

Knights of Twilight

What is this game for?

This is a game about fencing.

Quite a lot of RPGs have tried to construct a realistic simulation of a sword duel or swordplay, so far. As far as I understand swordplay, with almost 10 years of fencing competitions on my shoulders, they all failed.

This game, or at least the state of development in which this game is so far (very starting), wants to bring to the players the very thrill of instant-decision that is both tactical and practical; that “life on the edge” which is the very momentum in the life of a fencer.

An edge that is sharp, quick, and deadly.

No other role in western history arose more dreams and tales but the one of the Cavalier. Men of honor, men of sacrifice, men of discipline over which our very idea of “hero” has been prototyped.

And a Cavalier had no other friend on the battle field than his **sword**.

This game is about these Cavaliers, **soldiers** of all that is right and just, who wield their swords in lonely fights against hordes and champions of darkness.

Characters of this game are molded over the memory of Orlando, the Frenzied and the Lover, he who flew up to the moon to recover his sanity and free Jerusalem from the infidels. Namely, alone.

But these times of ours are such that we must be sure a message should not be misunderstood, so I will not talk of religion and I will elevate the concept behind these character to a general morale level, even bringing them away of the times that Ariosto told of.

Who is this game for?

This game is for people who likes fighting. There will be a lot.

It will be mostly, if not totally, one-to-one dueling.

There is something more, but the game is mostly duel-driven and then the players will face consequences of victory and defeat.

They will see their Knights developing, fight after fight, and getting prepared to missions and quests, or they will see them failing and maybe dying.

There can be romance, but is that kind that asks you for impossible missions and to risk your life to prove your feelings. Usually by fighting huge enemies alone.

This game is intended for 2 to 4 players, but my also work with more.

One of these players will be the GM.

GM is the player that moves the Non Playing Characters and that prepares the quests and missions the Knights will face.

A World of Darkened Time

Imagine then a time in a distant future. A time when civilization faces an age of strife between the forces of purity and the forces of corruption; the forces of humanity are fighting against demons of darkness that are trying to gain control of the world.

You are a Knight of Twilight, the ultimate shield and sword of humanity, a hero who accepted a oath and partook a seed of corruption, accepting a dangerous gift in order to be able to stand a chance against the Champions of Darkness.

You stand on the brick, you're a soldier against darkness, the last chance of humanity.

Would you die for it?

The world of our character, which has no particular name except “the world”, is blistered and covered in ever burning cinders, left by the crawling Darkness that the demons is taking along.

Few Fortresses of Hope remain, serving as shelters and cities for the common people and as bases for the Knights Chapters.

This is a time of war, and the Chapters are the army, this side of the front.

Few centuries ago, a Master Knight whose name is long forgotten, discovered a membrane that separates the world from the Darkness. This membrane is thick and uniform, and has properties which belong to both the world and the Darkness.

Sometimes this membrane opens, and sections of Darkness pour in into the world.

When it happens, fragments of this membrane detach and float freely in the world. Should a human put his hands on them, he could manipulate powers beyond dream... or nightmare.

When this Master Knight tracked one of these opens, he captured a fragment of the membrane, which he eventually named “the Twilight”, and ingested it. The power he came in contact with was so strong, he almost turned into a demon himself.

The Bishop of his Fortress performed a ritual that bound this power under the Knight control, in exchange of the promise of defending the Fortress at the cost of his own life. It was the day the Knights of Twilight were born.

On the age of 14, children are watched upon by a Master Knight and those who prove to be tough enough are brought to the Monastery, the higher and most secret tower of a Fortress.

Here they are given a Suite, which is a complex crypto-magical bio-techno-armor that will grow with the Knight body and will never be removed.

It defends the body but it has a toll which is a burden for the Knight, because it links the Knight to the fragment of Twilight that empowers the Suite.

After few months of training, a Knight is performed the ritual upon and he accepts the oath to defend humanity at the cost of their life.

You were one of these teenagers, you have been chosen after your caravan survived an attack from a horde, a pack of lesser demons that roam the Cinder Plains, the fields of ever burning ashes that cover all the world, in between Fortresses.

You survived, together with a person of your family or a love.

*Choose who is your **Affection** and write it on your character sheet.*

Eventually, this Affection will confront you and ask you for something. It is important to keep track of your relation with your Affection, because you will be allowed to have few and rare contact with the common people, so it is better for you to save these moments for your Affection. Your Affection has a starting rate of 1.

*Also, mark your **Corruption** rating; it is 1 as well, at the start.*

*You also have **Honor** rating at 1, at the start.*

First Blood

Training at the Monastery is hard.

“Hard” in like: you don’t know if you survive it.

At least half the training teenagers who enter the Monastery, will not leave it.

There are two main reasons for this: first, the Twilight corrupts, to a point that there is always the risk to be turned to a Demon. And it's not exactly a good thing to be a demon inside the heart of the bastion of humanity.

Second, there is only one way to be sure a Knight can stand a fight against a Champion of Darkness: training them against those Champions.

Teenagers are asked to fight against each other. Should one fall, he will start turning into a Champion of Darkness by the fragment of Twilight in his or her Suite, and the closest trainee to the Demon is asked to terminate it.

Whether he succeed, he will be ready for war.

Whether he perish, the next two trainee have just found their testing Champions.

You're one of these trainees, and you just landed a deadly blow across your training partner's chest. His skin is quickly turning dark and his eyes are starting to burn the amber flame of Darkness. You must act quickly.

*You have three characteristics you use for fighting: **Reaction**, **Movement** and **Power**.*

They are all currently at 1. Take a fudge die of a different color for each of them: White for Reaction, Black for Movement and Red for Power.

This is your dice pool. You will fight with it.

*You also have a **Resistance** rating, which is the sum of your three characteristics, so mark it as 3. Resistance rating may change during fights, but at the end of the fight it will be back to his maximum value.*

*Luckily for you, you have no **Scars**, so far.*

At the end of this document there's a quick schema of the fighting field. It is a simulation that represent the distance between you and your enemy during the fight. It also provides you and your opponent with boxes to put the dice in, while you use them.

You know some Techniques.

There are Techniques of Attack, Techniques of Defense and Techniques of Movement.

Techniques of Attack will use a White die.

Techniques of Defense will use a White die as well.

Techniques of Movement will use a Black die.

Using a die means that you have that die in your pool, and you "use" it by deploying it in the "Deployed Tokens" box of the fighting field.

*Some Techniques will allow you to **Assign** a further die. Usually, a red Die, that represent a Technique is On Target, and it has a chance to hit your opponent. There are Techniques that Assign other die colors, or Techniques that **Add** dies to the player pool, **Consume** dies from the pool (it must be there), or **Remove** dies from the deployed box (it must be there).*

Your opponent is a Demon just born, so he also has 1 in each Characteristic. He just transformed, so his reach of the Darkness is still of no use for him, giving him no bonuses. You're currently fighting with training swords, which doesn't change your dice pool.

Roll your Fudge Die.

These die will be used as tokens during the fight, and their value will be meaningful at the end, except for the purpose of calculating initiative.

Initiative

After the roll, calculate the results of the Black dice. Add the "+" and subtract the "-". The player who scored higher, moves first.

*In case of same result, the one with the LESS total Black dice starts first.
This is your First Blood, so both you and your opponent will have 1 Black die. In this particular case, you take advantage of tied results.*

The Fight

Choose a Technique to start with:

Techniques of Movement:



1. *Go Out of Measure - (you step away from the fight, forcing the enemy to come back In Measure if he wants to use Techniques of Attack or Defense)*
2. *Go In Measure (you go back In Measure, rushing in melee range, allowing to use again Techniques of Attack or Defense)*
3. *Charge (You run headlong toward your enemy with all your rage and worst intentions; Assigns a "+" Black die, enemy must be Out of Measure, up to 2 distances)*
4. *Crossed Step (You make a quick forward move that gives you a tactical advantage; Assigns a White die)*
5. *Dodge (You duck an incoming blow without engaging blades; Removes a Red die)*

Techniques of Attack:



1. *Cleave (Swing your blade for a slashing effect; Assign a Red die)*
2. *Stumble (Kick on your opponent's leg to send him off-guard; Removes a Black die; if the opponent doesn't have any more, it removes a White one; send the opponent Out of Measure)*
3. *Hitting the blade (You hit your opponent's blade to move it away from your own vital areas; Removes a White die)*
4. *Feint (You fake an attack on a line and quickly change to another; Adds a White die)*
5. *Lunge (Point your left foot firmly and leap ahead, sword high in front; Consume one of your Black die and Assign 2 Red die) > Warning... "multiple" move: you have to Use a white die (put it in the Deployment Box), Consume one of your Black die (remove it from your pool), Assign 2 Red die (put it in the box. If you don't have enough Red die, burn Resistance to reach the correct number).*

Techniques of Defense:



1. *Parry (Oppose your blade to the incoming blow; Removes a Red die)*
2. *En-Temp (Spot a weakness in the opponent attack, and hit it fast; Assigns un Red die)*
3. *In Line (Stand firm, your arm and sword in a perfect line in front of you, keeping the opponent away and also threatening; Consume one of your Black die and Assign 2 White die) > Warning... "multiple" move: you have to Use a White die (put it in the Deployment Box), Consume one of your Black die (remove it from your pool), Assign 2 White die (put it in the box. If you don't have enough White die, burn Resistance to reach the correct number).*
4. *Feint (You fake a weakness in your defense to force the opponent to strike exactly there, where you want; Consumes a White die of your opponent)*
5. *Using your left hand (Shield, the Twilight or Two-Hand your weapon) > See below.
Remember you have to deploy your white die before applying the consequences.*

You don't have a Shield at the moment, so you can only use your left hand for wielding your sword two handed, or invoking the Twilight.

Use a Weapon Two Handed:

1. *Two Handed Cleave* (You grab your weapon with both hands and unleash all your strength on the enemy; Your next Technique of Attack Assigns a further Red die).

Invoking the Twilight:

1. *Shadow Brust* (You reach out for your Twilight powers and unleash a flame of pure Darkness; Consumes any of your die and Assign a Red "+"; you generate +1 Corruption).
2. *Wall of the Restless* (You call for the victims of the war in your aid, commanding them to hold your enemy; Consumes a Black die and Remove all of your opponent Black dice; you generate +1 Corruption)
3. *The Twilight Step* (You melt yourself with the Twilight, emerging somewhere else; Consumes a Red die and you step Out of Measure or back In Measure up to 2 distances; you generate +1 Corruption)

How to Use the dice:

Whenever you perform a Technique, you deploy the corresponding die.

White for Attack or Defense, Black for Movement.

Every Technique has consequences, detailed in brackets.

If a Technique **Assign** a die, take it from your pool and put it in the Deployed box. If the Assigned die is Red, put it in the "On Target" box. Red die are those who actually inflict pain to the opponent or to you.

If a Technique **Removes** a die, take it from the opponent Deployed box and discard it. If the die to remove is Red, take it from the "On Target" box.

If a Technique **Add** a die, add it to your pool.

If a Technique **Consumes** a die, take it from yours or your opponent's pool, and discard it, according to what the Techniques says.

If a Technique requires a die to be used, that die must be present, in the Pool; otherwise, the Knight can burn 1 Resistance.

Exchanging Techniques:

It is all simpler than how it seems.

A technique of Attack can be replied to with Defense or Movement.

A technique of Defense can be replied to with Attack or Movement.

A technique of Movement can be replied to with Attack or Defense.

Always declare aloud which kind of Technique are you using: "Attack: Cleave", or "Defense: In Line".

Hitting the Enemy:

If your enemy goes out of die before you do (your pool is reduced to zero), you hit him.

Check the deployed dice: if you could Assign at least 1 Red die (On Target), you actually inflicted pain.

If you could Assign only Black or White dice, you retain those dice for the next assault and add them to your next Pool.

In your First Blood Scene, if you can inflict Pain to the Demon, you win.

There is no Wound calculation in this moment of the game.

In your First Blood Scene, also, the majority of "+" will tell you which Characteristic you trained the most, and so at the end of the fight, add 1 to Reaction, Power or Movement, accordingly.

Winning also grants you +1 Honor.

Going Out of Measure:

When one of the fighters goes Out of Measure (so it's no more in melee range with the opponent), the opponent may choose whether to go back In Measure, going further Out of Measure or Taking Breath.

The Knight who willingly goes further Out of Measure is considered a Vile.

You're a Vile if you use the Twilight Step to go Out of Measure.

You're a Vile if you improve the distance of an Out of Measure after a Stumble or a Shield Charge (see the Shield moves, later).

You're a Vile if your opponent willingly went Out of Measure and you improve the distance.

While if your opponent went Out of Measure and you don't do anything at all (stand still), you're Taking Breath.

Taking Breath

When an opponent decides to Take Breath, all deployed dice are removed. The fight restarts with the dice left in the pools. A new initiative is calculated with the remaining die (DO NOT REROLL THEM).

Taking breath is something you don't expect from a Knight. It's ok for trainee, or for High Floor Dames and servants. The number of times you can Take Breath in a fight is 4 minus your current Honor rating.

If you go past this number, you lose 1 Honor.

Inflicting Pain:

If you could Assign at least 1 Red die, you are inflicting pain.

Every die deployed inflicts 1 Pain Point.

Every Red "+" inflicts 1 more Pain Point.

Every White "+" grants the winning player to Narrate 1 REACTION for one Character in the Scene, his or any other. For example you can narrate that one of your fellow training Knight is incredible impressed of your performance. These narrations prepare the fiction for the creation of new Affections.

Every Black "+" grants the winning player to Narrate 1 MOVEMENT for one Character in the Scene, his or any other. For example you can narrate that half the crowd gathered around the fight, run away in fear of the Demon once it is destroyed. These narrations touch the framing around the Characters.

If the majority of the "+" scored by both players is Red, narration must include sanguinary scenes of unnecessary violence.

If the majority of the "+" scored by both players is Black, narration must include scenes of pursuit or escape.

If the majority of the "+" scored by both players is White, narration must include scenes of psychological or social reaction and introspection.

Real War.

So you fought a demon and defeated it.

In that moment, you were taken in the High Circle and threaten with respect.

You entered that elite circle of people who damn care for Honor.

Honor

It's the center point of a Knight's life. A Knight fights, risk his life and undergoes the most difficult missions and quests to improve his Honor.

When his Honor improves his Affections will be deeper, his ability to invoke the Twilight and to use weapons improves accordingly.

After you complete your First Blood, your Honor is 2.

With the exception of Resistance and Corruption, no rating on the Knight sheet can be higher than his Honor.

Modifier taken for weapon sets are applied -after- this calculation, so a Knight with Honor 2 may have Reaction 2, but when he wields a sword on the battlefield, he gains a +1 for a total score of Reaction 3 (see later for Weapons).

Few months of deeper training followed, during which you were prepared to fight with different weapon sets.

A Knight always roam with all of these weapons. His Suite can safely hold them all with no encumbrance, so that he can wisely chose the best one for each situation.

These weapons are blessed by the Fortress Bishop and made of the hardest and finest metal of the world.

Weapons

Sword > +1 to Reaction, +1 to Power

Axe > +2 to Power

Spear > +1 to Power, +1 to Movement

Off Hand

Shield > -1 to Movement, +2 to Reaction; must be worn before fight starts. If you use a Shield, you cannot wield your weapon two-handed and you cannot invoke the Twilight.

Aura of Twilight > -1 to Movement, +2 to Any (even different); must be declared before fight starts, generates +1 Corruption. If you activate the Aura, you cannot use a Shield or wield your weapon two-handed.

Free Hand > no cost. Allows you to wield your weapon two-handed at will and invoke the Twilight at will. You are not using a shield.

Techniques with the Shield.

- 1. Block (You contrast an incoming blow with the solid body of your shield; Consumes a White die, but Removes a White AND a Red die)*
- 2. Shield Charge (You run headlong toward your enemy, slamming on him from after your shield, knocking him out; Consumes one of your opponent's Black die and sends him Out of Measure; Assigns a Red and a Black die).*

Now you're fighting real fights.

Your Captain will send you, alone or with other fellow Knights, to face a pack of demons. This is usually your first mission.

There is no much difference from the fight you had with your Demon. Except these demons are slightly stronger and wont die with the first blow.

They also are not so kin to die as a whole, and strongly prefer to kill.

It may happen that you endure wounds.

Sustaining Wounds

A Character can sustain a total number of Pain Points equal to his REMAINING Resistance.

If he receives more, he will gain a Scar for each Red die endured.

When the total Scars are higher than Resistance, the Knight dies and turns into a Demon for the Twilight corrupting his body.

Keep a correct track of Scars and of the use of Resistance during fights (remember: you can burn Resistance if you want to use a Technique for which you lack a proper die), because it may happen that a Knight turns into a Demon in the middle of them.

Healing Scars

By Contamination

The Twilight is powerful and one of the easiest abilities to use is that of giving back vitality to dead flesh. This is true for the Knights also, and they can use the Twilight to heal their wound.

A player may decide to convert a Scar into 1 point of Corruption Rating.

By Scenes of Resting

The Knight spend some time resting from war and he may meet new people meanwhile.

Add 1 Affection and heal 1 Scar, or rise one existing Affection by 1 and heal 1 Scar.

You may heal only 1 Scar in this way.

Your new Affection or your modified Affection needs a prove of your feelings and demands you to bring them something that is found in the Cinder Plans.

Start a new Quest, alone. Now.

If you have comrades, they will stay in the Fortress and Train (see Training, later).

By Scene of Frustration

One of your Affections runs to you while you're in the hospital and warns you about what this crusade is doing to you, trying to convince you to give up.

Compare your Honor and your total Affections rating (sum up all the Affections).

You can heal 1 Scar by spending 1 point of the highest of the two, with no further consequences.

Training Scenes

When one Knight of a group is engaged in a Scene of Resting, and consequent Quest, the other Knights can practice and undergo training. In swordplaying, it's well known, you learn with exercise and mistakes. You can train only ONCE per Training Scene, either by fighting a dummy or by challenging a higher ranked Knight in a duel.

Remember, you MUST already have enough Honor to train a Characteristic to the desired level.

If you successfully train, update your Resistance rating as well.

Training on a fighting dummy

The Knight practices in a training field or armory, under the guide of an instructor.

The player declares which Characteristic he is trying to improve.

One other random player (not the GM, nor the player engaged in the Quest) defines which sequence of Techniques the Knights must perform.

This Characteristic is actually improved if the sequence is performed correctly, and at the end the player also has at least one die left in his pool, of the corresponding color.

The number of Techniques in the sequence cannot be higher than the training Knight's Honor rating.

Training against another Knight

Dueling, you know from your teenage, is a dangerous thing.

By challenging another Knight of a higher rank (with higher Honor) a training Knight can learn from his style.

Perform a standard fight, with a break at the first round, even if no Pain is scored.

If the higher ranked Knight doesn't score any Pain Point, the training Knight receive a +1 in the Characteristic corresponding to the majority of "+" on the battlefield.

If the higher ranked Knight DOES score Pain Points, the training Knight may rise TWO (different) Characteristics, but he receives standard Scars.

The Burden of Corruption

Using Twilight corrupts your body and soul.

It consumes you from within, whispering words of temptation and promises from the Darkness itself.

If the total Corruption rating is higher than the sum of Honor + Resistance, your Knight falls to the temptation of Darkness and changes side in the war.

Preparing Missions

Missions are official war assignments dispatched by the High Circle.

You cannot avoid missions.

Usually, Missions involve all the Knights together, so if your group is composed of 3 Knights, you will always take part to Missions together.

Missions are war objectives that must be achieved. Usually they involve defending strategic points, or acquiring new controlled territory, or escorting caravans to other Fortresses.

The GM calculate the total Honor and Resistance of the Group.

He then create three profiles:

- 1. one Horde, a group of lesser demons that will face the group at the beginning of the Mission.*
- 2. one Demon of Darkness, a middle, peer opponent that will threaten the mission success.*
- 3. one Champion of Darkness, a high, more ranked opponent that must be defeated to obtain the mission goal.*

The Horde

The Horde is a pack of demons with abilities that are a lot lower than the Knights'.

A Horde has a total Resistance of 1 point less than the total Resistance of the Knights Group and a total Honor of 1 less too; it may be fought in group and at each fight round in which the Knights do not receive Pain Points, the Horde is removed of 1 die, as the members of it are slaughtered.

If the Knights also can inflict Pain, remove more die, accordingly.

If the Horde inflict Pain, deal Scars as normal on the Knights.

Hordes cannot have a Characteristic of 0 (zero).

Demons prefer to develop Reaction and Power.

So in order to generate the Horde profile, assign points starting from Reaction, then Power, then Movement.

Hordes cannot make a mission fail.

If a Group loses a fight to a Horde, they are simply retreating to safer ground, waiting to move on.

In this case, though, the Group will face another Horde, until they defeat one.

Demon of Darkness

A Demon is a twisted creature of Darkness that roams free in the world.

They are made of stone and burning fire, and leave only ashes and cinders when they walk.

A Demon is a single enemy that has the same Resistance rating of the entire Knights Group and the same Honor of the HIGHER ranked Knight in the Group.

A Demon must be fought with a sequence of duels.

The higher ranked Knight starts first. Fight the duel normally.

Once Pain is scored, whichever side, start the duel of the second Knight.

Go on until all Knights have fought the Demon.

Apply Scars as normal, remember the Demon has more single scars, than every single Knight.

At the end of all the duels, if the Demon sustained at least half his possible Scars, he is defeated and the Mission can go on.

If he receives less than half his possible Scars, it defeated the Group and the mission is failed.

Champion of Darkness

A Champion of Darkness is a former Knight who is now fighting the war by the wrong side. He is a dangerous foe, and powerful one also.

A Champion is a single enemy that has 1 point of Resistance rating more than the total Resistance of the entire Knight Group, and a Honor rating of 1 point more than the HIGHER ranked Knight of the Group.

As for the Demon, it must be fought with a series of duels, but he will not leave the battlefield until he is killed.

If the Group defeats the Champion, the mission is completed successfully and all the Knights receive +1 Honor.

Preparing Quests

A Quest is a personal research, demanded by one of the Affection of the Knight.

While missions cannot be avoided, a Quest can be declined.

Declining a Quest results in the loss of BOTH 1 Honor and 1 Affection rating (if the Knight has more than one Affection, it impacts the one who demanded the Quest).

A Knight always start a Quest alone. They are personal affairs.

Usually a Quest requires a Knight to make some heroic thing, or to go take some impossible item in a remote demon controlled cave, or some other thing only the very brave souls can perform.

A GM prepares a Quest in the same way he prepares Missions, but a Quest is calculated on the single Knight who take part in it.

So the Horde is 1 Resistance and 1 Honor less than the Knight, the Demon is the same rating as he is, and the Champion is 1 point higher in both Resistance and Honor.

If the Quest succeed, a Knight receives both 1 Honor and 1 Affection.

If the Quest fail, he receive nothing (except maybe some Scar...).

Being a Vile

If for any reason a Knight proves to be a Vile (he runs Out of Measure too much...), his higher rated Affection will call him and ask for a Quest to prove his Honor.

The difference from a normal Quest is that there is Honor at stake.

If the Quest succeed, the Honor is just confirmed and the Knight has no consequences.

If the Quest fails, he will lose that Honor, adjusting all the other ratings accordingly, even Affections.

Knight Sheet

Name

Honor

Affections

1

2

3

Reaction

Movement

Power

Resistance

Scars

Corruption

Arma

Mano sinistra

