

Against all Evil

Know your enemy

Summary:

In this roleplaying game each of you will play a great hero. You fight the evil forces that threaten the land of the free people. You will fight undead and dragons, daemons and dark elves, orcs and evil cults. And eventually you will fail and die.

New heroes will take the place of the old ones and fight against the enemy your old heroes were not able to defeat. You will learn more and more about the enemy you are facing and in the end you will overcome the evil you are facing.

If your character dies the new one becomes more powerful and if the characters overcome the threat the next threat will be more powerful. Thus the game will balance itself.

Unlike most roleplaying games there is no game master. The story develops while you are playing. You can even play this game alone. You will need some six sided dice. Two for every player would be great, but if you are willing to share the same dice you can play with a total of three dice. You also need a five of tokens per player to represent the price the character has to pay to succeed. Use poker chips or something similar inedible. In addition you will need some pens and some paper to write down your characters and the threats you are facing.

Even if AaE can be played as a long campaign, where the characters advance from zero to hero it has been written with the intention to be played more casual. Play it when one of your players is absent or when you just want to have a break.

Overcoming an obstacle can be done in 5 - 10 minutes. So even if you are waiting for the last player to show up you can play to warm up and kill time. You could even play by post in a forum (I recommend 1km1kt.net) or by email. It is even possible to play this by yourself without other players.

Character creation:

Each character has a cliché representing who he is. For example: paladin, warrior, elvish archer, former farmer etc. The cliché has no mechanical influence but helps you to flesh out the character. Remember that you are a hero of good fighting against evil so a dark necromancer might not be the best choice.

In addition a character has three stats: force, awareness and mind. In battles you use them for fighting (force), shooting (awareness) and spell casting (mind). Outside of the battles a stat can be used for anything that makes sense. You can use force to threaten someone, mind to win a game of chess and awareness to sense if someone is lying. Additional uses for force could be: breaking a door, raiding a guild of thieves, sentence someone to death for a minor crime or being willing to risk casualties. Awareness can be used to compliment a lady on her dress finding a good spot for an assault or noticing a strange sound from a closed room. Mind can be used to remember a poem, to lead an army or simply find the right information in a book.

Choose a cliché and distribute nine points between the stats. That is all you have to do. Now start creating the adventure and playing the game.

Some sample characters:

Firemage: force 2, awareness 3, mind 4

Mercenary: force 4, awareness 4, mind 1

Noble: force 2, awareness 4, mind 3

Acarne Blade: force 3, awareness 2, mind 4

Jack of all trades: force 3, awareness 3, mind 3

Alex and Thomas want to play a game of AaE. Alex creates a paladin and chooses this as the cliché. Fighting should be important so he gives him fighting 4. A paladin also knows some divine magic and is well educated. Therefore he gives him a mind value of 3 leaving 2 points for awareness.

Thomas likes rouges. He chooses Assassin as the cliché claiming that the order of the assassins work together with the paladins to eliminate all evil. A high awareness is important so he sets it to 5 and force and mind to 2. They are now ready to start the adventure.

Creating and overcoming threats:

After everyone has created a character you have to decide on the enemy and the starting scene. A dragon raiding a village, orcs besieging a fortress, daemons killing the holy council, anything that lets you start with a fight is good, but of course you can start with a more calm threat. Do not worry about details. Why the undead forces are plundering this unimportant village church will unfold itself later in the game.

Creating, and later overcoming a threat is the main game mechanic of AaE. A threat can be anything that is hindering the characters doing what they want. Defeating enemies, facing trial, solving riddles, chasing a ship with your own ship or besieging a city. Keep it epic. Doing laundry or cleaning up is not even fun in real life. It is even less fun in a roleplaying game. Now it is time to see how powerful the threat is the characters are facing by creating a threat.

Roll three dice to see how strong the threat is. The first die is the force stat of the threat, the second the awareness stat and the third one the mind stat. Add a value equal to the number of players to each stat. Now you can start trying to overcome the threat.

Alex and Thomas decide that the game should start by letting the orcs besiege the fortress of the north. They roll for the threat and get 3,6,2. After adding the threat value of 2, because they are playing with two players they get a threat with force 5, awareness 8 and mind 4. They decide the orcs are trying to break through the main gate with a ram while their archers are covering the approach and a couple of shamans are casting protective spells.

Decide who should start. That player has to choose how to face the threat. He can choose force, awareness or mind. If his stat is equal or more then the stat of the threat he rolls two dice, else one. For every dice that is equal or less than the value of the stat he can reduce any of the threats stats by one. After him comes the player sitting left of him, and so on.

Alex and Thomas realize that the archers are a far greater threat than the ram or the shamans. Thomas wants to reduce the force value to make it possible for Alex to roll two dice using force. He tells how his assassin shoots some orcs with his crossbow. He rolls one die because his stat is lower than the threat stat and has a 2, successfully reducing the force by one. Alex describes how he charges through a side door to eliminate the shamans. He rolls two dice and has 2, 4 and reduces the threats mind stat to 2, slaying one shaman. The stats of the threat are now: force 4, awareness 8 mind 2.

Tokens of Doom and Lifting Doom

After everyone has faced the threat once everyone has to look how much it does cost him. For every threat stat that is higher than his own he gets one token of doom. Any character who has more than five tokens of doom dies.

Now Alex and Thomas have to look how much this does cost their characters. The Paladin has force 4, as has the threat. His mind of three is even higher than the two of the threat. He gets one token of doom for the awareness. Thomas is less lucky. He gets two tokens of doom, one for the force and one for the awareness. It seems the orcs are attacking the walls with siege ladders forcing the assassin to find a new save spot.

Once per character you can at any time choose to lift his of doom. Return all tokens. You now have to reveal something about the enemy you are facing. Now is the time to find out what the undead were looking for in the village church. Describe the lich that is leading the undead, tell us something about the moral code of the dragons, reveal how this attack of the daemons is connected to an event in the far past. Write the revealed facts down, so you can remember them the next time you play.

Remember this can only be done once per character, so if at any time after you lifted the doom he has more than five tokens he dies and this time there is nothing you can do. Keep in mind that if you create a new character you can choose to lift his doom anytime you want, even if you lifted the doom of an other character this session.

Use this to create facts about the enemy you are facing. The game title states “Know your enemy” and that is an important aspect of the game. You will discover more and more about the enemy the longer you play. You don't have to wait for having five tokens of doom to lift the doom. Sometimes creating a new fact about the enemy can be more satisfying even if your character will die more early. Since you can create a new one it is not a big loss.

Two rounds later the threat is reduced to force 3, awareness 6, mind 2. the assassin of Thomas has already 4 tokens of doom and decides to lift the doom. He describes a flashback where the assassin discovers that the shaman Grul'gur is assembling large forces for an invasion. Thereby the main enemy is discovered: the shaman Grul'Dur. Thomas writes down: “Orc Army: Leader Grul'Gur”. Later in the adventure Alex lifts the doom of his paladin by describing how Grul'Dur is promising his army the riches and the fertile soil of the free lands. He writes down “Orc army: Fighting for a better future”.

Aftermath and new threats

To overcome a threat you have to reduce its stats until no character can be damaged anymore. After you overcame the threat and hopefully are still alive all doom is reduced by 2. The player with the highest doom then tells what happens as a consequence of your actions and presents a new threat. In addition the threat modifier is raised by one. If it was 3 in the scene before it is now four, making your characters life more dangerous. Think about how you want to face the new threat and try to overcome it.

The threat is reduced to force 2, awareness 2, mind 2. Finally the front gate is save. Alex reduces the doom of his paladin from 4 to 2. Thomas had used lifting the doom to remove all doom tokens of his assassin and only took one token of doom afterwards. His assassin is now free of doom. Alex has more doom and describes how the orcs are using catapults to break the walls of the castle. The siege is not over yet and the new threat will have a modifier of 3 instead of 2 making it even more difficult to overcome.

Fleeing and death of characters

If you all agree that you can not overcome a threat you can flee. The Player with the highest doom tells what happens. The doom is reduced by two and the threat modifier is raised by one, just as if you overcome the threat. If all characters die trying to overcome an obstacle the modifier is not raised. Since all heroes died hope is lost! Tell how the evil schemes of the enemy are carried out and how the lands of the free people are tyrannized. The quest of your new characters will be to free your people and defeat the enemy you are facing.

If your character died because he had more than five doom give him an epic death. Let him defend the overrun castle to buy time or give him a big funeral to remember everything he did. Cool monologues before dying are recommended.

After that you create a new character, but his stats are one point higher then the stats of your deceased character this is important because it counterbalances the increasing threat modifier. Remember that you can again lift the doom for this character , because it is a new one.

After successfully destroying the catapults the characters are now facing a final assault of the orcs trying to conquer the walls of the fortress. The assassin has seven doom after overcoming the threat. He dies protecting the paladin, who vows to avenge his death before retreating to the keep. Thomas creates a firemage, waiting for the paladin in the keep.

Afterword

Dear Reader,

Thank you for reading the rules for Against all evil. This game was created for the 24 hours competition “meeting strangers”. I wanted to create a game that is rules light and deadly and I think I did it. The strangers you meet are the enemies. They have the real spotlight in this game.

Characters come and go, but the enemy remains. Slowly you will discover more about them and soon they will be more fleshed out than the characters themselves. And if you get fed up with one enemy you can defeat him and let the heroes face a new one. The number of possible enemies is endless and by no way limited to the examples in the introduction. Sometimes it can be interesting to change a well known enemy by killing their leader or changing their way of life or motivation. The orcs that came to plunder can turn into religious zealots of chaos if a charismatic leader shows up. The dark council can be overthrown, leading into a monarchy of a dark king, and soon a familiar enemy is a stranger again to be rediscovered.

The threats can be sometimes quite difficult to overcome. Try to reduce one stat first to make the enemy vulnerable and avoid tokens of doom. Discuss your strategy before rolling the dice.

AaE is very ruleslight. Use this to your advantage describing epic adventures without having to roll many dices. The mortality is high, giving this game a grim and gritty feeling while still being epic. Think of Against all Evil as Dungeons and Dragons meeting Game of Thrones. Since your characters will be gone soon it is possible to focus on the story. Play together to have an interesting adventure.

The rules do not come with a setting. Simply use some cliches and develop an interesting story. Sometimes it can be fun to break with cliches but do not do it too often. A badly shaved paladin with a drinking problem or a mage clad in plate armour can be fun but ten of them get boring.

I hope you will enjoy the game and maybe even give some feedback. Simply write me a PM in the 1km1kt.net forum.

Anastylas