



# Aquila, the Role playing game

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*Long ago, when the old gods still looked at us with proudly and when fire was still a new discovery, our newborn race crawled out from our dark caves to the earth, a barren wasteland left to us by the gods who inhabited it long ago. As we left our cavemen's lifestyle behind, we built small settlements around a few oasis and started growing crops that could feed us more than the small wildlife. However, this new prosperity was short-lived as we soon faced our first and greatest challenge. From the crude and desolate land grew massive trees overnight, filling the desert with jungle and life. Even though this sudden vegetation growth destroyed our huts, our crops and killed many before settling down, the trees could have brought us so many things, allowing us to take a leap forward, but sadly, they did not come alone. Monsters, called Leaf Giants by our ancestors, appeared from the trees with their minions and destroyed everything. These mindless beasts brought our race to the brink of the extinction and we turned to the only one we thought could save us, the gods. The old gods answered our prayers and lifted a chunk of the land into the skies for us to survive on and stayed behind, keeping the monsters at bay as the land slowly flew away, leaving the ocean behind. Cut from their brothers, the monsters were driven of our new home and we soon settled on this new and rich land we called The Plateau.*

*Thousands of years later, this story is now legend. Humanity changed a lot since we left the earth, our societies evolved and new faiths were created. Modern faiths may have fought each other for land and gold, but they still had one point in common, the complete denial of the old legends. To them and, by their rapid spread, the whole population, The Plateau was the only land in existence, created by their own gods for them. Needless to say that this belief was challenged many times and visionaries that enlightened us about the world below were soon beheaded for their beliefs. But their wise words were heard and influent investors challenged the faiths and funded expedition to the earth. Below, they found an ocean bigger than any lake they ever saw and islands left behind when The Plateau Ascended to the skies. But beyond the ocean laid wonders unseen before by any man. Jungles that spread farther than the eye could see, spices that no one tasted before and precious stones that simply grew out of the land. As word of their discoveries spread, kingdoms soon joined the fray and before the faith had time to stop this trend, the existence of the world below could not be denied anymore.*

*We are now in 1523 of the True God era. You and many others are embarking on the balloon ship that will descend for the old world to colonize the largest island in the ocean. Your family may try to stop you, you may be branded as a heretic for attempting what you will attempt, but the taste of discovery is far greater than what you will leave behind. Your old allegiance and your old faith don't matter anymore, you will now descend on the earth below and start a new life in the shadow of The Plateau. Welcome to Aquila.*

## **The Game**

Aquila is a game of explorations and discoveries, a game of politics and allegiances, a game of adventures and treasures, but most of all, it is a game about your character and his future in the colony of Aquila. Starring yourself and a few of your friends, the game will first start with your first colonist and his journey into this new land. Factions will rise and falls as he lives his life the way you want him to and soon, he will need to let his son take his place as his life will be nearing its end. Your story won't end here however, you will continue to play as your character's son or daughter and shape the world around you. You and your friend will create a story not only

about individuals, but about the whole colony and the world beyond the ocean. This story may span decades or even centuries, the only limit is your group's imagination.

The rules contained in this game will allow you to write this amazing story, but you will also need a few tools to help you along the way. First, the game uses six-sided dice - or d6 - as its way of resolving conflict and adding a bit of random element to spice the events that you will create. You will also need a few physical tokens - like glass beads for example - of different color and a big sheet of paper to represent the world of Aquila in a more graphical form. Finally, small paper cards are used to write your characters, factions and other elements in the game on. The size doesn't matter, but know that you will add more and more on the table as the game goes on.

Now that you have what you need to play the game, it is time to teach you how to play it. Once you have read most of the rules, you can start playing. Create your world, characters and factions then let the story weaves itself through roleplay.

### *Descriptors*

Everything in the game is described mechanically with *Descriptors*. These are a few words that describe one part of an element in the game - May it be a character or a room where the characters found a treasure – with a Score. The score represents the quality of the *Descriptor* with the higher the better. These *Descriptors* will be used to roll the dice and check for success on an action. They will also create the opposition to that dice roll as they can also work against you during an action. *Descriptors* will be explained mechanically later.

### **The island**

Aquila Island has no predefined geography, instead, you will create the island yourself through a simple mini-game before the first game session. The process of creating the island is as follow: take a sheet of paper – a bigger sheet means that the map will be easier to see - and draw a few circles to create the island and then describe each circle to give life to the island.

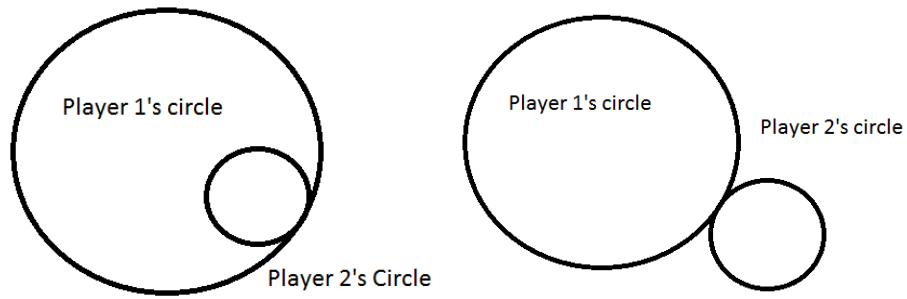
### *Drawing the Island*

As said before, the island is drawn on the sheet of paper through a few circles. The map does not need to be pretty or geographically accurate, it needs to be practical and clear. Circles are not drawn randomly, the group must follow a clear order to make the island the best it can be. First, choose the starting player, generally the one who brought the sheet of paper, who will draw the first circle. He can draw it anywhere and in any size he wants, it can take the whole sheet if he wants.

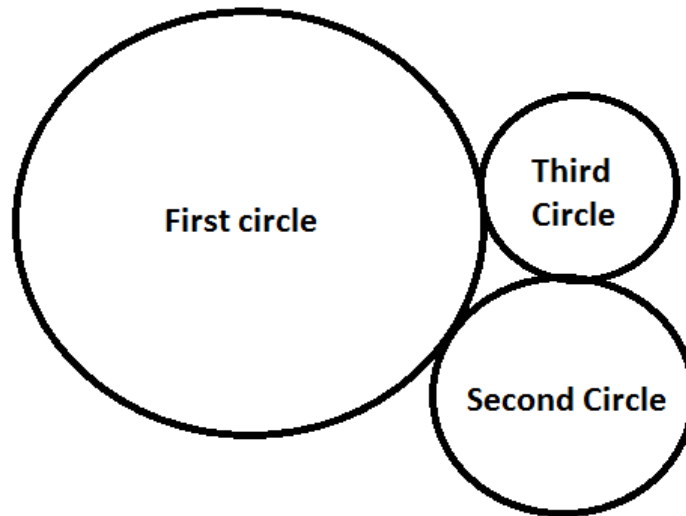
Once the first player has drawn his circle, the player to his right draw a new one on the sheet then the player to his right draw his and so on until all players have drawn three circles.

However, circle cannot be drawn arbitrarily, they must follow three main rules:

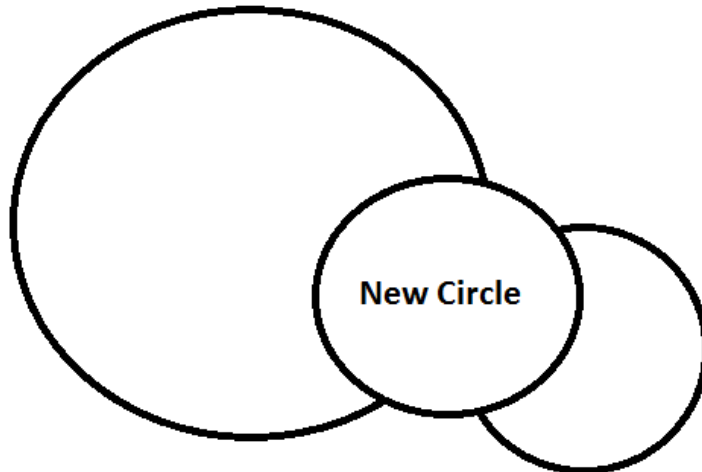
- The border of a circle must touch in some way the border of one of the other circle on the map. For example, if the first player drew a big circle in the middle of the sheet, the second circle must be drawn inside or around the border of that first circle.



The rule also applies to the third circle which would have to touch one or both circles and all other circle drawn after.

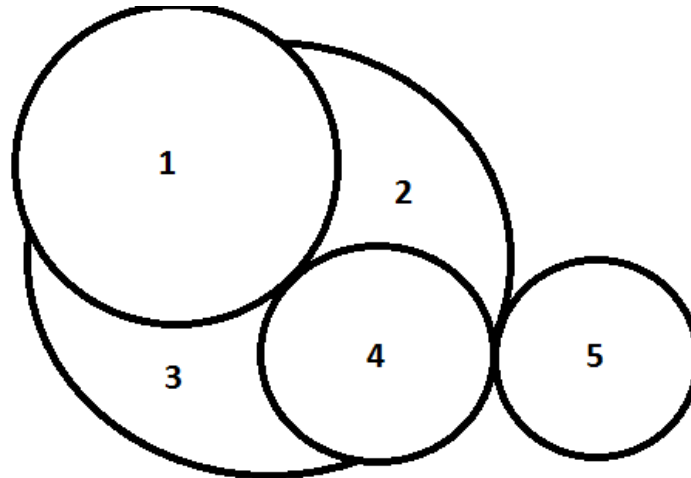


- If a circle is drawn over the border of one or more circle, the old borders inside the new circle are erased. Here is an example:



- Finally, a new circle cannot be drawn completely over an old circle. As a rule of thumb, enough place should be left in all circles after the map has been drawn to write a few words.

With all the circles drawn, you should now have a complete map showing many regions. Regions are delimited by any zone that is inside a circle and has border all around it. For example, the following map has five regions even though only four circles were drawn.



Starting again from the first player, every player write a number inside each region to give it a *score*. The first player is given three numbers - 5, 3 and 1 - to write inside any regions he wants and all the other players are given a 4, a 3 and a 1. Taking turns, they write the number in any regions that do not already have a number in it. It is entirely possible that some regions won't have any number in it, they simply do not have any *score*.

The last step of the map creation is to give *descriptors* to all the regions on the map. Start by the first player and let him write on a couple of words to describe the region he wants to describe. *Descriptors* should be pretty straightforward, things like "Eastern Marsh" and "Farm of the strange old man" are perfect. *Descriptors* are used in-game to determine the overall quality of a region. As such, the region with the score of 5 is always the Capital of the Island while regions with lower scores are poorer in resources or population. Regions with no score are impracticable terrain with no value, thing like mountains or lakes, their *descriptors* should clearly show this fact.

With the *descriptors* done, the map is finished and you can now start creating your family, faction and characters.

## The Families

As a colonist in Aquila, your character's goal is to make his mark on this new land. As such, his family name is extremely important to him as it's the name that his descendant will bear proudly. Families are created by writing their name on a small cue card and rating them. All families start at a rating of 1. As the game will progress, you will have the options to augment the rating of your family and use this rating to gain favours and various gifts from influent factions. Note that if all the family members die, a new family is created with a new character as its leader.

## The Factions

Each player creates a faction on the island in addition to their own characters and families. With a new cue card, every player write a name for their faction and three *descriptors* that describes how the faction acts and plays on the island. With the three scores available to them – 3, 2 and 1 – they distribute each score to one of the faction *descriptor*. You can then add a few flavor details to the faction, describing their major members and background on the island while everyone finishes their faction. A faction has a *Life Force* score which represents the overall capacity of the faction to keep itself alive through the years. The *Life Force* score starts at 50 and will change many times during the game. If a faction gets to 0 *Life Force*, it stops existing and is replaced by another faction that waited for a free spot. Create a new faction from scratch to replace to dead one.

**Faction name:** The Silver Merchants

**Descriptors:**

- Rich – 3
- Monopoly on the silver trade – 2
- Hates competition – 1

**Life Force:** 50

**Additional Info:**

Led by Argnar Bordner, controls most of the politicians in the region.

**Faction name:** The Adventurers Guild

**Descriptors:**

- Full of mercenaries – 3
- Influence – 2
- Vault full of treasures – 1

**Life Force:** 50

**Additional Info:**

Band of adventurers without a real leader. They accepts jobs from anyone.

Finally, every faction has a home region. For each faction, the player that created it chooses a region with a score lower than five and places a colored glass bead on it to represent the faction presence in the region. A region can host more than one faction.

## The Characters

Characters are created exactly the same way factions are, with only the *Life Force* changed. The *Life Force* of a character starts at 30 instead of 50 and it can never go up, only down. A character dies if he reaches 0 *Life Force*. At the start of the game, every player creates only one character, but you will have the chance to create many more as the game goes on. Like Factions, write a name for your character and then 3 *Descriptors* – one at a score of 1, one at a score of 2 and one at a score of 3 – and flesh him out with some additional info if you want.

**Name:** Finn Argia

**Descriptors:**

- Strong like an ox – 3
- Master trader – 2
- Hates water – 1

**Life Force:** 30

**Additional Info:**

A strong and tall man that worked in a factory before going to Aquila.

**Name:** Robert S. Galdos

**Descriptors:**

- Works for the queen – 3
- Ruthless – 2
- Known for his drinking habits – 1

**Life Force:** 30

**Additional Info:**

An influent man that managed to convince a queen for an expedition on The Plateau.

With all the elements for the game created, you can now start playing.

## Playing the game

When playing the game, your goal is to make your family prosper and work with or against the various factions of the island to reach new heights. However, the first colonist that was sent bellow will probably never see the fruits of his labour, it will be his children's and grand-children's job to make his dream happen.

The game is played year by year to see what effects the various actions of the players have on the world around them. Each year is cut into two seasons, the warm season and the cold season. Each season, you will have the possibility to play a scene, an adventure or work on your family. Your character's *Life Force* will gradually go down year by year and through the various scenes played until he dies of old-age, sickness or during an adventure. A year start with the warm season.

Before going into detail on how to play each season and year, you must first learn how to roll the dice to see how to succeed or fail at an action. To roll the dice, you first create a dice pool of up to three *descriptors*:

- An applicable personal *descriptor* of your character. For example, Strong like an ox can be applied to any situation requiring feats of strength.
- An applicable local or region *descriptor*. For example, if a room has the Dark *descriptor* it can be applied to a more stealth based approach.
- An applicable faction *descriptor*. Faction can sponsor you on adventures and Full of Mercenaries could be applied on many tasks if you asked for reinforcements.

The applicable *descriptor* list must be followed in order. This means that you cannot use a local *descriptor* if your character has no personal *descriptor* applicable to the situation. The same way, a faction will only help you if you already tried to use the resources available to you, it is their way of asking for a compensation. If no *descriptor* can be applied to the situation, you have no dice to roll and must expend *Life Force*.

*Life Force* is the other way to gain dice if you judge that you won't succeed and need a few more dices. For each point of *Life Force* you remove from your character, you add one more die to your dice pool. You cannot go lower than 0 *Life Force*, worse, if you reach 0, you character dies doing the task that brought him to that point. You still roll for success or failure and gains the results of a potential success, sadly, your character sacrificed himself while doing so.

Sum up all the *descriptors* score, the potential *Life Force* points and roll that number of dice. Every die that come up with 4 or higher is a success. You have to gain a number of successes equal to the opposition to win. Each additional success can be converted into findings which are described later.

### *The seasons*

As said before, each year on the island is cut into two distinct seasons. During the warm season, crops are planted and harvested, construction on various buildings is done and many festivals

are held. There is generally very few rain days during the warm season and *The Plateau* cannot be seen from the island. The cold season is much more cold and rainy, during this season *The Plateau* can be seen in the sky and blocks the sun most of the time. It's a dark and humid season, even though it is still hot, the rivers and lake on *The Plateau* constantly pour down water on the island and the ocean. It is said that during some cold seasons, *The Plateau* blocked the sun for weeks and brought sickness and death to the island.

Life on the Island is set around those two seasons and its effect are seen everywhere. Each season, the players choose what they want to do according to the season. After both have passed, you add a year to the calendar and start again. The Island will change after each year and by the start of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it may not even look the same.

Each action is described in detail in the next section. A season always cost one point of *Life Force* to both the factions and the characters. Each player can do any of the three possible actions and will get to play in other actions either way. The actions are resolved in this order: Adventures first, Scenes second and Family last.

### Adventures

Every player that chose the Adventure action for the current season is brought in the Adventuring party. A party is always sponsored by a faction, so you must choose which faction will sponsor you for this season and the faction creator has the job to play the exposition – similar to a GM - in this adventure. Of course, if the faction dislikes you or simply do not want to sponsor you, they can say no. A scene should be played to bring a faction to your side. The player who chose another action this season have the job to play the opposition for the Adventure.

An adventure is best described as an expedition of armed man to one of the giant tree on the continent. With the backing of a faction, they sail the ocean to find a giant tree that has not been looted yet. Once they do, they battle the monsters and the Leaf Giant living there, takes the treasures of a time long gone and bring them back to Aquila.

While also playing in the adventure, the player controlling the sponsoring faction creates each room of the tree dungeon by giving it a *descriptor* with a score, monsters and other things he considers fun and entertaining. If all the players partake in the adventure, he also plays the monsters, otherwise, the opposition player divides the monsters among them and play them.

Monsters are created by giving them one *descriptor*. The higher the *descriptor* score, the harder the monster is. By default, monsters with a score of 2 are considered average. To battle monsters, one character assemble a dice pool like usual while the monster does the same. The monster can always apply its *descriptor*, even if it does not logically applies. He can also use local *descriptor*, but not faction *descriptors*. All opponents roll the dice and check for success. If the players win, they beat the monster and take the



difference in success in findings. If the monster wins, the difference in success is removed from the characters *Life Force* and retry to beat the monster or flee.

The adventure ends when the players have beaten the tree's leaf monster or all character died.

### Scenes

Scenes allow players to interact with each other and with factions. Scenes can be anything and only the imagination of the players who chose this action for the season is the limit. Any disagreement or fight that breaks out from the result of roleplay is resolved with a die roll. Both players create their dice pool and roll. If the check was a result of a violent action, the loser removes the difference in success from his *Life Force*. In both case, the winner takes findings equal to the difference in success and the result is roleplayed.

Faction members are played by the player who created it. To prevent on player talking to himself, a faction can be temporarily given to another player for him to play this scene. Finally, players who chose another action this scene can play the random NPCs and add one *descriptor* for the scene to anything they want. If a player rolls against a faction, the faction uses his home regions plus one of its applicable descriptor as its dice pool. He can also expand *Life Force* to add dice to his pool and rolls like normal.

The scene ends when all the players who chose this action considers their scene finished. If a scene drags on, a vote can be cast to finish it early. Scenes are the best place to create interesting plot points and twists. All players have the job to create the story of the island.

Examples of scenes includes:

- A diner between two character to resolve some "Trading dispute" that turns into a mess when they learn that the mayor of the island is at their table to solve this dispute.
- An underground war between two factions reaches its boiling point when the daughter of one of the faction's leader dies in suspicious circumstances.
- A circus showing monsters from the continent is in the capital, but the man behind this circus seems shady.
- A group of rival adventurers want a faction approval for an adventure, but you already had talk with that faction and you don't want to lose your sponsor.
- Your daughter and another player's son are getting married, but not everyone is happy with this union.
- The last adventure went badly and a family lost its leader. Leaving the ceremony, you meet the new family's leader who wants revenge for his loss.

## Family

Taking care of your family is potentially the most important thing to do on the Island. This action allows you to do one of two things:

- Create a new character with a tie in your family. He can be a brother/sister, a husband/wife, a child or anything else, it only depends on what you want.
- Switch characters with any other character from your family. Old or sick characters can be a burden in the next adventure, switching character allows you to nominate the new head of the family and play this character as your own.

Once all the actions are resolved, you can use all those findings you obtained during your action. You can keep findings from season to season if you don't want to use them immediately.

Findings are used for the following options:

- **10** Findings allow you to add one to the score of any regions, showing its increase in resources. No region score can go higher than the capital score, it must be brought up before. Regions with no score can gain one with the use of this option.
- **10** Findings allow you to add a circle to the map of the island with a score of 0 and a *descriptor* of your choice. The circle is added following the same rules as when the map was created.
- **5** Findings allow you to add one to any of your character *descriptors*. This can also be used on other family member as well.
- **5** Findings allow you to add one to any faction's *descriptor*.
- **1** finding allow you to add one to a faction's *Life Force*.

## Yearly Events

Each year after the first, one player is chosen to roll one die. This die is the event die, if it comes as a success, the player who rolled it adds a global *descriptor* that represent a bad event that happened to the island this year. Things like a bad harvest, a rise in criminal activities, a tsunami or even an attack of Leaf Giants are good events. The result of the die is this *descriptor* score and is removed from ALL game elements that have *Life Force*. All characters and faction loses from the event and character's death and faction destruction is resolved before starting the New Year.

Finally, this *descriptor's* score is removed from all dice pool this year. To reduce this huge disadvantage, you can remove one to the score of any region on the island to remove on to the event score. The event *descriptor's* score cannot be brought lower than one using this technique. Events are deadly and can drain the resources of everyone on the island.

With all this, you are ready to embark on your own adventure. Have fun and remember the old legends, the old gods may still be out there waiting for you!