

Dear Master Wizard,

By the time you read this, it is likely that I will be dead. I am afraid that the worst of our fears are coming true. The Seals on the Dark Dreamer's Prison are degrading! At this point, they have degraded to a degree that the Nightmare Apostles can walk the Shared Dream, and some can already touch the physical world. None of them are able to Manifest here themselves, but they have agents to work their plans. The point is, They are Awakening, and the Seals are degrading!

I am writing you, as I am sure you understand, because you are the only person alive who knows the Ritual of the Dreamseal. You must Recast the Dreamseal Ritual! You will face grave threats to your life during your journey to the Stone Circle at Graystead to perform the Ritual. At the present point in your life, the demands of the Ritual are such that you will surely perish at it's Casting. Yet I ask you to please help us Master Wizard. You are Humanity's only hope.

Your Opposition will be numerous. You will surely face the Dreamtouched, as the fractures in the Dreamseal have allowed them to reenter the physical world. The Sisters of Mercy will surely attempt to stop you, as they now fear that you will be unable to complete the Ritual and the attempt will destroy what is left holding the Dark Dreamer in His Prison. They will bring to bear all their might in the form of martial arts mastery as well as mastery of the Craft. The White Knights will without doubt stand in your way. Their Knight Commander has decreed that The End of The Age is nigh, and that the release of the Dark Dreamer will usher in a brief conflict, followed by an extended Righteous rule by the White Knights. The total military might of the White Knights will surely be arrayed against you. In the end, it will be the Nightmare Appostles and the Dark Dreamer Himself who will stand in your way, using your Grief, Unrealized Dreams and Regrets to tempt you to lay down your quest. These threats, as well as numerous unscrupulous people who will attempt to exploit the situation, will stand in your way. Let them not distract or dissuade you from your task!

I understand that it has been almost forty years since you Performed the Dreamseal Ritual, locking the Dark Dreamer and His Nightmare Appostles within the Dream Prison, but the fate of all Free Will rests in your hands. You must fly without delay to the Stone Circle at Graystead, laying to rest any lingering Regrets that you may harbor, and recast the Dreamseal. Beware the agents of the Nightmare Appostles, and make haste to Graystead!

Your Friend in Life and likely now in Death,

Henry Gallows  
Master Wizard  
Veteran of the Nightmare War

## FACING THE END

SOLO RPG about Grief and the End of Life.

Lee Hammons

Using the Terms Old and Soldier

Facing the End is a roleplaying game for a single player. The point of play is to explore themes of Grief, Regret, and Loss associated with End of Life. This is accomplished in the setting of a fantasy world where the Protagonist of the game is asked to sacrifice himself to save humanity, and in the process he brings about the personal Loss and Regrets pertinent to the Themes.

In this game, you take the role of a The Master Wizard, an aging veteran wizard who is approaching the end of his or her life and now realizes that the accomplishment that made him or her famous was but a fleeting victory. Prior to yet again performing the Ritual that made him or her famous, he or she must vanquish any lingering Grief or Regrets, and overcome his sense of Loss at the prospect of losing his or her life.

Your character, The Master Wizard, is a retired Hero and Veteran of the Nightmare War, the Sealer of the Dark Dreamer's Prison, and the Liberator of the World. The Master Wizard has spent his time over the last 39 years since the end of the Nightmare War entertaining folks with tales of his heroics during the War. At first it was Royalty he entertained, then the well-to-do, then the common people. Recently, only the other Veterans at the Veteran's Hall have had any interest. His tales are still good for free drinks and a bite to eat, but the world has grown comfortable with the thought that the Dark Dream has been defeated.

Game play will consist of drawing cards from 2 decks, a Scene Setting Deck and an Opposition Deck, which will give creative guidelines for framing and playing out the scenes. Once a Scene Setting has been generated, the Player will alternate between narrating the actions of The Master Wizard and narrating the actions and responses of the rest of the world and the antagonists. The major Conflicts in the game will center on the temptation of The Master Wizard by the Nightmare Apostles with his own goals, relationships, treasured avocations, and meaningful places that he will otherwise imminently lose. The resolution of each of these Temptation Scenes will set the difficulty of the Final Scene. This process is able to avoid violating the Czege Principle by generating the scenes randomly, and determining the difficulty of each conflict through an Escalation Difficulty algorithm. The opposition to The Master Wizard will be generated by the game itself, using an Old Piece of Gaming Technology, the Random Encounter Table!

### **On Card Ranks and Suits**

In this text, Rank of a Card refers to the number on the card. This game assumes a Rank Order starting from the Ace and ascending through King. Ace is always considered 1, Jack is 11, Queen is 12, and King is 13. Suits designate the nature of the Opposition. For Suits, a Diamond designates the Sisters of Mercy, a Spade designates the Dreamtouched, a Club designates the White Knights, and a Heart designates some other, more worldly, opponent.

### **Game Play**

Play progresses through a sequence of Turns, each containing one Scene. Each Scene will have a Scene Setting, an Opposition, a Difficulty, a Conflict, various potential Complications, Escalations, and Counters, and a Resolution. Some elements listed above will be generated by Playing a Card Drawn from the Opposition Deck and a Card from the Scene Setting Deck. These Cards will then be cross-referenced on the Scene Setting List, the Opposition Table, and the Difficulty Matrix. Using the elements generated as creative constraints and inspiration, the Player Frames a Scene to include each element. There is then a period of Free Narration within the Scene to bring the Scene to a point of Conflict. Conflicts are then handled according to the Conflict Rules, and the Scene is then Resolved. The Turn then ends, and a new Turn is begun.

### **Turn Sequence**

- 1) Draw two Cards from the Scene Setting Deck and two Cards from the Opposition Deck.
- 2) Increase the Difficulty Matrix according to the Escalating Difficulty Rules.
- 3) Resolve any Dreamsequence dictated by either of the Scene Setting Cards.
- 4) Choose one of the Opposition Cards and one of the Scene Setting Cards, and set them aside. Add the other Scene Setting Card to your Hand and the other Opposition Card to the Opposition Discard Pile. Discard from your Hand to the Scene Setting Discard Pile if necessary to hold only seven cards in your Hand.
- 5) Use the Set Aside Opposition Card to generate the Opposition from the Opposition Table.
- 6) Use the Set Aside Scene Setting Card to generate a Scene Setting from the Scene Setting List.
- 7) Use the Set Aside Opposition Card to determine the Difficulty on the Difficulty Matrix.
- 8) Free Narrate the Scene using the Scene Setting and Opposition until the point of a Conflict. Every Scene must have a Conflict.
- 9) Resolve the Conflict with the Conflict Resolution Rules.
- 10) End the Scene.

### **Generating the Opposition**

Refer to the Suit and Rank of the Opposition Card on the Opposition Table. Use this entry as a creative starting point to Narrate the Opposition during the Scene.

### **Generating the Scene Setting**

Count down the Scene Setting List a number equal to the Rank of the Card Played, skipping any entry on the list that has been crossed out. Use the descriptive term generated to Frame the Scene Setting of the Scene. Once you have used any entry on the list, cross it out. If the Scene Setting Card does not have an entry on the Opposition Table, this card has special rules. These Cards will be described below. These Cards include all of the Aces, the Queens, and the Kings. When you draw these Cards, refer to the section in this text on the appropriate Card for how to handle them.

### **Generating the Scene Difficulty**

Refer to the specific Card entry on the Difficulty Matrix. This entry will tell you a number between 0 and 3. This number will be used during any conflict in the Scene. This number is incremented according to the section below entitled Escalating the Difficulty.

#### **The Conflict Roll**

- 1) Roll dice for the appropriate Arena (Study, Talking, Physical, Fighting, or Murder). At any point, you may add appropriate Aspect dice to the roll by Narrating the Aspect into the fiction. At any point, you may Escalate to another Arena by Narrating it into the fiction and roll any appropriate Stat Dice not already used in this Conflict.
- 2) If the total of the highest 2 dice show 8 or higher, narrate some action that if unopposed would result in accomplishing the goal and resolving the Conflict. If the total of the highest 2 dice is less than 8, narrate failure of the goal and resolution of the Conflict, or add Aspect dice or Escalate to another Arena.
- 3) If the Difficulty is higher than 0, reduce the counters by 1 and remove the highest die showing in the roll from play. Narrate a counter by the Opposition or complication of the Scene that stops the achievement of the Goal. Then go back to step 2.
- 4) When there are no more counters, if the roll has any 1s, remove a 1 and increase the Difficulty of the Scene by 1. Increment the Fallout Dice, then go back to step 3.
- 5) When there are no more 1s, if the 2 highest remaining dice show 8 or higher, refer to the appropriate Resolution Table for the appropriate Arena, and narrate the accomplishment of the goal and resolution of the Scene. If the 2 highest remaining dice show less than 8, narrate the failure to achieve the goal.

#### **Escalating the Difficulty**

Draw a number of Cards from the Opposition Deck equal to half of the Escalation Number. The Escalation Number starts the game at four. Add +1 to the entry for each card drawn on the Difficulty Matrix. If any entry is incremented past a multiple of 3, this is a Critical Escalation. Add +1 to each entry connected to the entry just experiencing a Critical Escalation. Each entry incremented in this way can cause further Critical Escalations, leading to a Chain Reaction of increasing Difficulty. Each entry on the Difficulty Matrix can experience only one Critical Escalation per Chain Reaction.

### **Preparing the Opposition Deck**

Take a normal playing card deck. Remove all of the Aces, the Queens, and the Kings. Shuffle and set the deck aside as the Opposition Deck. The order of this deck should be maintained for the duration of the game. Any cards played from this deck are placed in the Opposition Discard Pile.

### **Preparing the Scene Setting Deck**

Take a normal playing card deck, preferably a different color than the Opposition Deck. Remove all of the Aces, the Queens, and the Kings. Shuffle and deal a Hand of 5 cards. Separate the remaining Scene Setting Deck into four equal piles of ten. Randomly add an Ace, a Queen, and a King to Each pile, and then shuffle each pile. Stack all of the piles up to make a full deck of playing cards, maintaining the order of each pile. Set this deck aside as the Scene Setting Deck. The order of this deck should be maintained for the duration of the game. Any cards played from this deck are placed in the Scene Setting Discard Pile. Whenever there are two or more Aces, Kings, and Queens in the Scene Setting Discard Pile, remove one Ace, one King, and one Queen from the Scene Setting Discard Pile. Take 10 other non-Ace, non-Queen, and non-King cards from the Scene Setting Discard Pile. Shuffle them together with the removed Ace, Queen, and King. Place this new pile on the bottom of the Scene Setting Deck.

### **Preparing the Difficulty Matrix**

All entries in the Difficulty Matrix start the game at zero. Draw three Cards from the Opposition Deck. Add +3 to the entry of each Card drawn. Draw three more Cards. Add +2 to the entry of each Card drawn. Draw three more Cards. Add +1 to the entry of each Card Drawn.

### **Drawing an Ace, Black Queen, or Black King from the Scene Setting Deck**

When an Ace, Black Queen, or Black King is drawn from the Scene Setting Deck, do not add it to your Hand. A Regret Scene is Framed as a dream sequence using any entry from the Scene Setting List, an Opposition by any of the four Nightmare Lords, and a Difficulty equal to The Master Wizard's Grief. The conflict narrated will be a test of The Master Wizard's character, with the Nightmare Lord tempting him with one of his Regrets. Success means that he has overcome his Regret. He may be tempted with this Regret again, but only after he has overcome all of his other Regrets. Failure means that The Master Wizard is wracked with guilt, his Grief is incremented by +1, and his Aspect corresponding to that Regret is decremented by -1.

If the Card Drawn is an Ace, following the Regret Scene, increment the Escalation Number +1. Draw one card from the BOTTOM of the Opposition Deck. Increment the entry for that Card on the Difficulty Matrix by +3, following the rules for Critical Escalations if applicable, then discard the Card into the Opposition Discard Pile. Shuffle the cards in the Opposition Discard Pile. Place the Opposition Discard Pile on TOP of the Opposition Deck.

### **Drawing a Red Queen or Red King from the Scene Setting Deck**

Red Queens and Kings have special rules. These Cards can be played at any time in the game. The effect of each card is as listed below.

- 1) Queen of Diamonds – Discard this card to look at the top seven Cards on the Opposition Deck and rearrange them in any order.
- 2) Queen of Hearts – Discard this Card to decrement by -1 or increment by +1 any Aspect of The Master Wizard. Decrementing a 1d4 Aspect eliminates the Aspect.
- 3) King of Diamonds – Discard this Card to remove any Card in the Opposition Discard Pile from the game.
- 4) King of Hearts – Discard this Card to reroll any number of Conflict Dice.

### **The Ritual of the Dreamseal – The Endgame**

The final Conflict of the Game is the Casting of the Dreamseal. This will take place at the Stone Circle at Graystead. This Scene can only take place once the Player is able to select The Stone Circle at Graystead from the Scene Setting List. During the Ritual, the Nightmare Apostles will try to tempt The Master Wizard with all of the Regrets with which he began the game. The Difficulty of this Conflict has been set throughout the game as The Master Wizard has faced his Regrets, and increased his Grief. This is a normal Scene otherwise. The Scene Setting is the Stone Circle at Graystead, the Opposition is all of the Nightmare Lords, and the Difficulty is The Master Wizard's Grief. The result of this Conflict should dictate the Narration of the Resolution of the Scene, but must ultimately result in the Death of the Master Wizard.

### **To be Filled In Further:**

- 1) Notes on Themes and Influences (Gandalf and Obi Wan, not Elminster.  
Pyrotechnics and telekinesis, not teleportation and timestop.)  
Notes on how to play Elements of Grief.  
Notes on how to Frame Scenes.
- 2) The Opposition Table
- 3) The Difficulty Matrix  
Cards will be grouped by Suit.  
Each entry will have 2 to 5 connections to other adjacent entries, based on the Rank of the corresponding Card, Rank/2 rounded up number of connections.  
Spades centrally with many connections to the others, and the others peripherally, with few connections between them.
- 4) The Scene Setting List
- 5) Generate Resolution Option Tables for each Conflict Arena similar to the resolution options for each Move in Apocalypse World.
- 6) List of all Nightmare Apostles.  
Joshua, the Dark Dreamer, Bringer of False Hope  
Eve, the Temptress  
Moshe, Prophet of False Hope  
John, the Wearer of Many Masks  
Mark, Servant of Heretic Sects

Luke, the Propagandist  
Mathew, the Historian of Doubt  
Cain, the Betrayer  
Abraham, Tyrant of Dreams.

7) Generating Regrets/Dreams.

All generated from the player's real life.

List 2 goals that you are in the process of accomplishing that will be meaningful to you at age 70. These are your Life Goals and Major Accomplishments. Translate these goals into the goals of your Master Wizard.

List 2 relationships that are the most important to you that will be meaningful to you at age 70. These are your Relationships. Translate these relationships into the relationships of your Master Wizard.

List 2 activities that you enjoy doing most out of all activities that you do and that will be meaningful to you at age 70. These are your Treasured Avocations. Translate these avocations into the avocations of your Master Wizard.

List 2 places that are most important to you and that will be meaningful to you at age 70. These are your Meaningful Places. Translate these places into the meaningful places of your Master Wizard.

Whenever the game fiction references the goals, relationships, avocations, and places of your Master Wizard, think about what your goals, relationships, avocations, and places mean to you. Think about what the loss of them would mean to you. Feel what it would mean to lose them. Play your Master Wizard with these feelings and thoughts in mind.

At each game session, reevaluate all of the goals, relationships, avocations, and places in light of both the game fiction and the Player's real life priorities.

8) Refresh Scene

Additional Scene with a Difficulty equal to your Grief, with a Conflict centering around reconciling your Grief over a goal, relationship, avocation, or place of your Master Wizard.

The point is to allow you to recharge and build up your goals, relationships, avocations, and places Aspects of your Master Wizard, without advancing toward the End Game.

Framed as an inner dialogue or a dialogue with an NPC.

9) The Master Wizard's Character Sheet and Character Generation.

Stats are d4, d6, d8, d10, and d12

Various Aspects

Current Grief

One Aspect each for your Grievs, cannot be reduced below 1d4

10) Magic and Weapons

Use of any Aspect that uses Subtle Magic adds a 1d4 Complication to the Conflict.

Use of any Aspect that uses Overt Magic adds a 2d4 Complication to the Conflict.

Use of any Aspect that uses Subtle Weapons adds a 1d4 Complication to the Conflict.

Use of any Aspect that uses Overt and Deadly Weapons adds a 1d4 Complication to the Conflict.

11) Aspects and their use.

Extra dice for Conflicts, Tap Aspect

Untap an Aspect by adding +1d4 to a Conflict and narrating a complication arising from any Aspect.

Either can only be done once per Conflict.

One additional 1d4 Aspect for each goal, relationship, avocation, and place of your Master Wizard.

12) Fallout rules

Still working on these, may change them with play.

Starts with 2d4 for any roll of a 1 in a Conflict.

Increment a die +1 step for each additional 1 in the Conflict (1d4->1d6, 1d8->1d10)

1-7 = Permanent 1d6 Aspect or increment Stat or Aspect

8-15 = Temp 1d4 Aspect

16+ = Permanent 1d4 Aspect or decrement Stat or Aspect

13) Stats and Arenas of Conflict

Five Stats – Intellect, Heart, Body, Will, and Cunning

Five Arenas – Study (Int+Cng), Talking (Int+Hrt), Physical (Hrt+Bdy),

Fighting (Bdy+Wil), Murder (Wil+Cng)

One each of 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, 1d12

Body cannot be 1d10 or 1d12

Intellect, Heart, or Cunning must be 1d12

The rest are open.



### Opposition Table

Card Rank	Spades	Diamonds	Clubs	Hearts
2	Dream Agent	Village Healer	Sympathizer	Peasant Mob
3	Agent Cell	Amazon Guard	Knight Errant	Bandits
4	Goblins	Agents of the Sisters	Knight Company	Predator Attack
5	Hobgoblins	Sister and Amazon Guards	Renowned Knight	Hunger/Famine
6	Fading Dream	Wandering Scholar Sister	Inquisitors	Inclement Weather/Natural Disaster
7	Hobgoblin Raiding party	Hunter Sister	Spymaster's Agent	Raiding Warlord
8	Dream Assassin	Sister and Amazon Guard Troup	Whipped up Mob	Organized Crime
9	Animation Storm	Legendary Sister	Inquisitor	Haunting
10	Nightwing	Coven	Placeholder	Spirit of the Land
Jack	Dreamweaver Wizard	Sorceress	Knight Champion	Summoned by the King

**Scene Setting List-** Feeling uncreative right now, I'll fill this in later.

On the road at midnight.

The ferry at Hillshire.

Brekon's Ridge.

Cherry Hill Inn.

Farmer Gable's Farm

Elderberry Well.

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The Stone Circle at Graystead.

