

cold soldier



a story about the walking dead for two people. by bret gillan. 2011.

The dead walk. A dark master has called the recently buried to serve in his army, to avenge the wrongs committed against him. You are one of these beings.

You shamble on, tearing apart anything in your path to achieve the tasks he has given you, his orders tolling in your mind over and over like a bell. A soldier in his army, a skull that sees once more because of his will.

But who you were still glimmers in your mind. Perhaps you can resolve the things left undone. Perhaps you can save those you loved. Perhaps, shattered fragment that you are, you can still make who you were a greater person.

Decisions.

You and the GM should decide two things.

The Dark Master: Powerful sorcerer, genius scientist, vengeful god.

The Time: The past, the present.

Determine as many details as you need to feel comfortable in the setting.

What are you?

You are dead and rotting or rotted. You will not deteriorate to uselessness, your dark master prevents that. You cannot speak or communicate with other beings. At all. No gestures. No writing. No emphatic grunting. It is beyond you. Your memories still flicker in you, though. Perhaps you will act on them.

Write down the following on a piece of paper.

Cause of Death: Old Age, Illness, Injury, Suicide, Homicide

Weapon: You are a soldier in the army of one who can command the dead. In returning you to life, he has also armed you with a weapon. This is not a sword or a gun, this is some way in which you have emerged from the grave as a more terrible creature. What is it?

How you fight: Alone, in a group, in a horde.

GM.

Take a deck of cards and split it into two halves. In one half, shuffle in a joker card. Mix up the cards so that you do not know where the joker is. Now place the other half of the deck on top of it. This is the draw deck.

His task.

The GM will tell you the task that the dark master has given you. You will say what you are doing to accomplish it. This will be the first scene of the game.

Play out this scene. You say the actions of the dead thing. The GM describes the world, the creatures in it.

Do you accomplish the task?

The GM flips the top card of the deck. This is the obstacle. You may flip the top card to defeat it. If the card you draw is not of a higher value, if you can find a way to work your weapon into accomplishing the task you may draw another card.

You may also take any card and place it into your hand if you narrate a memory. The memory must be a fragment of your life, and you must tie in an element of the current scene, either directly or indirectly, into the memory. An element could be a person or an item or a location. Hold onto this card. The card is no longer in play. A new one is drawn to replace it. Write down the element of your memory on your character sheet, and a short memory describing it.

If you have a card higher than the GMs you accomplish the task. If you have a card lower than the GMs you fail at the task. If you have any cards in your hand you must discard one.

You are compelled to complete the task unless you play a card from your hand to defeat the obstacle of the task. In this case you resist. In all cases narrate how the task is accomplished and the aftermath.

Endgame

When the joker comes up set it aside. The next scene will be the last scene of the game.

In the last scene, based on your memories one of the following is at stake.

Whether a thing you cherished will be placed beyond harm.

Whether a regret will be made right.

Whether unfinished business will be completed.

The master's orders will be such that either what is at stake is at risk, or you have the opportunity to accomplish both at the same time. Take the cards in your hand. Draw up to five. If you have more than five take the best five cards to make a poker hand. The GM will draw five cards at random. If you have the better poker hand, you get what was at stake. If the GM has the better hand, you do not. Narrate out the scene.

If you do not have any cards in your hand when the joker comes into play, you are destroyed at the end of that scene.

Continuing play

If you wish to continue play with the same soldier, keep the same character sheet. You may add a new weapon if you wish.

Play continues as though it were a new soldier. It is recommended that the GM review your sheet and base tasks the master gives you on the elements that you have written down.

In order to pick up a black card when remembering a memory, it must add to, modify, or contradict an existing memory.

Play may continue with this soldier until it is destroyed.

End