

# DARKEST NIGHT

A cooperative board game for 1-4 players

*A great shadow has fallen over the kingdom as the undead continue to multiply under the control of a dread Necromancer. The king's army is broken, the lands overrun, and now the castle has fallen. The last of the kingdom's strength has taken refuge in the hallowed ground of the monastery, where the Necromancer and his dead dare not tread...yet. As he tightens his grip on the land and builds his power for a final assault on this last refuge, a few brave souls seek a way to fight back...*

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## SET-UP

### SET-UP SUMMARY

1. Choose 4 Heroes
  - a. Each hero has a character card, a position marker, and 10 power cards
  - b. Choose 3 of each hero's 4 basic powers for them to start with
  - c. Shuffle each hero's remaining powers to form his power deck
  - d. Place grace (☺) and secrecy (☹) markers on the circled numbers of each hero's character card
  - e. Place each hero in the monastery
2. Place relics in the mountains, forest, ruins, and swamp
3. Shuffle Event and Map decks
4. Create Blights
  - a. Draw a Map card
  - b. For each location *except* the monastery, find a blight token matching the icon the Map card shows in that location and place it on the game board
5. Place Necromancer in the castle
6. Place the darkness marker (✚) on the zero position of the darkness track
7. The play area should look something like the following:<sup>1</sup>

### HEROES

Each player chooses one of the included heroes to play (the knight, prince, rogue, scholar, or seer), and takes the corresponding character card and deck of power cards (10 per hero).

Each player should search through his power cards and find the four basic powers<sup>2</sup>, then choose three of these four powers to start the game. Place your selected powers face-up on the table in front of you. The remaining basic power is returned to the deck, and each player shuffles his power cards.

Each player also takes a “grace” token (☺), a “secrecy” token (☹), and the hero marker corresponding to his hero (with the same picture as printed on the character card). Place the grace and secrecy tokens on the circled numbers on the character cards, and place the hero markers in the monastery on the game board.

*Darkest Night* is always played with four heroes. If playing with fewer than four players, some players should take extra heroes to bring the total up to four.

### THE WORLD

Find the four relic tokens and place them face-down on the game board, with one each in the mountains, forest, ruins, and swamp. Shuffle the Event and Map decks. Then, draw the top Map card, and place the indicated blight in each location *except* the monastery (ignore the search results listed on the card, and ignore the blight listed for the monastery).

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<sup>1</sup> Insert diagram here

<sup>2</sup> Should have a picture here showing how to identify basic powers.

Place the Necromancer at the Castle, which has just fallen to the undead assault. Place the darkness token (✦) on the zero position of the darkness track.

## GAME CONCEPTS

### POWERS

Each hero has several cards representing that hero's unique abilities, which are called *powers*. Once a hero has obtained a power, he never loses it. Each hero begins the game with any three of his four "basic" powers, and the remaining powers are shuffled to form his power deck, from which new powers are drawn during the game. The hero's current powers should be displayed face-up in front of him.

There are three main types of powers: *actions*, which provide the hero with new options for things to do on his turn; *tactics*, which are used in combat; and *bonuses*, which provide other benefits and can be used whenever appropriate. The precise effects of each power are described on the card.

Some powers must be "exhausted" when you use them. When you exhaust a power, turn it face-down. Exhausted powers have no effect until "refreshed" when that hero hides or prays (or when refreshed by another card). Turn refreshed powers face-up again; they now work as normal.

**Example:** *The seer is in the forest, and there is a dark fog blight present. Since the search difficulty is so high, he decides to use Dowse, an action power that can be exhausted to automatically search successfully. Next turn, he can't Dowse again, because the power is already exhausted, so he spends his turn hiding in order to refresh it.*<sup>3</sup>

Some powers can have a lasting effect; when this happens, the power is said to be *activated*; place the card in a prominent position as a reminder. Any "Active:" effects listed on the card are in force from the time the power is activated until it is *deactivated*. Powers will describe the conditions under which they are activated or deactivated. Additionally, if an active power is exhausted, it is also automatically deactivated.

**Example:** *The knight chooses to use Oath of Purging on his turn, an action power that is activated when used. He places the power card on top of his character card as a reminder. He now rolls an extra 2 dice on fight rolls made while attacking blights, as described in the "Active:" portion of the card. This effect continues until the Oath of Purging is deactivated, which the card says will happen under two conditions listed at the bottom of the card: if he "fulfills" it by destroying a blight (in which case he will also gain 1 grace as the power is deactivated), or if he "breaks" it by entering the monastery (in which case he will also lose 1 grace as the power is deactivated).*<sup>4</sup>

Some powers are also targeted at a particular location, hero, or other entity when they are activated; place the power card on or near the thing it targets as a reminder. Unless otherwise specified, any "Active:" effects apply only to the targeted entity.

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<sup>3</sup> Insert picture of card.

<sup>4</sup> Insert picture of card.

**Example:** *The prince chooses to use Inspire on his turn, an action power that is activated targeting any hero at his location when used. He opts to target himself, so he places the power card on top of his character card as a reminder. The “Active:” effect allows him to choose to roll 3 extra dice on any future roll he makes, but the power will deactivate when he does so. If he chooses to use Inspire again next turn, he can target a different hero at his location, but then he will no longer be targeted and will lose the opportunity to use the “Active:” effect.*<sup>5</sup>

If the power is activated on a target while it is currently active on another target, it ceases to affect the old target and moves to the new target. Other than that, activating a power that is already active (or deactivating one that is already inactive) has no additional effect.

Power cards are intended to be self-explanatory, but some of the more complicated ones are described in further detail at the end of the manual; see “Signature Powers,” page 10.

## COMBAT

When a hero encounters the Necromancer or a monster, or when he chooses to attack a blight, combat ensues. Normally, the hero can choose either to *fight* the enemy or to try to *elude* him. The hero then chooses an appropriate tactic power, if he has one. Only one tactic may be used in each combat.

The tactic will specify a certain number of dice to use when fighting or eluding. If the hero chooses to fight or elude without a tactic, he uses one die. A hero can also choose to automatically lose the combat without rolling, if he wishes (for example, he might allow an undead scout to notice him if he wishes to attract the Necromancer’s attention).

The hero then rolls the appropriate number of six-sided dice. If fighting, the *target number* is the opponent’s *strength* (or power, when attacking a blight). If eluding, the target number is the opponent’s *awareness*. Any single die that comes up greater than or equal to the target number is considered a *success* (do not add the dice together). A hero that rolls at least one success wins the combat; otherwise the hero loses. Some cards have additional effects if the hero rolls multiple successes.

**Example:** *The knight draws an event card and encounters a ghoul (4 strength, 3 awareness). Since the ghoul’s awareness is lower than its strength, eluding it would normally be easier than fighting it, but the knight has a tactic power called Charge that lets him fight with two dice, so he chooses to use that. He rolls a two and a three. Since neither of the dice met the target number (the ghoul’s strength), the knight loses the combat.*

**Example:** *The rogue encounters a zombie (5 strength, 3 awareness) and uses his Vanish tactic, which allows him to elude with 2 dice and gain 1 secrecy (up to 7) if he rolls two successes. He rolls a three and a six. Since both dice equal or exceed the target number (the zombie’s awareness), the rogue has two successes. He wins the combat, and also gains 1 secrecy.*

Different encounters will specify different results that occur if the hero wins or loses. The most common result for losing is a wound (☠), which means the hero dies unless he spends 1 grace to negate the effect (see below).

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<sup>5</sup> Insert picture of card.

## GRACE AND SECRECY

Each hero's character card has a grace track (☯) and a secrecy track (👁) at the bottom. Grace represents a hero's luck or divine providence, and is used primarily to avoid death. Secrecy represents how well the hero's movements are hidden from the Necromancer and his minions.

The circled values are each hero's *default* grace and secrecy, and are the amounts available to the hero at the start of the game. Place markers on these numbers. If a card instructs you to gain grace or secrecy, move the marker up the track. If a card instructs you to lose grace or secrecy, move the marker down the track, but do not reduce it below zero (any loss beyond zero is ignored). If a card instructs you to *spend* grace or secrecy, then you may not use that effect unless you have at least that much grace or secrecy available to spend.

**Example:** *The knight has 1 grace and encounters a lich. He chooses to use his Reckless Abandon tactic power, which allows him to fight with 4 dice, but causes him to lose 1 grace unless he rolls two successes. Unfortunately, all of his dice come up as ones, so he loses the fight. The lich's penalty is that he must spend 1 grace or die, and he also loses 1 grace due to the Reckless Abandon tactic. He chooses to suffer the Lich's penalty first, and spends his last grace to escape death (if the knight had zero grace, he would be unable to spend any and would die). He then loses 1 grace, but since he is already at zero grace, this loss has no effect.*

**Example:** *The rogue has the Eavesdrop action power, which allows him to spend 1 secrecy to search with two dice. However, his secrecy is currently zero, so he cannot use this power until he gains some secrecy.*

The minimum value for both grace and secrecy is zero (represented by moving the token to the symbol printed to the left of "1", or removing the token from the track). Neither secrecy nor grace has an absolute maximum, but most things that raise grace or secrecy will only do so up to some threshold.

## DARKNESS

There is a darkness track (⬆) printed on the Necromancer card. Darkness represents the amount of power the Necromancer has gathered, and increases gradually throughout the game. At specific thresholds, the Necromancer gains certain advantages, as indicated on the track.

Darkness begins at zero at the start of the game, and cannot exceed 30. If anything causes the darkness to be raised when the darkness is already at 30, place a new blight in the monastery instead.

## BLIGHTS

Blights represent the unholy forces of the Necromancer throughout the kingdom. Each blight has some harmful effect it produces as long as it is in play (as indicated on the reference sheet<sup>6</sup>). Heroes can destroy blights, but the Necromancer creates more as the game goes on.

Some blights indicate that any heroes ending a turn at that location encounter a monster. In this case, every turn a hero ends at that location (while the blight remains there), he does combat with that monster, which has the indicated strength and awareness. If the hero successfully attacks or eludes the

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<sup>6</sup> Should probably have a picture showing how to read the reference sheet.

monster, nothing happens; if he fails, he suffers the indicated failure effect. The monsters can only be destroyed if the hero attacks the blight during his turn (in which case he rolls against the blight's *power*, not the monster's *strength*). If there are several monsters in a location, the hero must do combat with each of them every turn, but he may resolve the combats in the order of his choosing.

**Example:** *The prince moves to the mountains, where the Necromancer has previously created a "Shades" blight. Since the prince ends his turn there, he gets attacked by a shade (3 strength, 5 awareness) and must fight or elude it. He fights it and wins, but the blight is unaffected. Next turn, he can spend his action to attack it and try to destroy it, but he'll need to roll a 5 to do that (the blight's power), even though the shades only have 3 strength.*

Whenever a new blight is created, draw a card from the Map deck (reshuffle the discards if necessary), and find the blight type listed on that card for the relevant location<sup>7</sup>, then place a token corresponding to that blight type in the affected location. If there are no more blight tokens of the type specified, draw a new card. (If you draw 3 cards in a row and you don't have tokens for any of them, just pick any available type.) When a blight is destroyed, simply remove the corresponding token from that location (it may be re-used if another blight of that type is created later on).

There can never be more than 4 blights in a single location. If something happens which would cause a new blight to appear in a location that already has 4, add a blight at the monastery instead. If there are already 4 blights at the monastery (that is, when a fifth blight is created in the Monastery), the heroes immediately lose the game.

## ITEMS

Sometimes a hero finds an item when searching; the hero takes the corresponding item token, and may use it as described on the reference sheet.

Items may be freely transferred between heroes at the same location at any time. Heroes in the monastery may also choose to store items there for safe-keeping, or pick up previously stored items. However, if a hero uses an item, that item cannot be traded or stored until that hero's next turn (this prevents multiple heroes from all using an item during the same round).

## HOLY RELICS

Holy relics are a special type of item. There are four holy relics scattered about the kingdom: one in the mountains, one in the forest, one in the ruins, and one in the swamp. A hero with three keys (obtained from searching) may discard them as an action to recover a relic from his current location. A hero may only carry one holy relic at a time.

The holy relics are very potent when used against the undead. Whenever a hero carrying a holy relic makes a fight roll, he may add one to his highest die (if the hero wants to give the relic to an ally later during the same turn, he must choose before rolling not to use this bonus). This is cumulative with all other effects.

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<sup>7</sup> Should have a picture showing how to read the Map card.

The power of the relic also attracts the notice of the Necromancer, and a hero carrying a relic loses one secrecy at the start of each of his turns. A hero also loses one secrecy immediately if he obtains a holy relic during his own turn (for example, when picking up a holy relic stored in the monastery).

Bringing three holy relics to the monastery causes the heroes to immediately win the game. A holy relic is also required to win the game by killing the Necromancer, so the heroes will always need to find at least one.

## PLAY SEQUENCE

Play consists of a series of *rounds*. During each round, each hero takes a turn; the heroes may act in any order, and may change the order of their turns each round, if they so desire (if you have trouble keeping track of which heroes have already taken their turns, try giving each player a token at the start of the round and discarding them as they take turns). Once every player has taken a turn, the Necromancer takes a turn before the next round. Play continues until one of the victory or defeat conditions is fulfilled.

### *HERO TURN SEQUENCE*

#### **0. Upkeep**

A hero loses 1 secrecy if he is in the Necromancer's location. He also loses 1 secrecy if he is carrying a holy relic. (These effects are cumulative.)

Also, resolve any powers or effects that occur "at the start of your turn." If there's more than one, you may resolve them in any order you like.

#### **1. Event**

If the hero has zero secrecy *and* is at the same location as the Necromancer, the Necromancer attacks. The hero may attempt to fight or elude the Necromancer. If unsuccessful, the hero receives a wound, and must spend 1 grace or die. If the hero fights successfully, the effect is the same as if the hero had attacked the Necromancer (see below).

Otherwise, the hero draws an event card (unless the hero is in the monastery). Events usually result in a combat (see page 4).

Some events have different effects depending on a hero's current secrecy or the number of blights in his location. Such cards list the variable in *italics* below the title, then give ranges for each listed effect on the left side of the card.<sup>8</sup>

#### **2. Action**

The hero may perform one action of his choice:

*Travel:* The hero moves to an adjacent location, and gains 1 secrecy (up to a maximum of 5).

*Hide:* The hero gains 1 secrecy (up to a maximum of 5), and refreshes any exhausted powers.

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<sup>8</sup> Example picture would be good here.

*Search:* The hero rolls one die (or possibly more, if allowed by powers). For *each* die that equals or exceeds the search difficulty in the hero's location, the hero draws one card from the Map deck (reshuffle the discards if necessary). The hero then chooses one of the drawn cards and receives the search result listed on that card for his current location<sup>9</sup>; then, all of the cards are discarded. Possible search results are described on the reference sheet.

*Attack a Blight:* The hero may attack one blight in his location. The hero must attempt a fight roll (not an elusion roll) against the blight's power (in the case of a monster blight, note that this is usually different from the monster's strength). If the hero fails his roll, he suffers the effect listed as the "defense" of the blight. If the roll succeeds, the blight is destroyed. Regardless, the hero loses 1 secrecy.

*Attack the Necromancer:* If the Necromancer is in the hero's location, the hero may attack him. The hero loses 1 secrecy, and must attempt a fight roll (not an elusion roll) against the Necromancer's strength.

The Necromancer is only killed if a hero successfully fights him when there are no blights in that location *and* the hero is wielding a holy relic. If that happens, the heroes immediately win the game.

If the hero succeeds when there is at least one blight present, the Necromancer sacrifices his minions to escape, and the hero merely destroys one blight in that location (hero's choice). If there are no blights present, but the hero does not have a holy relic, success has no effect.

If the fight roll is unsuccessful, the hero receives a wound, and must spend 1 grace or die.

(Note that the Necromancer also attacks a hero during the event phase if the hero is in the same location and has no secrecy; a hero can destroy a blight or even win the game if he makes a successful fight roll at this time, just as if the hero had attacked.)

*Retrieve Relic:* If the hero is holding at least three keys, and there is a holy relic face-down in the hero's location, he may spend his action to discard three keys and take the holy relic. Relics are important to winning the game.

*Power:* The hero may use one of his "action" power cards.

*Pray (in monastery):* While in the monastery, the hero may spend his turn in prayer. The hero rolls two dice against a target number of 3, and gains 1 grace (up to his default value) for each success. The hero also refreshes any exhausted powers.

## **NECROMANCER TURN SEQUENCE**

### **1. Darkness**

Increase the darkness by one. If the darkness is already at 30, create a blight in the monastery instead. If this brings the total number of blights in the Monastery up to 5, the heroes lose the game.

### **2. Movement**

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<sup>9</sup> Should have a picture showing how to read the Location card.



Roll one die to determine the Necromancer's movement. The Necromancer detects any hero with a secrecy strictly lower than this die roll, unless that hero is in the Monastery.

If the Necromancer detects a hero, he moves towards the closest hero he detects by the shortest possible route (but never through the Monastery). If the closest hero is in his location, he stays where he is. In the event of a tie when determining the closest hero or the shortest route, choose at random.

If no hero is detected, move the Necromancer according to the numbers printed on the game board (using the result from the same die roll—do not roll again). The Necromancer will leave his location by the route marked by the number he rolled (or stay where he is, if the number is printed inside the location).<sup>10</sup>

The Necromancer may *never* move into the monastery.

### 3. Create a Blight

The Necromancer creates a new blight in his current location. If there are already 4 blights in the Necromancer's current location, one is created in the monastery instead.

If he has at least 10 darkness and there are no blights in his new location, he creates two instead of one. If he has at least 20 darkness and he rolled a 1 or a 2 for movement, he creates one additional blight. (Thus, if he has at least 20 darkness, rolls a 1 or 2, and moves to a location with no blights, he creates a total of three new blights.)

## VICTORY AND DEFEAT

### *HOLY RITUAL*

If the heroes manage to recover three of the ancient holy relics and bring them all to the monastery, they can perform a cleansing ritual that will instantly destroy all undead in the land, saving the kingdom. All the players win as soon as the third relic enters the Monastery.

### *SLAY THE NECROMANCER*

If the heroes can kill the Necromancer, most of his magics will be undone, and any remaining undead will be mindless and undirected—easy to dispatch. All the players win.

You can kill the Necromancer by successfully fighting him using a holy relic when no blights are present. (See the "Attack the Necromancer" action, page 8.)

### *DEATH OF A HERO*

If a hero gets a "spend 1 grace or die" result in combat and has no grace to spend, he is dead. This has the following immediate effects:

- The hero is removed from the board. All of his powers are removed from play.
- The Darkness immediately increases by 1 (this may end the game, see below).
- Any items the hero was carrying (including holy relics) are dropped at the location where he died; other heroes may pick them up during their respective turns.

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<sup>10</sup> Should have an example picture.

On that player's next turn, he selects one of the unused heroes and places it in the monastery; he controls this hero for the rest of the game. However, the new hero enters play with only 2 basic powers (instead of the normal 3), and his default grace and secrecy are each 1 point lower than normal. The new hero doesn't do anything on the turn he appears, but may act normally beginning on the following round.

### *OVERRUN*

Any time there are 5 or more blights in the monastery, it is overrun with the dead. The Necromancer gains undisputed control of the kingdom, and all the players immediately lose the game.

Since the Necromancer never enters the monastery, blights only appear there when another location "overflows" with more than 4 blights, or when the Darkness increases after reaching 30 (see Darkness, page 5, and Blights, page 5).

## ADDITIONAL RULES AND CLARIFICATIONS

### *THE MONASTERY*

The monastery is a special, hallowed location which provides protection from the undead and the Necromancer's magic. The following special rules apply to the monastery:

- Heroes in the monastery do not draw events.
- Heroes in the monastery may choose to pray on their turns (see the "Prayer" action, page 8).
- A hero that starts his turn in the monastery and does not leave gains 1 secrecy, up to his default value (in addition to any he would otherwise gain from powers or actions). Heroes do not gain this secrecy on the turn they enter or leave the monastery.
- The monastery has no search difficulty and cannot be searched.
- The Necromancer can never enter the monastery, and ignores any heroes in the monastery when determining his movement.

### *TIMING*

When something can be done "at any time," that means literally *at any time*, even between rolling a die and determining the results. When two effects occur at the same time or in reaction to the same trigger, the affected player may choose their order of resolution.

### *MAP CARDS*

After drawing a Map card to determine a blight or a search result, discard the Map card. When the Map deck is empty, reshuffle the discards to form a new Map deck.

### *SIGNATURE POWERS*

All powers are described on the cards, and are intended to be self-explanatory. However, in case of confusion, several of the more unique powers are described here.

### **Knight: Oaths**

The knight has several powers called "oaths." An oath can be activated as an action, and provides an effect listed on the card while it is in play. The oath remains in play until either the

“fulfilled” or “broken” condition listed on the card is satisfied, at which time the oath is removed from play and the effect listed after that condition is applied. The knight may choose to play the same oath again, but doing so takes an action.

No new oath may be used while any oath is in play. An oath cannot be voluntarily deactivated; if the knight has already sworn an oath, but wishes to swear a new one, he must fulfill or break his previous oath first.

The “fulfilled” effect of some oaths can be used to immediately activate the same oath again, if the knight chooses.

### **Prince: Support Network**

The prince has several powers that allow him to organize the remaining populace in the kingdom to provide support to himself and the heroes (resistance, safe house, chapel, scouts). As an action, the prince spends secrecy and activates one of these cards targeting his current location, where it provides an ongoing effect described on the card.

Each card can only apply to a single location at a time, but the prince can move any card from its previous location to his current location in the same way that he originally placed it.

### **Scholar: Artifacts**

The scholar can recover and activate various beneficial artifacts around the kingdom. When the scholar first draws any of the artifact powers, immediately activate it targeting his current location. The artifact provides an ongoing effect at that location, and can never be moved. If an artifact is somehow exhausted, it is reactivated in its original location as soon as it is refreshed.

### **Scholar: Find Weakness**

The scholar’s “find weakness” tactic allows him to attack with one die and add one to the result of that die. If any power allows him to roll additional dice when attacking, the +1 from find weakness applies only to one die, and the die must be chosen before it is rolled (this is different from the holy relic, which adds +1 to the *highest* die roll); roll the special die separately to avoid confusion.

The +1 from find weakness and from a holy relic stack; a scholar using both can potentially add a total of +2 to the affected die.

### **Seer: Prophecies**

The seer’s “prophecies” are bonus powers that can be used at the start of a hero’s turn (that is, during upkeep). Using a prophecy does not require an action, but the power is exhausted, so it normally cannot be used again until the seer hides or prays. Most of the prophecies provide some beneficial effect to the current hero until the end of the turn. The seer need not be at the same location as the affected hero.

### **Seer: Prediction**

When the seer chooses to use his “prediction” power as an action, he rolls two dice and places them on the power card, adding them to any dice already there. There is no limit to the number of dice he can accumulate. Whenever the seer is required to make a die roll, he may choose to use all the saved dice on his prediction card (and their pre-rolled results) instead of rolling normally. For example, if he has

used prediction twice and rolled a five, two fours, and a three, then the next time he prays, he could use those four dice instead of rolling two as normal, and since all four dice show a three or higher, would gain 4 grace (up to default).

You must use all of the saved dice at once. When the dice saved with prediction are used for any purpose, the card is cleared of all dice.

## ADVICE FOR THE HEROES

### Searching

Searching is critical: it's how you become more powerful, and it's how you find the keys you'll need to retrieve the holy relics, which are critical to winning. Search a lot.

What you find when searching depends heavily on where you search:

- The castle has a lot of treasure chests and supply caches, as well as the lowest search difficulty, making it a great place to power up—but you'll find very few keys there.
- The village is similar, but less extreme: more treasure and fewer keys than most places, but less treasure and more keys than the castle.
- In the mountains and the forest, you'll find keys about as often as new powers.
- The ruins have the most keys by far—about two thirds of all draws.
- The swamp is the only place you can get an epiphany, which gives you the power of your choice. You'll also find quite a bit of bottled magic there.

### Secrecy

Keep a close eye on your secrecy. High secrecy helps protect you from event cards, and makes the Necromancer less likely to come around, which means fewer blights wherever you are.

However, it's often a good idea for one hero to keep their secrecy deliberately low, to act as a decoy and draw the Necromancer away from the other heroes. You should have plan before you do that, though; you can lose your grace really fast when the Necromancer is attacking you every turn, and if you stay in one place, that will concentrate blights there, which may cause them to “overflow” into the monastery.

Having a holy relic helps a decoy a lot, since it makes it much easier to destroy blights, and even gives you a chance to destroy a blight when the Necromancer attacks. The knight's oath of defense power is also a huge help here.

### The End Game

There's two typical end-game scenarios: one where the heroes band together for a final fight against the Necromancer, and one where some of the heroes defend the monastery against encroaching blights while the rest of the heroes search for the last keys you need for the third relic.

The Holy Ritual victory usually takes longer than slaying the Necromancer, but it's more reliable, especially if you only have one or two good fighters. If you're not in any immediate danger, it's often a good idea to keep searching to try and get the remaining relics.

Around the time the Darkness reaches 15-20, though, it's usually time to weigh your chances and think about making a stand. Remember, it may take several rounds to gather everyone together, lure the Necromancer over, and clear out any existing blights so you can go for the kill...and it gets a *lot* harder when the Darkness hits 25 and all blights have their power increased. If you have enough time, and enough grace, you can make several attempts in a row.

## OPTIONAL RULE: EXPERT MODE

If you feel that the game has become too easy, try making the following changes to the set-up sequence for a more challenging game:

- Start the Darkness track at 5, instead of 0
- When creating the initial blights, draw two Map cards instead of one, and place both of the indicated blights at each location (except the monastery). If you don't have enough tokens for a particular type of blight, just place as many as you have.
- Select your heroes at random, instead of allowing each player to choose.
- Select each hero's starting powers at random (from his available basic powers), instead of allowing the player to choose.

After set-up, the game proceeds as normal, except that if any hero dies, select the replacement hero and his starting powers at random, too.

## OPTIONAL RULE: PLAYING AS THE NECROMANCER

Darkest Night is designed as a cooperative game, and that's the recommended play mode. However, having someone control the Necromancer is such an obvious modification that it would be remiss not to have rules for it.

This will require 2-5 players; one plays as the Necromancer, and the rest control heroes as normal. The game plays as normal, except as noted below.

### *SET-UP*

Set up the game as normal, except that when you're done, the Necromancer draws four cards from the Map deck to make up his hand. Do not show these cards to the heroes.

### *NECROMANCER TURN SEQUENCE*

#### **1. Darkness**

Increase the darkness by one as normal.

#### **2. Movement**

Roll a die and compare to the heroes' secrecy as normal to determine whether the Necromancer detects any heroes.

If the Necromancer detects any heroes, he *must* pursue one of them, but he may choose which one to pursue (it need not be the closest). He must move towards that hero by the shortest available route; if multiple routes are equally short, he may use the one of his choice.

If the Necromancer does not detect any heroes, then he can move to any adjacent location that does *not* contain any heroes. He can never move into the location of another hero unless he is pursuing one (not necessarily the same one).

The Necromancer may not remain in the same location unless he detects a hero in that location or he has no legal moves available (if he is surrounded by heroes with high secrecy, for example).

The Necromancer may still never enter the monastery for any reason, and never detects heroes in the monastery.

### **3. Create a Blight**

Any time a blight is created, rather than drawing the top card of the Map deck, the Necromancer chooses a card from his hand, and creates the blight listed on that card for the appropriate location. When he runs out of cards, he draws a new hand of 4.

If the Necromancer has cards in his hand, but there are not enough blight tokens remaining to use any of the blights listed for the relevant location, he discards all his remaining cards and draws a new hand of 4. If there are still no suitable cards in the new hand, the heroes may arbitrarily choose the type of blight to create from those available (and the Necromancer keeps his new hand until the next time).