

# Game of the Gods

In the Age of Bronze, legendary Heroes are empowered by jealous, petty, fallible gods.

- The gods are manipulating you as a pawn in their schemes against other gods.
- Can you manipulate the gods, making their rivalries work for you?
- The gods' relationships emerge from play.
- Heroes may serve more than one god, both consecutively or concurrently.
- Some gods will approve or disapprove of your actions.
- The gods' relationships affects how they influence the characters actions.
- The Heroes' actions can influence the gods' relationships with other gods, and with other Heroes.

(This game owes *3:16, In a Wicked Age,* and *Apocalypse World.*)

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# Preparation of the Pantheon

The Oracle (GM) and the players sit around a table. Ideally each player is given a deck of cards, but they may share the same deck if necessary. The Tapestry is placed in the center where all can see.

Each player (not the Oracle) invents a god. This god will be their hero's first *Patron*. Go around the table clockwise, starting with the person to the Oracle's left. Each player will:

1. Give this god a name
2. Describe the god's domain (nature, death, war, love, sea, etc.)
3. Describe the god's relationship with one other god (they may be family members, lovers, liege and vassal, rivals, enemies, one may be indebted to the other, etc.)
4. Assign a face card to the god (one that hasn't already been assigned to another god)

As these decisions are made, the Oracle adds each new member of the Pantheon to **The Tapestry**. Other gods (those not yet filled in) may emerge during play, or you may decide to complete the whole Pantheon of 12 gods right away. The Oracle's role is to interpret the will of the gods.

*NOTE: The Pantheon your group creates may have two factions within it (red vs black, light vs dark, old vs new, etc.); or it may have four courts (suits, families, seasons, traditions, what have you); in short, it may have any subdivisions you decide to define... but it doesn't have to. That's all up to the group, and it may be different every time.*

# Preparation of the Heroes

Each player (not the Oracle) now invents the details of their Hero character. Go around the table in the same order as before. Heroes have five Traits: **Warfare, Wisdom, Craft, Travel and Speech**.

**Warfare** is a measure of the Hero's talent in waging war, whether solo combat, in formation with fellow warriors, or at the head of an army.

**Wisdom** tracks a Hero's awareness of both the divine and the mundane.

**Craft** speaks to a Hero's industry and skill in labors.

**Travel** measures a Hero's worldliness. It is referenced in the context of moving by land or sea, in knowing or predicting a people's customs, and the like.

Finally, **Speech** refers to a Hero's talent with the spoken word. It determines their ability to sway hearts, deliver hope or fear, to perform statecraft, and so forth.

In addition, each Hero begins the game with one **Gift**, given to them by their patron god.

To create a Hero, each player does the following:

1. Assign values of +2, +1, +1, +0, +0 to the five Traits, in any order you wish.

(Example: **Warfare+1, Wisdom+2, Craft+0, Travel+1 and Speech+0**)

2. Denote the Hero's patron god on the Hero Sheet. It can be the god the player created, or one made by another player. Multiple Heroes can have the same patron god. Mark the "Relationship" box on the Hero's character sheet with the word "Patron".

3. Describe the specific supernatural **Gift** that was given to the Hero by their patron god and mark it on the character sheet.

(Examples: *Great strength, awesome beauty, stone skin, legendary endurance, a magical sidekick, a helm of invisibility, a cloak of animal form, a winged horse, the gift of every tongue, etc.*)

4. Introduce your hero to the table thusly - "I am (name), son/daughter of (parent), (verb) of (noun)." (Examples: 'I am Ovidious, son of Balbina, Slayer of the Eight Night Daughters.' 'I am Camilla, daughter of Julius, Baroness of Sharpcorpse Isle.' 'I am Gallus, son of Caius, Wanderer of the seas.')

# Preparation of the Quest

The Heroes will be given a quest by The Oracle. This quest may come from a god or from a mortal (i.e., the king, a village elder, a helpless peasant, wizened shopkeeper, etc.) The Oracle can make the Quest after the Heroes are made ready or in advance.

To determine the Object of the Quest, the Oracle rolls 1d6 twice on the tables below. The first roll (on the left table) determines the purpose, and the second (on the right table) determines the target.

1d6	Purpose of Quest	A Person	An Item	A Monster
1	Destroy...	1	2-3	4-6
2-3	Defeat...	1-3	4	5-6
4	Find/Locate...	1-2	3-5	6
5-6	Steal/Kidnap...	1	2-5	6

To determine the Reason for the Quest, the Oracle rolls 2d6 on the table below.

2d6	Because...
2-3	It is a favorite of an opposed god (name them, creating a new one if desired)
4-5	It offends a patron god (name them, creating a new one if desired)
6	It is evil or out of control
7	A prophecy foretells it
8	To prove your prowess or worthiness
9-10	You'll need it for another quest
11-12	You've been chosen and may never understand why

The Oracle makes up some details based on those rolls, creating new gods or involving the existing ones, and describes the Quest to the heroes. (Example: "The purpose of the Quest is to Destroy a Monster, because it offends Yargamesh, god of fecundity.") Finally, consulting the Tapestry, the Oracle tells the heroes which gods approve, and which disapprove, of this Quest.

## Challenges

Challenges are difficulties that the heroes must overcome in pursuing the Quest. They are not revealed to players until they arise. To determine these Challenges the Oracle gathers 1d6 for each player in the group, rolls them all together, and consults the following table.

For each...	The Challenge is...
1	A military force or ongoing battle
2	A person or creature must be appeased or defeated
3	A physical problem requires a technical solution
4	You must cross or traverse a... (1) River, (2) Mountain Range, (3) Sea, (4) Desert, (5) Swamp, (6) Forest
5	You must move through hostile/enemy territory
6	A magic spell or enchanted region

The Oracle places these Challenges in any order desired, and assigns *Threat Tokens* to each as follows: The final Challenge gets 3; the preceding Challenge gets 2, and all other Challenges get 1. Finally, the Object (whatever the Challenges are preventing the heroes from reaching) gets 3 Threat Tokens.

*Example: The Oracle decides that the Object (Monster that offends a patron god) is an undead sorcerer. With 3 players, the Oracle rolls 2, 3 and 4, and interprets this to mean (2) a troll, (3) a chasm with a broken bridge, and (4) an island across treacherous waters. They are placed in this order: Island, Chasm, Troll. Sailing to the island will be 1 threat token, crossing the chasm will be 2, defeating the troll will be 3 and defeating the sorcerer will be 3.*

The Challenges will be revealed to the heroes as they arise.

# The Quest in Action

Play proceeds in *Scenes*. A Scene is a setting in which the heroes face a complication or challenge, interacting with non-player characters (NPCs) or other aspects of the world controlled by the Oracle. The Oracle begins each Scene by describing the setting, indicating any NPCs within it, as well as any obvious features, activities or contents of the setting. The first Scene is the one in which the heroes learn of the Quest.

All characters (including NPCs) may describe their actions and speak dialog freely. If there is any confusion over the order of actions, the Oracle decides. Whenever a player says their hero is doing something, it happens automatically, UNLESS that something is difficult or dangerous. If the action is difficult or dangerous, the player will have to succeed in an *Heroic Action* to pull it off.

At the end of each Scene, the Oracle describes how the heroes move on to the next Challenge. If the players decide to stop along the way (at a blacksmith's workshop, perhaps) or go somewhere in particular (like their Patron god's temple), they may do so by calling for an *Extra Scene*. The heroes may even split up and move in different directions if desired. However: each Extra Scene has a 50% chance (roll 1-3) of unexpectedly becoming a Challenge worth 1 Threat Token.

## Heroic Actions

*To perform an Heroic Action:* Decide which Trait your hero is using to perform the action, and describe what your hero is attempting to do – but not the result. We're about to determine that, by consulting the following table.

- For most actions, roll **1d6** and add the value for the Trait being used.
- If your hero is using a **Gift**, draw a **playing card** from your deck instead, and add your Trait to that.

TOTAL	RESULT
1, Ace or Joker	<b>TRAGEDY.</b> Mark <b>all</b> gods “watching” you as “offended”. The Oracle adds three threat tokens, to this Challenge or others in any desired combination, and involves a new god in the quest. <i>Example: This troll is the son of the sea god.</i>
2,3	<b>FAILURE.</b> The Oracle adds one threat token, and introduces another complication or challenge. <i>Example: The troll is hidden in a dark cavern complex.</i>
4-7	<b>MORTAL SUCCESS.</b> The Action succeeds normally. The Oracle removes one threat token. <i>Example: The Hero clashes with the troll and bests it in combat, forcing it to flee.</i>
8-11	<b>HEROIC SUCCESS.</b> The Action succeeds in an exceptional way or causes up to two effects, and may include the description of superhuman feats. The Oracle removes two threat tokens. <i>Example: The Hero wrests the uprooted tree from the mountainous troll's iron grasp, turning the club back upon it.</i>
12, 13	<b>LEGENDARY SUCCESS.</b> The Action succeeds exceptionally or causes up to three effects, and may include the description of supernatural feats. Mark <b>all</b> gods “watching” you as “pleased”. The Oracle removes three threat tokens. <i>Example: The Hero grasps the support holding the cavernous tunnel together and, with a mighty shove, rends the mountain above in two. Pure sunlight streams inside, turning the troll to stone and dust.</i>

The Oracle narrates the effects of all *Tragedy* and *Failure* results. Players narrate the effects of their own *Success* results. After each action, the Oracle adds or removes Threat Tokens and adjusts the Tapestry as necessary. When the number of Threat Tokens is reduced to zero or lower, the Challenge has been defeated. Players reshuffle their decks after each Scene involving a card draw.

## Face Cards

Face Cards represent one of the 12 gods. How does this god get involved?

**When you draw an allied god** (your *patron*, the god who gave you this quest, or the god who gave you the Gift you are using), count this as a draw of **10**.

- Does this god approve of your action? If they're not already your patron, mark them as "pleased".
- Do they disapprove of your action? Still count as **10**, but mark that god as "offended".
- If they were already "offended", mark that god as "enemy".

**When you draw an opposed god** (the god this quest is against, a god you have offended, or an enemy of the god who granted you this power), count as a Tragedy. Mark this god as an "enemy".

When you **draw any other god**, consult the Oracle. Does what we know about this god (domain and relationships) imply that they approve or disapprove of this action?

- Is the action within the god's sphere of influence? Count as a **10**.
- Is the action opposed to the god's sphere of influence? Count as a **1**.
- Is this god the ally of your patron? **+1**.
- Is this god the enemy of your patron? **-1**.
- Does this god owe your patron? Count as **10** and mark them as "Neutral" to your Patron.
- Is this god a creditor to your patron? Count as **1** and mark them as "Enemy" to your Patron.

When in doubt, assume the god is apathetic in this Challenge. Count apathetic gods as **5**. Mark that god as "watching" the hero.

*Heroes may call on their patron god to intervene with an apathetic god, and change their 5 to a 10. The Hero marks the patron down to "pleased". The Oracle marks the apathetic god as "Creditor" to the patron, and the patron as "Owing" the apathetic god.*

*The Oracle may spend a Threat Token from a future Challenge for an enemy god to intervene with a apathetic god, to change their 5 to a 1. Mark the apathetic god as "Creditor" to the enemy god, and the enemy god as "Owing" the apathetic god.*

## The Gods

The Oracle interprets the will of the gods. Heroes may roll +Wisdom to ask if an action will please or offend a god: on any successful roll, they know.

**When you act in a god's interests**, mark them as "watching". If they were already "watching", mark them as "pleased". If they were already "pleased", mark them as "patron". If they were already "offended", mark them as "watching".

**When you act against a god's interests**, mark them as "watching". If they were already "watching", mark them as "offended". If they were already "offended", mark them as "enemy". If they were already a "Patron" mark them as "pleased". If they were already "pleased" mark them as "watching".

**When a god is "watching" you, you can distract them from other Hero's' actions.** Roll +Craft or another Trait appropriate to the situation. On any successful roll, the god ignores the other Hero's action. This kind of roll may introduce new threat tokens, but will never eliminate any.

## **At the End of the Quest**

The Oracle updates the Tapestry. Which gods gained or lost from that Quest? Which gods became allies or enemies?

All Heroes add +1 to one Trait (max +3). If Heroes have any gods marked as “patron”, you may accept a new Gift from **one** of them. Mark that god as “pleased”.

The attentions of the gods waiver and do not always hold over time. Gods who are “watching” become “apathetic” after a quest ends. If significant time passes before the next such quest, at the Oracle's discretion, each god who is “pleased” or “offended” also becomes neutrally apathetic.

A player may retire their Hero and create a new one if they so desire.



# The Tapestry

The Gods

Relationships with other Gods

	God / Domain	KD	QD	JD	KC	QC	JC	KH	QH	JH	KS	QS	JS
K ♦		-											
Q ♦			-										
J ♦				-									
K ♣					-								
Q ♣						-							
J ♣							-						
K ♥								-					
Q ♥									-				
J ♥										-			
K ♠											-		
Q ♠												-	
J ♠													-

Enemy  
(-2)

Creditor  
(-1)

Neutral  
(0)

Owing  
(+1)

Ally  
(+2)

# Hero

Traits:

(+2, +1, +1, +0, +0)

Gifts:

Patron God

Warfare	
Wisdom	
Craft	
Travel	
Speech	


Deeds: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Gods

Card	Name / Domain	Relationship
K♦		
Q♦		
J♦		
K♣		
Q♣		
J♣		
K♥		
Q♥		
J♥		
K♠		
Q♠		
J♠		

Enemy  
(-2)

Offended  
(-1)

Watching/Apathetic  
(0)

Pleased  
(+1)

Patron  
(+2)

# An Example of Play

Rachel, Tim, Adam, and Gage have gathered to play Game of the Gods. Rachel is the most familiar with the game, so she offers to play The Oracle, and passes out a Hero sheet to Tim, Adam and Gage, setting The Tapestry sheet in the center of the table.

Rachel : “Okay guys, this game is set in a Bronze Age roughly like a romanticized version of our own was. Great spans of the world remain to be explored, empires and city-states are alive and well not terribly far from tribal civilizations and uninhabitable wastes. Ocean travel is just starting to advance beyond the 'shot in the dark' method of navigation. And, of course, the gods are alive and well, bickering and feuding as ever. We'll start by creating a few.”

(They look over the “Preparation of the Pantheon” section together.)

Adam : “Swell. My Patron is Bob, god of space, and he hates whatever god Tim's going to make.”

Rachel : “Slow your roll, Adam. We're going for a kind of Greek / Roman, epic poem type feel here. How's about Robernius, god of the heavens and the air, who hates Tim's god.”

Tim : “Hey!”

Adam : “Robernius, Lord of the Sky? Yeah, that's okay. I need to pick a face card for him too, right? How about the Jack of Spades?”

Rachel : “Sounds good to me. Everyone jot down “Robernius” and “The Sky” next to the Jack of Spades on their sheet. It's at the bottom. I'll just mark it on The Tapestry... Tim, which face card is your god using?”

Tim : “Fariamonia, goddess of feasts AND famine, uses the queen of diamonds. She's the sister to the Jack of diamonds, who is Robernius's father.”

Rachel : “Nice. Everyone mark that, Fariamonia, feast and famine, queen of diamonds. I'll just note her on The Tapestry, along with all that lineage stuff. Gage?”

Gage : “Airon, god of war?”

Adam : “Ah, I should have picked war!”

Rachel : “Don't worry too much, your hero can suck up to Airon too. The gods of the pantheon are pretty down with polytheism, except where it works against their plots. What is your god's relationship with another god, Gage? Remember, it can be with one we haven't made up yet. The Jack of Hearts or something.”

Gage : “Ah, he sprung forth fully formed of his own will. He's not related to any of the other gods.”

Rachel : “Interesting. Just came into being, huh? Is there a god he likes or hates particularly? Like maybe he loves Fariamonia, famines in the wake of war and everything.”

Gage : “Oh, no, he's super impartial. But she owes him a favor for the last great war, bringing in all those celebrated war spoils and putting all those defeated people through a long season of hunger.”

Rachel : “I can work with that! King of Clubs?”

Gage : “King of Clubs.”

(All the players add the new information to their sheets, as Rachel, acting as The Oracle, adds it to The Tapestry. She also makes note that the Queen of Diamonds, Fariamonia, is “owing” to the King of Clubs, who is a “Creditor” to her.)

Rachel : “Alright, gods aside. What do our Heroes look like? Let's check out the Preparation of the Heroes page.” (They all read it.)

Adam, to himself : “Hmm... how about a young warrior who has led troops in battle? I'll give him Warfare plus two, and Travel and Speech plus one, leaving Wisdom and Craft at zero. Airon makes sense as a Patron god. He granted him a strong horse which never tires as a gift. I'll note all this on my sheet..”

Rachel : “Anyone ready yet?”

Adam : “I am Policaus, son of Polius, Liberator of the Gated City.”

Gage : “I am Drusilla, daughter of Iovita, Seller of Bread.”

Tim : “I am Gallus, son of traitors, Lieutenant of The Shielded Legion.”

Rachel : “Son of traitors, I like that. Hold on a second guys, while I consult the bones.” (She rolls a die, twice, getting a four and a six. Checking on the chart in the Preparation of the Quest section she sees that the Heroes will be tasked with locating a monster of some sort. She rolls two dice, getting a total of six. The monster is evil or out of control. Finally, she throws three dice to make the Challenges that stand between the Heroes and the objective. In this case, the Heroes must face a mountain range, must move through enemy territory, and require a technical solution to a physical problem.)

Rachel : “Gage, does it make sense that Drusilla might be traveling with a war train? Troops have to eat, after all, and it was common for civilians to tag along for security and to hawk wares at the soldiers of the time.”

Gage : “Yeah, I think she might be. She probably gives a discount to Policaus, since her parents lived in the Gated City.”

Rachel : “Cool. Well, one night, just before false dawn, your bread cart suddenly goes flying sideways, flipping over and spilling your goods all over the camp field.”

Gage : “No, not my precious precious bread!”

Rachel : “Yup! It looks muddy but salvageable when you rise to the clatter and find your cart on it's side. Huge, deep prints sink into the mud leading back into the night and away from the campfires of the site. They were made by a single creature, its feet at least a forearm wide and half a man long.”

Gage : “Uh oh. Bipedal?”

Rachel : “Quadruped. Whatever it was, it took a whole crate of flour with it when it went. You can see the occasional tuff of earth ripped out where the crate scraped the ground at speed.”

Gage : “No way I'm going after it alone. I'm reporting this!”

Rachel : “So, just before dawn, Policaus and Gallus find themselves called to the tent of the second in

command of the whole operation. Drusilla is there too. 'Men,' the sub-commander says, 'a beast has been tormenting our train for the last three nights. It needs to be stopped. Following it blindly is folly, as we have places to be and can't redirect the whole army into some kind of animal hunt. A small group, however, could leave immediately, find the creature, and report back. Then we could send an appropriate number of forces to take it out without neglecting our primary mission. You two are that small group, the best I've got. Drusilla, you know what its prints look like and got as close to it as anybody. Make yourself useful. Leave as soon as you can, we need to be rid of this problem.' "

(After a while the group agrees to head out. Rachel notes that the prints lead almost straight up a dangerously steep mountain, the start of the 'traverse a mountain range' challenge.)

Adam : " 'My horse, gift of the gods, never steers me wrong nor tires. I shall ride ahead and find the shortest, safest way while the others travel along with their lesser beasts.' "

Rachel : "Okay, nice. Well, this is clearly a Traveling test, so you add that value to a roll. Since you're using your Patron's gift, though, draw a card and use its value instead of a dice roll."

Adam : "Okay. I drew an eight, plus my one point of Travel, for nine, a Heroic Success. What happens?"

Rachel : "You decide on a success. I get to explain failures."

Adam : "Okay. I've removed enough threat tokens to get rid of the Challenge of this mountain, so ... I ride to the peak of the tallest mountain in the area, faster than most horses could travel on flat land, and take in the scene. My eyes pick out not just the tracks of the beast, but another, less rolling and tenacious route to get to the same place. When I return to the others I have a travel plan that saves us days of travel."

Tim : "Nice. I like plans where I don't have to do any of the heavy lifting."

(Skipping ahead, the group eventually makes it to the beast's cave after evading enemy foot patrols.)

Tim : "Okay, mission accomplished, we should head back."

Rachel : "Are you sure?"

Gage : "Nah, if we leave nothing keeps the monster from wandering off. We need to trap it, even if we're not going to try to kill it, so that its still here when we come back with all those troops."

Tim : "Ah. That makes sense. Well, I'll use my knowledge of fortifications to figure out how to drop this cave entrance. That's a Warfare check?"

Rachel : "No, I think this is closer to stonemasonry. It's a Craft check."

Tim : "Oh, boy. (Rolls) That's a... two in total."

(Groans)

Rachel : "Okay. That's a failure, so I narrate, and I get to add a challenge. You're looking around the cave mouth, trying to find a natural seam or weakness to exploit, when dark fortuitous timing succeeds for you, albeit way too early. You find yourself trapped behind the crumbled inner mouth of the cave, now a dead end barely shedding light through the gaps in between boulders. Everyone else, you're still outside. When the cave entrance gave way, you saw dust snort out of another part of the hill a half mile away – it looks as though there are multiple ways in and out of this nest, so while

Gallus is trapped the beast is not.”

Tim : “Guys, dig me out.”

Gage : “No, just sneak in, find the other way, and leave. There are enemy patrols, remember? We can't be moving earthworks out here, they will have heard all the noise!”

Adam : “At least if the thing eats Tim's Hero we'll get some idea what it's capable of.”

Tim : “Not funny guys.”

Gage : “I wander from the entrance, looking for a place to huddle undetected until this is resolved.”

Adam : “Ditto, you're on your own bud.”

Tim : “Traitors!”

Rachel : “So, you're stuck in the cave, what little light comes through the rockslide fading as the day outside ends, with a four legged monster of some huge description lying ahead of you. What do you do?”