list (apart from a compulsory one), and the players begin to resolve it.

Phase 2: The Noon

1:00 – 2:00

Bonuses to Emotion and Glass

Crises resolved in this phase will affect a maximum of two Aspects of the Kingdom. Players may introduce new crises if there are less than 8 available.

Phase 3: The Dusk

2:00 – 2:50

Bonuses to Ancient and Glass

Crises resolved in this phase can affect a maximum of three Aspects of the Kingdom. Players may introduce new crises if there are less than 4 available. Compulsory Crises may be attempted.

Phase 4: The Night

2:50 – 3:00

Bonuses to Ancient and Glass

Adjudicate Outstanding Crises

The current crisis finishes immediately. If the GM was narrating the resolution of the crisis when phase 3 ended, then he continues to do so and adjust Aspects as though in phase 3 before considering the remaining crises. If the players were still in the process of resolving the crisis, it is counted as being unresolved, although the progress made may influence the GM's adjudication of it.

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King, High Priest, Chief Glasswright, General, Bard, Scribe

Final Adjustment

The King may adjust the Ancient Aspect of the Kingdom one point in either direction. The High Priest may adjust the Emotion Aspect of the Kingdom one point in either direction. The Chief Glasswright may adjust the Glass Aspect of the Kingdom one point in either direction.

Determine Pre-eminent God

The GM sees which Aspects the Kingdom currently has rated at 5 or more. These Aspects are considered 'present' in the Kingdom, and the others 'absent'. The god with the same present and absent Aspects becomes the chief god of the Kingdom.

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