

Chronicles of the Drenai

A Dark Heroic Fantasy RPG inspired by the Drenai series of David Gemmell

This RPG is dedicated to the memory of David Gemmell, to my dear wife Cathy and to Gemmell fans everywhere. This RPG is free for you to use, copy and distribute, so long as my authorship of it is credited. Legend, The King Beyond the Gate, Waylander, Quest for Lost Heroes, In the Realm of the Wolf, Hero in the Shadows, The Swords of Night and Day, The First Chronicles of Druss the Legend, The Legend of Deathwalker, Winter Warriors, and White Wolf are properties of the Gemmell estate.

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Introduction

Desperate last stands. Agonizing choices between two or more evils. Searing encounters with the worst in man. The fate of millions resting on a grim and scarred antihero. Valor and sacrifice in a dark, uncaring world, with only faith in a nebulous and rarely evident Source to guide your way. This is the world of David Gemmell's gritty, pulse-pounding, dark yet uplifting series of heroic fantasy novels revolving around the unlikely heroes of the Drenai people. In this game, you will walk in the same troubled paths as Waylander and Druss, rising from an unknown or troubled past and into the halls of legend as you fight to save the Drenai.

What is Chronicles of the Drenai

In this RPG you will create your own heroes and pit them against the evils of man, the supernatural, and most importantly their own weaknesses, for love, loyalty and honor. This will be a game of hard, often deadly choices, and in fact it's very likely your character will bite the dust before the game ends. What matters, though, is that your character dies achieving something worthwhile. The central theme of this game is that it takes struggle and self-sacrifice to become a hero.

Chronicles of the Drenai is a low-fantasy, sword-and-sorcery style RPG that emphasizes action, adventure and moral dilemmas. The only characters available are humans, with no fantasy races like elves or dwarves present. The setting is a world much like medieval Eurasia, though with rather fewer nations – apparently the continent on which the stories take place is small compared to the real-life Eurasian landmass. Magic is available, but is usually limited and pretty low-key; only an extremely powerful sorcerer would be able to fling fireballs or lightning bolts in this milieu. The game uses a rules-light system designed to encourage cinematic action and make moral choices difficult, or at least costly.

What is Needed to Play

To play Chronicles of the Drenai you will need 2-3 or more players, several 20-sided dice, writing materials, and your imagination. To help keep track of Karma and Dharma, you may want to use chips or plastic stones of two different colors.

Do you need to have read the Drenai books to enjoy the game? Not really. You can enjoy this game purely as slam-bang, high-action sword and sorcery entertainment set in a vanilla western medieval milieu. It's really the characters that count, and there are rules to help you make the kind of character that'll fit the spirit of the game.

Overview of the Rules

To emphasize the theme of heroes struggling against themselves, Chronicles of the Drenai rates characters not in terms of Strength or Dexterity as traditional RPG's do, but in terms of their Passions: several kinds of Fear, Anger, Avarice, Despair, Gluttony, Lust, Pride and Sloth. To perform a dramatic task, you must overcome the Passion that is most applicable to the task – e.g. in combat, you have to overcome your Fear of Harm.

To encourage roleplaying, GM's dispense Karma and Dharma points: Karma is given when a character dramatically overcomes a Passion, and Dharma, when a character voluntarily gives in to a Passion or acts in a way consistent with his Passion even if the effect for his character is negative. Your character's Karma multiplied by his Dharma is his Catharsis rating. Thus the character likely to achieve the highest Catharsis is not the one-dimensional do-gooder who never has any doubt, but the conflicted, complex character caught in the middle between his own weaknesses and desires on one

hand and the call to do the right thing on the other.

At the end of every game of Chronicles of the Drenai, the player whose character got the highest Catharsis should be celebrated in some way - maybe every other player can chip in for that player's dinner for the evening, or the GM can give the player a card or certificate memorializing the character, whatever is good with your group and easy on your budget. The idea is to celebrate the character that had to struggle the most to be a better person - whether or not the character survived. That's right, this is a game that rewards you for heroically sacrificing your character. Do it too soon, however, and another player's character may end up winning a higher Catharsis than you.

Character Creation

Character creation for Chronicles of the Drenai is a very simple process:

- 0) **GM Briefing:** the GM should give a quick rundown on what the game will be about, answer any player questions, and give players ideas on what character types may be suitable.
- 1) **Create a Concept:** come up with a concept for your character, and give him or her a name. Drenai names are usually quite simple, and surnames are rarely used. Gemmell often used names with only one or two syllables, with Nordic, Gaelic or Greco-Roman sounds – e.g. Ulric, Druss, Chareos, Kiall, Niallad, Orien, Danyal, Miriel, Rowena.
- 2) **Choose Class:** decide if your character will be a Warmaker like Druss or Waylander, an ordinary Citizen like Danyal, Sieben or Kiall, or a Mystic like Serbitar or Dardalion. Each class has a special power.
- 3) **Assign Passion scores:** distribute 110 points to your character's Passions. You must assign a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 18 points to each Passion, and have no points left over. Assign a low score to Fear of Harm if you want to be good at Combat.
- 4) **Give each Passion a Tag:** note down a visible or often-manifested quality or action that is associated with each Passion. For example, your character has a low value for Fear of Harm: your chosen Tag for this is 'Icy, Calculating Stare.' A Tag for anger might be 'Hates the Nadir Like Venom,' which not only gives the GM ideas for situations to throw at your character, but also begs the question why – and so can lead to interesting roleplaying opportunities.
- 5) **Choose Traits:** give your character up to 3 Traits. Traits are skills, backgrounds or qualities that give us an idea what that character is good at or define his identity. For example Druss could have the Traits Bear-like Strength and Owns Snaga the Sender (his powerful axe), Waylander has the Traits Dead Shot and Incredibly Fast Reflexes, and Dardalion has Priest of the Source. Whenever you must roll a test at which one or more of your Traits should help, you get to roll additional dice.
- 6) **List your Equipment:** list down the items your character travels with. You can have anything that's reasonable for your character's stated background – this is mostly for color and personal style, as items don't really alter character power the way they would in most other RPGs.
- 7) Let the **GM review** your character.

Classes

To help you come up with your character, you can think of characters in the Drenai world as falling into one of 3 classes: Warmakers, Citizens, and Mystics. In addition, each class has a special power in the game.

Warmakers are based on warrior heroes like Druss, Waylander, Skilgannon, and Karnak. They are usually professional fighting men, living as soldiers or mercenaries, possessed of little fear but prone to terrible weaknesses and cursed to bring violence and death wherever they go. Some, like Karnak, have a high Pride and bring suffering to others through their vaunting ambition; others like Waylander have become icy-cold killers, believing they can be no better (high Despair), and as a result have become extremely antisocial; while Druss's fame attracts challengers eager to take his glory wherever he goes, and despite his desire for peace his wrath is all too easily awakened (high Anger). In game terms, a Warmaker character is likely to earn Karma slowly, because Fear of Harm is not much of a challenge to him, but his inner demons make gaining Dharma easy.

Special Power: Hang Tough

Warmakers can choose to roll an extra die for a Survival Test up to 3 times each game session. This of course lets Warmakers do what Warmakers are supposed to do more freely.

Citizens are ordinary folk, often brief-living in the stories, but by dint of sheer pluck and resolve can sometimes pull off extraordinary feats. Citizens tend to gain Karma quickly, especially if you give the character a realistically high level in Fear of Harm. Sieben, Danyal, the soldiers Bregan and Gilad, and the innocent youth Kiall are examples of Citizens. Citizens often play a crucial role in a Drenai story as catalyst, triggering a change in another character that leads them on the path of redemption. For example, Danyal's influence is essential in the re-humanizing of Dakeyras, who had spent the last decade of his life as the cold, amoral assassin Waylander. In *Quest for Lost Heroes*, the peasant boy Kiall is instrumental in getting the Heroes of Bel-Azar together again. Citizen characters are best for players who want a roleplaying challenge.

Special Power: Humanity

Citizens remind other people what it's like to be an ordinary human being. Thrice every game session, you can invoke this power to have another character make a choice of higher humanity than what that character originally intended. However when you do this neither you nor the target character gain Karma. You see this in the Drenai tales when Sieben calms down Druss' murderous rages, and when Danyal persuades Waylander to accompany her and two children to safety despite the risk to himself. Used on a villain, the effect of this should only be partial; you might convince the nefarious Nosta Khan to spare yourself, for example, but not anyone else (or you could convince Nosta Khan to spare someone else, not yourself).

Mystics are those who are able to tap into mysterious reserves of supernatural power. This is partially internal, and partially from either the Source or Chaos. The Source is a nebulous force for good that favors life, peace and harmony; it never acts directly or flashily, but through subtle ways like guiding a person's steps to where they are most needed, and always leaves its agents a choice whether to answer its calling or not. Chaos on the other hand is a power that revels in death and suffering, lending itself quickly to those who desire domination.

Mystics are capable of limited telepathy, astral projection, astral combat, healing, and with the aid of rituals and/or prehuman devices, are able to perform more fantastic and overt forms of sorcery such as shapeshifting. Dardalion, Serbitar, and the evil shaman Nosta Khan are examples of mystics. The challenge for mystics is the temptation of power; Dardalion for example agonizes over his use of the mystic disciplines to fight for his people, while Nosta Khan has given in to corruption and become inhuman. Not all Mystics have training; some have found their talents manifesting spontaneously.

Special Power: Magic and Foresight

A Mystic has a talent for the supernatural, and this manifests two ways. First, a Mystic can work magic. Second, once during each session a Mystic's player can ask the GM for a Sign or Vision to guide his path. The GM must give an answer to the player's question, though he is free to give it as an obscure dream or hint.

Passions

In David Gemmell's Drenai tales, characters are constantly struggling against their baser natures. To represent this, I chose to rate characters not by the traditional stats of Strength, Dexterity and the like but with Passions, modelled on the 7 Deadly Sins of Christianity. When you create your character, you must distribute 100 points between your character's 8 Passions, with no points left over. The Passions are:

- 1) **Fear of Harm:** Fear of death, fear of injury or suffering, these emotions are always a core dynamic of the Drenai tales. Gemmell makes much of the need to overcome fear, especially in combat; he's clearly of the school that the psychological components combat are more important than the physical, and for the most part I agree with him. Combat usually revolves around tests against Fear of Harm.
- 2) **Fear of the Unknown:** This fear comes into play when faced with supernatural beings and phenomena, and in working magic. Mystics typically have a pretty low Fear of the Unknown, especially if they've had training as a Source Priest or a Dark Brother.
- 3) **Fear of Loss:** This fear comes into play, and may supersede Fear of Harm, when the character is struggling to keep someone or something he values. Fear distracts and paralyzes, slowing down the ability to make decisions; time and again Gemmell's heroes say the deadliest combatant is the man who thinks he has nothing to lose. You should tag this Fear to give the GM an idea of what your character fears to lose most.
- 4) **Anger:** Excessive anger, allowing yourself to be moved to violence or extreme words too quickly, or harboring hatred, can play a very important part in a Drenai tale. Anger is tested in situations where your character is trying to control his temper, or overcome a prejudice – for example Aryen hates the nobility because a nobleman raped his sister, but when a noble begs his aid, Aryen decides to roll against his Anger.
- 5) **Avarice:** Greed is one of the commonest and often highest Passions. It can manifest as a shamelessly mercenary attitude, even a predilection for cheating others just to come off with the better part of a bargain. This Passion is usually tested in situations involving wealth, such as being tempted with a bribe or a chance to commit theft or embezzlement.
- 6) **Despair:** Despair is giving up hope, and worse, refusing to hope. In the Drenai stories, Despair can manifest as a character giving up hope in redeeming themselves. For example, Waylander in his quest for vengeance became a hardened killer, and believes himself damned to that condition. Warmakers and dark-minded Mystics often have a rather high Despair, reflecting their failing grip on their humanity. Despair is also rolled against for Survival Tests; in this world, your chances of surviving a potentially lethal blow or illness are governed more by your will to live than anything else.
- 7) **Gluttony:** A desire for excessive indulgence in food, alcohol, or even drugs and entertainments. As with Greed, this Passion is usually tested when the character must try to resist temptation.
- 8) **Lust:** A character in Chronicles of the Drenai may be excessively lecherous, or even sexually imbalanced in some way. This Passion is tested when a character is trying to resist carnal temptation, one that would result in a wrongful act – rape, infidelity, molestation of a minor, etc. etc.
- 9) **Pride:** Haughtiness and excessive ambition are the weaknesses of many villains and heroes alike. Karnak for example was a great and valorous general, often taking incredible risks to his own person, but ultimately he fought to advance his own political ambitions, even at the cost of his men's lives. Pride may be tested in many situations – whether a character backs down or not from a potentially violent situation over a 'point of honor,' or when a character must choose whether or not to advance his ambitions at the cost of his humanity.
- 10) **Sloth:** Sloth is your resistance to exerting effort, your willingness to accept certain things rather than try to change them. Sloth is tested against when your character must put forth extraordinary mental or physical effort – say to swim across a raging river, or stay up all night researching a counterspell against a demon your enemy has summoned.

Traits

A Trait is a background or quality that indicates what your character knows or is good at. You're free to come up with your own Traits; however the GM may veto any Trait that is abusive – Traits like 'Good at Everything' are not allowed. If you want a character to shine in some physical or mental characteristic, you indicate that as a Trait. If your character was a veteran of the Black Legion, you can indicate that as a Trait. You can even specify a special possession as a Trait.

Whenever you must roll a Test, you may roll an extra die for every Trait that applies to that Test.

For example, Druss could have the Traits *Bear-like Strength*, *Instinct for Victory*, and *Owens Snaga the Sender*. As you can see, Druss is going to be really really good at combat, but have no special advantages in most other tasks. As another example, Waylander could have the Traits *Dead Shot*, *Incredibly Fast Reflexes*, and *Wary as a Wolf*.

Mechanics

Tests

The core mechanic of *Chronicles of the Drenai* is very easy: Whenever your character must make a dramatic test, the GM will pick one of your character's Passions, and possibly add a modifier of +1 to +5 to give you a Bar.

Roll one d20 plus any bonus dice, and if your highest die shows higher than the Bar you succeed. If you rolled lower than the Bar, you fail. If you rolled exactly equal to the Bar, it's a partial success. Partial successes usually mean you can continue the task or contest. You should roll all your available dice together.

A 20 is an automatic success.

By the way, GM's almost never have to make rolls in this game; the burden of tossing dice is almost entirely on the players.

Stakes

Whenever the GM calls for a roll, he must make sure the situation is clear to everybody and that the stakes for the roll are defined. The GM should be clear on what will happen if you succeed, and what will happen if you fail.

Color Bonus

The better you describe what your character does, the more entertaining it will be for the GM and the other players. If any player comes up with a really cool action, or narrates what his character does in a very exciting way, and the action is appropriate for the character, you, the GM and the other players may vote to give that player a Color Bonus die. If the vote is unanimous, the player gets the bonus die. GM's should encourage this by calling for a vote whenever he feels a player deserves a bonus.

Trait Bonuses

Remember to roll an extra die for every Trait that applies to a Test.

Fear Tests

Different kinds of Fear are made according to the situation. In physical combat, most rolls are made against Fear of Harm. When facing the supernatural, such as demons and hostile magic, rolls will usually be made against Fear of the Unknown. When a character is forced to fight to defend what they most value, their rolls are made against Fear of Loss.

The stakes for Fear tests are often the ability to act as you will – if you fail, your action is dictated by fear. In combat, the stakes are victory or defeat – a victory means you kill, injure, or disable your opponent, a defeat means your opponent inflicts a potentially lethal or subduing blow on you. Partial successes mean you were just barely able to control your fear, or defend yourself.

Persuasion Tests

A Persuasion test is unique. Instead of rolling against your own Passions, you must roll against a selected Passion of the character you're trying to convince. This could be against the target character's Pride, if you're trying to convince the character to do something humbling, against Fear of Harm if you're trying to persuade the character to a course that requires courage more than anything else, Sloth if you're trying to stir a reluctant character to action, and so on.

Survival Tests

A Survival Test is made whenever your character is defeated in a combat roll. Roll against your Despair passion; if you succeed your character lives and can continue fighting, if you fail your character is mortally wounded. In unarmed combat where the intent is not to kill, the GM may call for a roll against Sloth instead to see if you have the energy to keep fighting, or against Fear of Harm to see if you are willing to continue.

Medical and Healing Tests

A character may try to apply medical skills or magical healing to an injured or sick character if he has a Trait indicating such ability. Most military men and Source Priests know at least first aid, and the latter often more. Roll one die plus an extra die for every applicable Trait, the Bar being the Despair of your target character. In other words it's easy to keep a character determined to stay alive, and vice versa.

Skill Tests

A Skill Test can be made for tasks where no Passion is clearly crucial to the result. For example, you are listening for the footsteps of assassins stalking your character through a forested path. That doesn't seem to fit Fear of Harm, or Sloth, or any other Passion. To resolve a Skill Test, the GM decides the Bar (5 is Easy, 10 is Average, 15 is Difficult, 18 is Very Difficult), and you roll one die plus an extra die for every Trait that is applicable. For example, if you had Waylander with you he could use his Wary as a Wolf trait to listen for approaching enemies.

Oracle Rolls

Oracle Rolls are made when trying to resolve a question that a player character usually cannot influence. It's an easy way for a GM to decide whether something is true or not - is it going to rain or not, is the rickety wooden bridge going to fail under a character's weight or not, and so on. The GM simply picks a number, and if you roll higher the result is good for you, if you roll equal or lower the result is bad for you.

Combat

Combat is very simple and narrative-oriented in this game, cinematic but grittily unforgiving. Combat occurs in rounds, every round being a flexible unit of time – say up to 10 or 20 seconds – in which each character can attempt something. Every round is resolved in three phases, with an additional phase for situations where one party may be surprised.

Combat Procedure

- 0) **Surprise Check:** This check is performed only at the first round of a battle where one party may have been surprised by another. Surprise is tested as a Skill Check; if the players are being ambushed they must each roll vs the GM's Bar, using any Traits that indicate alertness or military/tactical skill, and if the players are ambushing, the players roll vs the GM's Bar using any Traits that indicate military/tactical skill. Hunting skills are also good for surprise checks.

Control of the Deployment phase is the prize for the surprise check; players who win it may deploy as they see fit, players who lose it must accept the GM's deployment.

For example, Karados the Assassin uses his Silent Shadow of Kiatze trait to worm his way unseen into an enemy camp, occupied by Vagrian cavalymen. He has 2 dice – one by default, plus another for the Trait – and the GM rules the Bar is 14. Karados' player rolls 17, a success – Karados has gotten in undetected, and can pick his deployment.

- 1) **Deployment Phase:** In the Deployment phase, players who may do so choose their positions and with them, their opponents. The GM picks the positions and opponents of any players who cannot choose their own deployment. You may want to use a battlemat, chessboard, or even an improvised, hastily drawn map and miniatures for this phase to make things clearer. Every character will usually end up with one or more opponents.

As numbers give advantage, the goal of players and GM alike is to deploy so as to outnumber their enemy, or at the very least shield the more vulnerable characters from being mobbed. A +1 modifier per additional opponent is applied to the Bar for an outnumbered player character, while player characters who fight together may share dice by Trickle Rolling. Players may also arrange to have their characters fight in a limited space so that fewer foes can come at them at any one time.

If no surprise check was made, the attacking party decides the deployment. If both parties are attacking, the players get to decide the deployment.

Continuing the example of Karados from above, Karados' successful infiltration of the enemy camp lets him pick his deployment. Karados' player declares he'll take on just one Vagrian, the one most isolated from the others. The GM agrees.

- 2) **Action Phase:** In the action phase, each player declares his character's action, preferably in as cinematic a style as possible. You're playing this game to entertain each other, don't be boring! Instead of saying "I attack," do a Gemmell-style description -- "Bardon roars with a fury he never knew he had, and levelling the pitchfork, charges at the nearest Nadren. I drive that pitchfork so hard it's gonna leave him pinned to the wall!" Good narration here should win you a Color Bonus die. Roll all your available dice vs. your Fear of Harm plus your opponent's Threat Level. Threat Levels range from 0 for Mook-type characters to +5 for villains like Karnak or Kaem.

If you win, you gained your immediate objective – usually that means striking a telling blow against your opponent, or one of your opponents if you were facing multiple opponents, but it may also mean you were able to advance closer to a distant enemy shooting arrows at you without being hit, or forced your opponent to the edge of a precipice – use your imagination! If you fail the roll, you are defeated. Partial success means you were barely able to defend yourself.

Continuing the example from above, the GM decides the Vagrian soldier Karados has chosen to attack is not an important character at all, with a Threat Level of +0. Karados must only beat his Fear of Harm to perform a successful attack and kill the Vagrian; Karados' Fear of Harm is 9, pretty low because Karados is of course a Warmaker type character, and in addition he gets to roll extra dice for his Razor-Sharp Kiatze Blade and Icy Killing Machine traits.

Karados' player announces, “Crawling as close as I can without getting detected, I spring up and slash at the Vagrian's throat before he can even react!” and rolls. But lo, the fickle dice come up 3, 4, and 7 – no successes.

The GM continues the narration: “The enemy's surprise doesn't seem to be as complete as you thought, as the Vagrian rolls aside with an oath, and he just happened to be resting leaning on his drawn sword. He thrusts desperately, clumsily, up – and by some strange chance he connects. You feel a hot pain lance through your ribs.”

- 3) **Consequence Phase:** If your character was defeated in the Action Phase, you must make a Survival Test to see if your character falls or not. Roll one die plus one for every Trait that indicates increased toughness, strength, resistance to pain and the like, vs your Despair. If you succeed, your character is wounded but can continue fighting; if you fail, your character has taken a mortal wound and is out of the combat.

If you do not wish to risk a Survival Test, you may also elect to increase your character's Fear of Harm immediately by +2. This represents the trauma of almost getting killed.

Important or formidable NPC's and creatures have a Threat Level from +0 to +5. An opponent of Threat Level 0 dies as soon as it's defeated; opponents of Threat Level +1 and up survive, losing 1 Threat Level with every defeat, until they are reduced to below Threat Level 0. Thus a Threat Level +5 will withstand up to 5 defeats, and only go down after the sixth.

Karados' player decides to make a Survival Test, invoking the bonus die he gets up to 3 times per game session as a Warmaker. He gets 2 dice, and his Despair rating is 13. The roll is made, and this time the dice are in favor – Karados gets a 15 and 19. The wound is not mortal, and the fight continues – but the GM now declares that after another round, Karados will have to face multiple opponents.

Combat Options

Team Fighting: When two or more player characters fight together in melee, their players can roll their dice one at a time and share dice to maximize chances of success. Roll your dice one at a time. As soon as you succeed you can stop; any dice available to you but unrolled can be shared with the players whose characters are acting with you. You should agree among yourselves who rolls first – ideally, the character with the lowest Fear of Harm should roll first, as he'll need the least number of rolls to succeed.

Splitting Attacks: When you have multiple dice to roll and have multiple opponents, you can divide your dice among your opponents as you please, but must assign dice rolls to all your opponents. You may split dice between individual opponents and groups of opponents. For example, you have 4 dice to roll, and 3 opponents; you decide to use 2 dice against one of them, to maximize the chances of taking down that opponent, and 2 dice against the other two together, to at least keep them from wounding you.

Blaze of Fury: Available only to characters with Anger of 15 or higher, this allows you to switch from rolling vs. Fear of Harm to rolling vs. Anger, but getting an extra die on top of all your other bonus dice. It represents a berserk, all or nothing attack such as Druss was famous for doing. If you are defeated in making a Blaze of Fury attack, however, you can only roll one die for a Survival Test.

Cautious Defense: You gain one more die to roll, but if you roll a victory it's regarded as a partial success. In other words, you're more likely to keep your enemies from killing you, but you give up the chance to kill any foes yourself in favor of maintaining a stronger guard.

Taking Trauma: Instead of making a Survival Test when your character is defeated, you may choose to take an immediate +2 increase to your character's Fear of Harm.

Feeding the Fury: Instead of making a Survival Test when your character is defeated, you may choose to take an immediate +2 increase to your character's Anger. However for the rest of that combat scene you must roll your fighting Tests vs your new Anger rating. Of course, if this brings your Anger to 15 or higher, the Blaze of Fury option becomes available to you.

Blaze of Glory: You choose to have your character die in the current combat scene. This will automatically defeat your current opponents (that is, the enemies directly in combat with your character). If the party is fleeing, this automatically gives the rest of the party a safe escape. If the party opts to continue combat, combat continues as normal. Moreover you automatically gain +5 Karma. This is meant to be real desperation tactic, so we're not making it *too* attractive in comparison to trying to survive.

Combat Options Example:

Delcard and Bardon find themselves fighting the Nadren bandits together. The GM says they are fighting 6 bandits. Delcard decides to even the odds by doing two things – he'll take on 4 opponents and let Bardon take on the other two, fighting together as a team; he'll also use the Cautious Defense option for himself.

The Nadren are all Mooks, but because Delcard is taking on 4 Nadren, he gets a +3 modifier to his Fear of Harm Test. No problem, as Delcard has an almost inhuman Fear of Harm of 8. Bardon has two opponents, so he gets a +1 modifier to his Fear of Harm Test; his Fear of Harm is 12, so the Bar for him becomes 13.

The two players roll, Delcard's player getting a high of 12, and Bardon's player a high of 15. Both succeed. Bardon kills one Nadren, while Delcard, who used the Cautious Defense tactic, is just able to fend off his four opponents – which is all he wanted anyway, so it's all right.

On the next round, Delcard declares a change of tactics, to keep their enemy off-balance. This time he'll charge his four opponents, devoting 2 of his 4 available dice to one and the other 2 dice to the other three as a group, hoping to make two quick kills. Bardon has only one opponent, so he should easily take care of that one.

Delcard easily succeeds at all his rolls, what with having very little Fear of Harm, but Bardon fails. Two more Nadren bandits fall to Delcard's greatsword, but Bardon's opponent slips past his pitchfork

to drive a saber into Bardon's body.

Bardon's player decides this makes Bardon really mad, taking the Feeding the Fury option. He raises Bardon's Anger from 14 to 16, but must now roll against Anger for the rest of this fight.

Magic

Magic in the world of the Drenai is pretty low-key most of the time. The most spectacular effects I remember are the summoning of a demon lord in Hero in the Shadows, and Nosta Khan's creation of wolf-man Joinings in Waylander. Most of the magic that happens is closer to what a D&D player would know as psionics – telepathy, clairvoyance, prescience, and astral travel are the most common effects. Magic inspired by Chaos is often grisly, fueled by human sacrifices and creating horribly misshapen, twisted results. This magic system is meant to give that kind of feel – no point-n-zap type spells, but a lot of mental-type magic and horrific elements.

For this game, only a Mystic may work magic. As with any task, you get one die by default, plus an additional die for every Trait applicable to the task. Traits like Priest of the Source, Shaman, Sorcerer, and Necromancer. Some items can also help with working magic – there seems to be a prehuman civilization with some kind of technomagic, as shown in In the Realm of the Wolf. Possession of such items will give bonus dice too.

Most sorceries need to be done pretty close up, save for Pulsing, Sending and Astral Combat.

Minor Sorceries

Minor sorceries can be performed by any Mystic character, with or without training, though without training results may be erratic. Minor sorceries are only mildly tiring; for game purposes, there are no limits on the number of times a Mystic may perform a minor sorcery, so long as he or she is conscious and of sound mental state. Being under the influence of mind-deadening drugs or too much alcohol prevents the use of all Mystic powers.

Foresight: the special power of all Mystic characters, you may invoke Foresight once every game session to make the GM reveal a clue as to what you should do or how you can achieve your goal, in the form of a cryptic vision or prophecy. There is no need to roll to use Foresight.

Pulse: Mystics can speak with other Mystics by sending pulses of thought to each other, silently and instantaneously even over long distances. There is no need to roll for Pulsing.

Astral Projection: any Mystic can send their soul out of their body and travel through the physical world in astral form. This astral form can pass through solid objects and is unhurt by physical attacks, but can see and hear in both the physical and astral planes. If the astral form is slain or kept from returning to the body, physical death follows. Dardalion and The Thirty often use this power to scout the enemy in Waylander and Legend. To successfully enter the astral plane, you must roll vs the highest of these Passions: Fear of Harm, Anger, or Sloth. For example if you have 12 Fear of Harm, 13 Anger and 14 Sloth, you must roll vs a Bar of 14.

Astral Combat: a Mystic in astral form may do battle with another Mystic's astral form, on the astral plane. Both Mystics visualize their astral forms in shapes of power – often as idealized warrior figures, but beast forms are also possible. Rolls are made vs Fear of Harm or Anger, as with ordinary combat; physical Traits do not count, but mental/spiritual Traits do. For example, your character has the Traits Strong and Indomitable; both count in physical combat, but only Indomitable will add a bonus die in astral combat. Consequences of astral combat are the same as with normal combat.

Calm: by touching a target character and sharing some of his own inner serenity, a Source-aligned Mystic can quell the Passions of the target character. The Mystic must roll vs. the target character's highest Passion; if successful, the target character's Passions are all reduced by -2 for the duration of the current scene. This is also doable to a small group, the Mystic must be able to touch them all in quick succession, and must roll against the highest Passion rating of all the members in the group.

This means if even one player took any Passion at 18, a Calming attempt including that character must be made vs a Bar of 18.

Inflame: the opposite of Calming, Inflame stirs up one of a target character's Passions, of the Mystic's choice. The Mystic must roll vs. the target character's Anger, this being the Passion that best resists mental suggestion and domination. If successful, the Mystic can raise one of the target characters Passions by +2 for the duration of the scene. This may be done secretly, after which the sorcerer or one of his allies can force a situation on the target character that tests the altered Passion – for example, casting this to raise a maiden's Lust so she can be successfully seduced.

Delude: basically, the Jedi Mind Trick. Roll vs. your target's Anger, this being the Passion that best resists suggestion, and if successful your target will believe the first thing you tell him.

Major Sorceries

Major sorceries are performable only by trained Mystics, that is by those that have Traits such as Priest of the Source, Witch, Necromancer, Shaman, Sorcerer and the like. Moreover major sorceries exact a heavy toll: the fatigue they cause is so great that the Mystic must go into a coma-like sleep for 24 hours immediately after performing the sorcery. Major sorceries may also be performed with the aid of other Mystics; in fact shamans like Nosta Khan often used acolytes to aid in their magic-working.

Heal: a Mystic may try to heal a mortal wound, but this is very draining. Roll vs the target character's Despair; if you overcome it, the target character's injuries or sickness is fully healed, and he will be back to normal after 24 hours. If you fail, the target character dies. If the target character has any Traits indicating a strong will to live or a tough constitution, you may roll an extra die for each such Trait. You can only do this once a day. (It's assumed you perform minor healing spells, but since we don't bother recording light wounds we won't bother with minor healings either).

Ward: you may create mystic barriers impassable to another Mystic's astral form, to Pulses and Sendings, and to supernatural beings like demons, within an area you have bounded by a symbolic circle. The circle is usually drawn using a knife or an instrument that can leave a mark, such as chalk, paintbrush and paint or ink, and so on. The Ward lasts as long as you are conscious and the circle remains unbroken; if either condition is broken, the Ward collapses. To initialize a Ward, you must roll vs Sloth. Wards are not too exhausting to create, but they do drain the caster if broken.

Meld: some corrupt Mystics have learned the terrible secret of Melding a human with a beast, usually a predator like a wolf, to create a Shapeshifter, monstrous hybrid with supernatural strength and ferocity, but only bestial intelligence. Each of these supernatural beasts is made from a pair of a human and an animal victim; the animal is made to kill the human victim, and then takes aspects of human form. Because they are unnatural, Shapeshifters cannot gain nourishment from animal flesh, though they try; only human flesh will satisfy their needs. To create a Shapeshifter, the Mystic must roll vs. the human victim's Anger. When a Mystic creates Shapeshifters, his Pride rises by +1 for each beast created.

Join: harnessing the power of Elder devices buried deep under secret mountain fastnesses, some Mystics have learned how to merge beasts with humans to create powerful Joinings: half-man, half-beast creatures that retain some of their human intellect and the ability to use weapons, but are far larger, stronger and faster than any human. It is said the Elder devices used for creating Joinings were originally made to treat cancer, but were perverted by evil users. To create a Joining, the Mystic must roll vs. the human victim's Anger.

Send: Mystics can transmit messages and visions into the minds of non-Mystics by the art of Sending. This can be used to give a warning message, as The Thirty did for Druss in Legend, but it can also be

used to insinuate horrific, even deadly illusions into target minds. To work a Sending, the Mystic must overcome the target character's Anger, this Passion being best at resisting mental suggestion and domination. If successful, a hostile Sending can force its targets to Test vs Anger or Fear of Harm to make them run amok if they fail, or even make Survival Tests vs Despair to slay them in their tracks.

Summon: Mystics have been known to summon demons, such as the Kalitarn in The First Chronicles of Druss the Legend. To work a Summoning, the Mystic must roll vs their Fear of Harm + the target creature's Threat Level. Demons can have a Threat Level of up to +10.

A failed Summoning still calls up the demon, but it immediately attacks its summoner and tries to kill and eat the summoner before returning to the Void.

Every successful Summoning raises a Mystic's Pride by +1.

Necromancy: this dark art can bring the dead back to a mockery of life, as zombies under the Mystic's command. Necromancy requires dead bodies to work with. Similar to Summoning, the roll is made against the Mystic's Fear of Harm + Threat Level modifiers; you can create a single undead being with a high Threat Level, or create a number of mindless zombies whose Threat Levels combined will modify your Bar. If the Threat Level desired is 0, the modifier is the number of undead to be created -1.

For example, Zetharos has stockpiled enough bodies to create pretty much as many undead as he wants, and decides to create a bunch of 0-level zombies. Zetharos has 11 Fear of Harm, so he decides to create 6 zombies; this gives a +5 modifier to his Fear of Harm, so he must roll vs. a Bar of 16.

Character Development

Character development in Chronicles of the Drenai is designed to follow changes in personality, and secondarily increase character power. This is done through Awards, some of which are given during or immediately after playing a scene, and some at the end of each game session. GM's should consider giving awards often during the game, to encourage player participation and more intensive roleplaying.

Karma

Karma is given out during or at the end of every scene to players whose characters achieved something heroic, or roleplayed a heroic attitude well. Each of the ff. situations should deserve +1 Karma:

- Slaying an enemy;
- Saving another character's life;
- Convincing another character to choose a heroic course of action instead of an ignoble one;
- Expressing heroic defiance in a cool way;
- And any action that the GM deems an act of magnificent madness.

Karma can be tracked by noting down the awards on your character sheet, or by using some kind of token such as colored plastic stones. If the latter, use two colors - one for Karma, one for Dharma.

Dharma

Dharma is given out during or at the end of every scene to players whose characters did something antiheroic, following their highest Passions, or roleplayed an antiheroic attitude well. Each of the ff. situations should deserve a +1 Dharma:

- The character refuses to follow a heroic course of action, until convinced by another character;
- The character indulges in an antiheroic vice;
- The character's indulgence in a vice is immediately detrimental to himself or the party;
- The player roleplays one of his character's Passions in a very entertaining manner;
- The player comes up with a scene in which his character's Passions get the character into trouble;
- The player deliberately does not take the optimal action because he believes the character's Passions wouldn't let him

Dharma can be tracked by writing the awards down on your character sheet, or by using tokens such as colored plastic stones. If using the latter method, be sure the Dharma tokens are of different color from the Karma tokens.

New Traits

Players may petition the GM to allow them to take new Traits for their characters. This can be justified by recent experience – for example, the veterans of the Siege of Dros Delnoch can claim to have learned something about either combat or military knowledge from their experiences in the siege. It can also be justified by downtime – when an adventure takes place some time after the previous one, the characters could have learned new things in the meantime.

It's up to the GM whether to let the players take new Traits or not. In a short campaign, it probably isn't necessary and will make player characters too powerful in short order. In a longer campaign with increasingly formidable antagonists, however, gaining a new Trait every few sessions will reinforce the feeling that the characters are growing to the status of heroes.

Catharsis

Catharsis in Greek tragedy refers to the 'cleansing' experienced after suffering and struggle. In *Chronicles of the Drenai*, your character's Catharsis score represents how hard he struggled to be a hero. In David Gemmell's tales, the greatest heroes were not those who were of impeccably saintly conduct, but those who had fallen the farthest then redeemed themselves.

Thus in the game, Catharsis = your character's Karma x Dharma.

A character who got a lot of Karma but no Dharma isn't struggling – he's all light, with never a worry for the dark side. Similarly a character with a lot of Dharma but no Karma is not going to make the cut – such a character is not even an antihero, but a villain. Note that in both cases, the Catharsis would be 0, as any number multiplied by 0 results in 0.

At the end of the game, all players should compare their characters' Catharsis scores with each other. The player whose character got the highest Catharsis should be celebrated in some way – maybe you can treat her out, or the GM can give a home-made certificate or card memorializing the event. Whatever. Just make sure that player feels special.

New Characters in Mid-Game

It may happen that you lose your character in mid-game. In fact you may even choose to have your character die heroically in mid-game, which has some nifty results. As it would be boring to have to watch everyone else having fun while you're sidelined, you are allowed to create a new character whenever you lose one.

Record your current character's Karma and Dharma, and multiply them to get that character's Catharsis score. Then pick up a new character sheet and make your new character.

Your new character starts with 0 Karma and 0 Dharma. The GM will try to work your new character in within the next few scenes. When character Catharsis scores are compared, it is done per character, not per player.

The World of the Drenai

The world of the Drenai is the setting of a series of novels. Though Gemmell wrote the first books without doing a series in mind, he used the same setting but at different points in its history. Later he wrote in new novels to fill in the gaps between the existing tales, and from these we can piece together the history of this world.

In general terms, players can think of the Drenai Empire as being similar to the Byzantine Empire. It was a wealthy, cosmopolitan nation that dominated its area of the world in its prime, but under a series of weak and inept rulers it suffered multiple invasions. These troubled times provide the backdrop for the great sagas that Gemmell had to tell.

Technology and Economy

The technoeconomy of the world is roughly like that of 13th-14th century Europe, but with some Byzantine and Asian elements. Much of the continent is wilderness still. Society is feudal, but there seem to be quite a few cities. Trade is well-developed, with wealthy Drenai able to enjoy luxuries imported from lands far to their east, and evidence of a banking network spanning many nations. The gold Raq of Drenai is the most widely circulated currency. Men fight with bows, blades and polearms, crossbows are common but there seem to be neither handguns nor cannon. Armor is leather, brigandine, chain mail, and rarely plate.

Timeline of Drenai History

As I personally have only some of the Drenai series novels, and have not read beyond Quest for Lost Heroes, I'm setting this RPG by default during the Nadir occupation of Drenai. This is a good time to have a campaign, as the oppressive conditions will be just right for new heroes to arise.

Event	Described in:
Elder Civilization disappears	
~thousands of years later	
Drenai Empire reaches its greatest expanse	
~460 years later	
The shrinking Drenai Empire stabilized under King Orien	
Orien hides the Armor of Bronze and gives the throne to his son Niallad	Waylander
Dakeyras' family wiped out by raiders, and in pursuit of them he becomes Waylander the Slayer	
Niallad assassinated by Waylander for Kaem of Vagria	
Ventrians invade Drenai, led by Kaem	
Waylander is led to retrieve the Armor of Bronze, enabling Egel to save Drenai; Order of The Thirty founded by Dardalion; Waylander kills Kaem	
Egel builds Dros Delnoch and becomes the first Earl of Bronze; Drenai becomes a republic	
Karnak has Egel assassinated and takes over the Drenai government; civil war in Drenai; Karnak vanquishes all opposition and becomes dictator	

Event	Described in:
Ventrians attack Drenai; are defeated by Karnak	In the Realm of the Wolf
Karnak is killed by Waylander's daughter Miriel	
~140 years later ...	
Druss aids Emperor Gorben of Ventria defeat a satraps' rebellion aided by the Naashanites	First Chronicles of Druss the Legend
Druss allows the demon inside his axe Snaga to be drawn out; the demon is imprisoned in the new sword of Gorben	
Druss aids the Nadir Okai to defeat the Gothir	
Abalayn becomes Chancellor of Drenai, which begins to decline under his inept rule	
Gorben, now turned to evil, leads an invasion of Drenai	
Battle of Skeln Pass; Gorben's army defeated by Druss and Delnar, Lord of Dros Delnoch and the current Earl of Bronze	
Okai of the Wolfshead becomes Ulric, Khan of all the Nadir	
The Nadir invade Drenai; Siege of Dros Delnoch; Druss dies defeating the Nadir; Regnak marries Virae daughter of Delnar and becomes Earl of Dros Delnoch	Legend
Ulric dies on campaign against Ventria	
Jongir, grandson of Ulric, invades Drenai; a peace treaty is agreed upon, in which Jongir weds the daughter of the Earl of Bronze	
Tenaka Khan born to Jongir and the daughter the Earl of Bronze	
Ceska becomes Emperor of Drenai	
Tenaka Khan, heir to Ulric, defeats Ceska's armies with a Nadir army	The King Beyond the Gate
Tenaka Khan invades Drenai with his Nadir army; peak of the Nadir Empire	
Tenaka Khan poisoned by his son Jungir; Jungir becomes Khan of the Nadir	
The Present	

The Nations of Legend

(Information gathered from the books, from wikibin.org and the map by Dale Rippke)

The Drenai Empire

A nation in the west that used to dominate much of the continent. Once a glorious empire, a succession of weak and inept rulers has led to its being invaded many times, most recently by the Nadir. Drenai is currently ruled by a Nadir governor. It is bordered by the Nadir Steppes to the north, the Ventrian Sea to the east, Lentria to the southeast, Mashrapur in the south, and Vagria in the south and south-west. The land is mostly temperate, with many forested areas. The north is mountainous, and is contested by the Sathuli clans. Drenai has an advanced, Byzantine Empire-like

army, with well-organized cavalry Legions, who fight with lance, saber, and bows.

Vagriian Empire

A powerful nation to the south of Drenai, ruled by an Emperor. Vagria was one of Drenai's frequent opponents, almost destroying the nation after the Vagriian general Kaem the Cruel had King Niiallad killed. At that time Kaem had the service of the Dark Brotherhood, an order of knights devoted to Chaos and trained as Mystics as well as warriors. Vagriians seem to rely on heavy cavalry and large numbers of mercenaries.

Ventrian Empire

A rich and powerful empire based apparently on ancient Persia, it is ruled by an Emperor, whose authority in the provinces is delegated to powerful hereditary satraps. The Ventrian imperial guard is made up of ten thousand elite cavalrymen called The Immortals. The imperial capital is at Usa. Ventria is a land of meadows and steppes, favoring a herding economy and farming where irrigation can be had. It is bordered by Naashan in the northeast, Cadia in the east, the Southern Sea on the southeast and southwest, and the Ventrian Sea in the west.

Gothir

A great kingdom far to the north of Drenai, with a high aristocratic culture. It was defeated by the Nadir and is now a tributary to them. Gothir is bordered by the Northern Sea to its north and west, the Salt Wastes to the east, and the Nadir Steppes to the south. The capital is at Gulgothir, which was sacked by Ulric Khan; it seems to have been rebuilt and is once more the capital by the time of Tenaka Khan.

Lentria

A kingdom to the southeast of Drenai, most famous for its fine red wines.

Mashrapur

A wealthy trading city-state south of Drenai.

The Nadir Empire

The nomadic Nadir tribes were first united by Ulric, chief of the Wolfshead tribe. Ulric conquered the Nadir tribes one by one, forged a mighty army of cavalry supported by skilled engineers and conscripted subject peoples, and proceeded to conquer country after country in the north. His career peaked at the Siege of Dros Delnoch, however, and he died on campaign against Ventria some years later. After many rounds of civil wars, the Nadir were again reunited by Tenaka Khan, great-grandson of Ulric. When Tenaka died, his son Jungir Khan became leader of the Nadir. What the Nadir do not know is that Jungir poisoned his father.

Naashan

This once-powerful eastern kingdom was once the arch-enemy of Ventria.

Chiatze and Kiatze

These two kingdoms occupy the extreme northeast of the continent. They share a border with the Nadir Empire to their west, the Northern Sea is to their north, the Jian Sea to the east and northeast, and the Manean Sea to the south. Chiatze culture is very formal and ritualistic, and they regard all westerners as barbarians. Kiatze swords and swordsmen are supposed to be the best in the world.

Minor Peoples

Aside from the great nations of the continent, there are some minor peoples mentioned in the books. Of major interest are the Nadren and the Sathuli, who prowl around Drenai's northern border.

The Nadren

The Nadren are a nationless people, made up of defeated Nadir tribes and half-Nadir, half-Drenai outcasts. They are impoverished steppe nomads who scratch a living in the poorest parts of the steppe by herding and by banditry. The Nadren typically fight with rusty, second-rate weapons scavenged from old battlefields or stolen from their victims.

The Sathuli

The Sathuli are a group of clans that hold the Delnoch Mountains, and claim the land of Dros Delnoch as their own. Fanatical warriors, they are known for their courage and the deadliness of their heavy curved tulwars. Sathuli warriors typically dress in all-white robes and headdresses. They fight with swords and bows.

Orders and Organizations

Aside from the various nations, several orders and institutions are mentioned with importance in the Drenai tales.

Priests of the Source

Priests of the Source are dedicated to worship of the nebulous deity known only as The Source, which seems to be the only force that stands for good and peace in the Drenai universe. Source Priests are marked by wearing blue robes, and are sworn to poverty, celibacy, nonviolence, vegetarianism and abstinence. While it's unlikely all Source Priests are Mystics, it seems they are all taught the mystic disciplines so that the few talented ones can definitely use magic.

The Thirty

Founded by the Source Priest Dardalion, The Thirty is an order of warrior-monks who have sworn to serve The Source by sacrificing themselves in battle. Dardalion was regarded as a heretic in his time, and it's likely The Thirty has never been fully accepted by the rest of the Source clergy. However, Drenai leaders have learned to value their services, for by the time of Druss The Thirty were the best mystics, tacticians, healers, and hand to hand fighters on the continent. When the order is called upon, its abbot chooses 29 brothers to make up The Thirty. They typically fight until there is only one survivor, who then returns to the main temple at Purdol to perpetuate the order. The Thirty wear silvered armor and blue cloaks, and each wears a helm with his number blazoned on it in Elder characters.

The Dark Templars

Recruited by the mad emperor Ceska, this brotherhood of mystic warriors were devoted to Chaos in the tradition of the Vagrian Dark Brotherhood. They are knights in full black armor, and possessed of Mystic powers and trained to use them. Supposed to have been wiped out by Tenaka Khan – the one good thing Drenai remember him for – there have been rumors that some have survived, and the order is being rebuilt. Cruel, implacable and very difficult to kill.

The Black Legion

The elite cavalry of Drenai. The Black Legion ride black warhorses, said to be the best in the continent, and fight with bow, lance, sabers and shields and wearing chain mail armor.

The Dragon

The Dragon is an elite regiment of cavalry, formed mostly from noblemen's sons. Tenaka Khan was one, but left when the regiment was disbanded by the Emperor Ceska. A few old members of the Dragon may still be lurking around.

The Dark Brotherhood

First heard of when the Vagrians invaded Drenai, the Dark Brotherhood were an order of warrior-mystics devoted to Chaos. Also called the Hounds of Chaos, they were cruel and implacable fighters, relentless in hunting down anyone their master told them to kill. Apparently some members of the order survived, and passed down their teachings to later incarnations such as the Dark Templars.

Famous Personalities

Abalayn – inept and nepotistic Chancellor of Drenai; in his time the army was weakened by reduction of its numbers and appointment of favorites to positions of command.

Dardalion – Source Priest rescued by Waylander, was 'contaminated' by Waylander's violence and feeding him meat; ended up founding the warrior-mystic order of The Thirty.

Delnar – Earl of Bronze at the time of Ulric's invasion; knowing he was dying and Dros Delnoch commanded by a fool, he summoned Druss to help in the defense and sent his daughter Virae to fetch The Thirty. He died before either reached the fort.

Druss – a great giant of a man, grandson of the psychopathic Bardan the Slayer, and determined to live a life of righteousness – he is said to have never lied, stolen, or spoken false, but was a holy terror to the enemies of the Drenai. Druss was instrumental in stopping two invasions of Drenai – by Gorben of Ventria at Skeln Pass, and by Ulric at Dros Delnoch.

Egel – first Earl of Bronze. After the death of King Niallad, Waylander was prompted by visions to bring the Bronze Armor of King Orien to Egel, and wearing it he inspired the Drenai to victory against the Vagrians. Egel then had a vision instructing him to build Dros Delnoch.

Gorben – Emperor of Ventria, took Druss into his army and befriended him, but later became possessed by the demon in his sword. Led an invasion of Drenai, but was defeated by a small army with the aid of Druss.

Jongir Khan – grandson of Ulric Khan, and Khan of the Nadir after Ulric. Led a second Nadir invasion of Drenai, but agreed to peace by marrying the daughter of the Earl of Bronze. Their son was Tenaka Khan.

Jungir Khan – son of Tenaka Khan. Believing his father despised him, he eventually poisoned Tenaka and became Khan of the Nadir. Was slain by Tenaka, who was possessing the body of a Gothir youth.

Kaem the Cruel – Vagrian general who engineered the simultaneous invasions of Drenai and Lentria, and the assassination of King Niallad by Waylander. He is infamous for enlisting the Dark Brotherhood to his cause. Killed by Waylander.

Karnak – a great Drenai general and contemporary of Egel and Waylander. Led the defense of Dros Purdol vs the Vagrians, but was ultimately fighting for his own ambition. When the Vagrian war ended, Karnak had Egel assassinated and made himself dictator of Drenai.

Miriel – adopted daughter of Waylander, and killer of Karnak.

Orien – first owner of the legendary Armor of Bronze. The armor was such a powerful symbol to the

Drenai that on learning the Drenai nation was doomed to a bad reign and disaster, Orien hid the Bronze Armor in Mount Raboas to make sure only a worthy candidate would next possess it.

Regnak - succeeded Earl Delnar as Earl of Bronze by marrying Delnar's daughter Virae. He led the defense of Dros Delnoch along with Druss, but was a berserker and afraid his rage would betray his own men.

Sieben - lecherous minstrel and companion of Druss. He was one of only a few who could understand Druss, and calm his anger. Died at Skeln Pass.

Tenaka Khan - half-Nadir, half-Drenai prince who saved the Drenai from the mad emperor Ceska, but later led the Nadir in conquering the Drenai.

Ulric - born Oshai of the Wolfshead tribe, Ulric followed a prophesy that he would unify the Nadir tribes, and founded the Nadir Empire.

Virae - daughter of Earl Delnar, and a great warrior woman in her own right. Slain at the Siege of Dros Delnoch, but brought back to life apparently by the Source.

Waylander - born as Dakeyras, he assumed the name Waylander after becoming an assassin. Originally he had only intended to pursue and punish the raiders who massacred his family, but turned into a professional assassin and eventually accepted a contract to kill King Niallad. He later expiated the deed by retrieving the Armor of Bronze from Mount Raboas, where he was almost killed by the monsters there and by the Dark Brotherhood.

Appendix: What is a Role-Playing Game

Chances are if you're reading this you already know what this is all about. If you don't, though, a quick explanation is to say a role-playing game is a game in which you try to guide an imaginary character to a desired goal, trying to overcome any obstacles in the way using your character's assets and your own imagination. The traditional form for a role-playing game is to have a Game Master act as main narrator and arbiter, creating and narrating the challenges your character must overcome, and one or more players each playing their own characters.

The best way to illustrate this is via example, so here's a 'replay' of how a typical scene in a **Chronicles of the Drenai** game would go:

GM: "It seems the Nadren chieftain has betrayed your earlier agreement to make peace with his clan, for as the sun rises your whole village awakes to the hammering of hoofbeats. When you look out, you see villagers stumbling out of their doors only to be cut down by howling, whooping riders in dirty furs, mounted on shaggy, short horses. What do you guys do?"

Vic (*playing Bardon, the village strongman*): "That dog! How can he do this after we agreed to give him forty sheep and forty sacks of grain?! I'll grab my pitchfork and join the battle outside!" *Vic has created Bardon as the village strongman, so it's natural that his response to the situation is to think of using his strength to solve the problem.*

Cat (*playing Gellien, Bardon's wife*): (to Vic) "Wait, Bardon! You can't go out there, you'll just die! There's no way we can defeat such well-armed raiders. Let's hide in the root cellar instead!" *Cat has defined Gellien as a typical peasant woman, canny and pragmatic but strongly averse to risk. She is playing to Gellien's high rating in Fear of Harm.*

Barry (*playing Delcard the Wanderer, a mysterious vagabond who is guesting with Bardon and Gellien*): "If I know the Nadren, they'll break in, take all they want, kill anyone who resists and then burn down whatever's left. If you want to live, go out now with your hands in the air. If you're lucky the Nadren will capture you instead of killing you immediately, then take you to the slave-blocks in Gothir. Maybe you'll escape along the way, maybe not – but at least you'll be alive." *Barry defined Delcard as a cold bastard, so he's taking this icily pragmatic, hard-boiled attitude.*

Vic (Bardon): "And what will you do, stranger?"

Barry (Delcard): "Climb out your south window. The Nadren have probably found my horse, but on my own I'm pretty sure I can avoid them until they're gone."

Cat (Gellien): "And what about us? You're our guest, by all the customs of hospitality you should be helping us!" (To GM) "I grab Delcard's sleeve. I'm not letting him go until he decides to help us!"

GM: (To Cat) "Do you want a roll to see if you persuade him?"

Cat (Gellien): "No, let's roleplay this out."

GM: (To Barry) "OK, what's Delcard's response to that?"

Barry (Delcard): (To Gellien) "Like I said, take your chances with the Nadren. I've paid you for my board, don't think I owe you anything or try putting any obligation on me, woman. I've already given you the advice that's most likely to prolong your life. Now let go. Or I will have to make you."

Vic (Bardon): "Let the coward go, Gellien. He's no use to us. I'm going out to fight, as a man

should." (To GM) "There! I hope that shames Delcard into fighting!"

Barry (Delcard): (To GM) "You know, I rated Delcard's Pride pretty high, higher than his Fear of Harm or Despair, so I guess in this situation I'd feel needled. I say 'Damn you, you ox of a farmer, I've fought in the Nadir Wars! I'm sick of fighting, but I'll join you outside.'"

Cat (Gellien): "Not without me you aren't! If I can't convince you two idiots to do the safe thing, I might as well go out with you to watch over you!" (To GM) "I'll grab an improvised weapon - a Drenai peasant woman would likely have a heavy iron frying pan, wouldn't she?"

Barry (Delcard): (To GM) "Delcard unwraps the bundle he always carries on his shoulder and reveals it to be a gleaming greatsword. I'm going to burst out the door, dodge immediately to one side, and cut down the first Nadren I see."

Vic (Bardon): "And I'll follow Delcard."

GM: "Good! We'll cut to the fight in a second, but first let me give Delcard and Gellien one Dharma each, and all of you get one Karma each."

In this scene, the character Delcard was persuaded to join a battle against his better judgment by appealing to the one quality that would make him act counter to his own hardboiled instinct for self-preservation. It could be his first step to becoming a hero - and the same for Bardon and Gellien.

Appendix: How To Play

A roleplaying game is played very simply through verbal interaction with the GM and other players. The flow of interaction usually follows this pattern:

- 0) The GM frames a scenario that involves the player characters in a struggle. This struggle and its objective lay the foundation for the rest of the game. For example, the GM informs the players that they are all in the village of Drostan when a band of Nadren bandits comes raiding.
- 1) The GM initiates a scene by describing a location and/or an event, usually as a scenario that requires action from the players; or, any player may initiate a scene by describing a location and/or action that his character is taking. To continue the example above, the GM begins narrating the raid as the player characters experience it.
- 2) Players and GM respond to each other by declaring character actions and voicing character dialogue. Actions and dialogue may be declared in first person form -- "I say blah blah blah to Bardon" -- or in third person form -- "Bardon picks up his pitchfork and moves to block the Nadren from the doorway." Either is perfectly fine, as long as it's clear.

The GM is the main arbiter of clarity in the game - if anything is unclear to him he should ask players to elaborate for him, and similarly any player who's unclear on something can ask the GM to explain things for him.

- 3) When a situation comes up where actions can have chancy or unforeseen consequences, the GM will call for die rolls from the player/s involved. At any time during or after the scene, the GM may dispense Karma and/or Dharma tokens to those players which he believes deserve Karma/Dharma awards.
- 4) When a scene is finished, either the GM or the players move the action to a new scene.

The GM's objective is to challenge the players, and at the same time entertain them by providing trials at which their characters can fail or shine, depending on how well they play and a bit of luck. The players' objective is to resolve the issue that put their characters in a struggle.

To continue the example above, the end of the fight at the village should present the players with questions, problems, and the chance to form objectives and make plans to end their struggle. Why did the Nadren attack? Did the Nadren capture someone significant to one of the PC's? Who's responsible for the raid, and will the raids stop if he's taken down?

- 5) The game usually climaxes in a grand struggle scene - often a fight - where the player characters have a chance to achieve their grand objective. For example, perhaps the key to ending the Nadren raids is to kill the corrupt baron who's been allowing them to slip past his patrols in return for a share of the loot and proceeds of slave trading. If the game is intended to run as a multi-session campaign, perhaps the ending of each episode leads the player characters to another, often bigger, problem and struggle.

As you play more, you will doubtless have other ideas for how to play this game. Go ahead and have fun! That's what makes RPG's so cool - they can be adapted almost endlessly to the tastes of the group that plays them.

Appendix: Days of Blood and Fire

This short adventure is playable in a few sessions, and good for any number of player characters. The setting is shortly after the death of Tenaka Khan, in terms of the books sometime between the events chronicled in *The King Beyond the Gate* and *Quest for Lost Heroes*.

Background

Following the death of Tenaka Khan, the Drenai rebelled against their Nadir overlords. Bitter fighting rages all through northern Drenai, drawing men, horses and treasure into its red maw like a whirlpool engulfing a fleet of fishing boats. The village of Drostan, in southern Drenai near the Vagrian border, has so far escaped the fighting, but all its menfolk are gone. The village is inhabited only by women, children, and a few elderly men considered too old to join the war effort. Unknown to the peaceful inhabitants, the rebellion has gone worse for the Drenai than anyone had let on, and the Nadir are advancing south. A raiding party riding in advance of the main Nadir army is just a day's ride from Drostan ...

Characters

Player characters can be residents of the village, in which case they shouldn't be men between 15 and 50; this means the characters are either women, elderly men, or even boys. Player characters can also be visitors to the village: mercenaries, deserters, Drenai soldiers fleeing the battle after losing their units, and so on. As with any Gemmell-style adventure this will feature quite a bit of physical conflict, so make sure the characters are danger-worthy in one way or another.

Drostan

The village of Drostan lies in the southeastern corner of Drenai. East of it is the port and stronghold of Dros Purdol; south lie the Pabbi Hills, a range of low, forested limestone hills, said to be pocked with many unexplored caves; and beyond that, the Vagrian border. To the north and west lie more farming villages. As it lies far to the south, Drostan has so far been untouched by war, and its fields are still prosperous. It is the beginning of fall, and the harvest has just been brought in.

None of the villages save 2-3 grandfathers have any military experience or weapons save for farm tools. The old veterans however were members of the Legion in their day and still have their Legion armor and weapons. The old village hunter, Bannock, was a good archer in his day, but he's 65 and his eyes and strength are failing; it's been some years since he last drew his bow ...

Prologue: The Nadir are Coming

A Nadir outrider is spotted on the outskirts of Drostan. Or, one of the PC's may be set up as arriving just ahead of the Nadir raiding party. The villagers have just one day to formulate a plan for dealing with the raid.

Act I: The Raid

The Nadir are foraging for food and pursuing any stragglers from the Drenai army they defeated just days ago. They will inevitably find Drostan. Depending on the number of PC's, between 20 to 50 or more Nadir will enter Drostan; their objective is to kill all fighters, take what supplies they can, and deny the rest to the Drenai. All the Nadir are mounted on shaggy steppe ponies, and are armed with a variety of weapons – bows, lances, axes, scimitars, and round hide shields.

Nadir Raider:

+0 to all combat tests; Fear: Harm 7, Fear: Unknown 14, Fear: Loss 8, Anger 13, Avarice 16, Despair 11, Gluttony 10, Lust 11, Pride 11, Sloth 10

Act II: The Flight

If the PCs survive the raid, impress upon them the idea that the rest of the Nadir army is not far behind. There is definitely no way to hold the village against an even stronger force. The only decision left is where and how to flee. The most logical destinations are Dros Purdol, or south across the Vagrian border.

Either way, the PC's and whatever refugees from the village they'll be shepherding will have to pass the Pabbi Hills. Unknown to the villagers, as Bannock hasn't been hunting here for years, the Pabbi Hills have acquired some new and unsavory residents: namely, a quartet of Joinings created by a rogue Source Priest named Barkaylas. Depending on the strength of the PC's, this sorcerer may either be dead, murdered and eaten by his own creations, or alive and full of malice.

The PC's and refugees will be stalked and hunted by the Joinings, who make sure to strike at night, leaving little trace of their passage save for horribly mangled corpses, blood and entrails. If the sorcerer is still alive, the Joinings will also have instructions to capture children for his experiments. A side trek could be to recover one or more captured children from the sorcerer's lair.

The sorcerer's lair is a cave in the Pabbi Hills, wherein some Elder machines will be found in working order. No one in the village will know how to work the machines, and in any case they will do nothing good right now.

Joinings:

+5 to all combat tests: Fear: Harm 5, Fear: Unknown 7, Fear: Loss 5, Anger 18, Avarice 5, Despair 8, Gluttony 18, Lust 16, Pride 16, Sloth 12

Barkaylas the Sorcerer:

+3 to all magic tests; +0 to combat tests: Fear: Harm 13, Fear: Unknown 5, Fear: Loss 9, Anger 13, Avarice 13, Despair 11, Gluttony 9, Lust 8, Pride 17, Sloth 12

Act III: New Enemies

If the PC's and refugees survive the gauntlet of the Pabbi Hills, they will be on the road to either Purdol or Dros Kaem in Vagria. The road is jam-packed with refugees, Drenai soldiers, and supply wagons laden with food and weapons bound for Dros Purdol.

As they march on, however, they will encounter the scouts of a Vagrian army headed into Drenai. The Vagrians, not wanting a Nadir invasion, have decided to invade Drenai again and raze the entire southern part of the country to deny the Nadir the supplies with which to invade Vagria. Any Drenai who resist are of course to be destroyed.

The all-cavalry force is made up of Vagrian light cavalry plus an elite body of Vagrian Knights of the Hound. They will pursue the PC party up to just out of sight of Dros Purdol.

Vagrian Cavalrymen:

+0 to combat; Fear: Harm 7, Fear: Unknown 13, Fear: Loss 11, Anger 12, Avarice 15, Despair 10, Gluttony 10, Lust 14, Pride 11, Sloth

Vagriian Knight of the Hounds:

+3 to combat; Fear: Harm 5, Fear: Unknown 11, Fear: Loss 12, Anger 12, Avarice 13, Despair 10, Gluttony 11, Lust 11, Pride 15, Sloth 10.

Act IV: Last Stand

Dros Purdol, the only hope of safety, is not in friendly hands. Despite a surprise mutiny by its Drenai and mercenary garrison, the Nadir overlord of Dros Purdol and his troops continue to hold out in the citadel and the port. If they can continue to hold the port, Nadir supplies can come in from over the sea, and no one can go out. If the citadel can't be taken, all the refugees will be caught between the Nadir and the Vagriians. And it has to be soon, for it's said Jungir Khan has dispatched another army to Dros Purdol by sea ...

The only hope of safety for the refugees now is to take the port, which the Nadir lord, General Jebei, is determined to protect as his main hope of relief.

Several courses are possible:

- Ally with the Vagriians vs the Nadir, to take the port;
- Ally with the Nadir vs. the Vagriians, to hold the city;
- Try to take the port by stratagem, without help;
- Try to hold the Drenai quarters of Dros Purdol against both armies, in a three-way fight to the death.

This should be a desperate, do-or-die battle, where the PC's may have to make the ultimate sacrifice to get the refugees away. Ideally, the port area should be taken so the refugees can take ship out of Dros Purdol and the port held against the Nadir fleet.