

THE SAGA



April 2024

Issue IV



Forget the Critics.
Easy Investigation Rules.
and the gods of Atheles.

THE SAGA

April 2024

Writing: Michael Bielaczyc
Cover Art: Michael Bielaczyc
Interior Art: Michael Bielaczyc
Design by Michael Bielaczyc



Copyright Lone Wanderer Entertainment, 2024.



A banner for the Table of Contents. It features a dark, atmospheric background with silhouettes of trees and a large, bright yellow sun or moon in the center. The text "Table of Contents" is written in a large, bold, yellow font with a black outline.

Table of Contents

- Ignore the CriticsPage 4
- Investigation RulesPage 6
- Organizing Your CampaignPage 9
- Into the World: The GodsPage 12



A SagaBorn Roleplaying Game Compatible Product

IGNORE THE CRITICS

This is something I have to tell myself all the time.

The internet, once a hopeful wonderland of personal blogs and creative projects, has become a wasteland of generated articles and arguments. And this mindset has infiltrated into our daily lives. On top of this, it pays to be a critic. Whole YouTube channels spring up like weeds to have wanna-be “journalists” complaining about everything. Their thumbnails, featuring clickbait titles and open-mouthed headshots, somehow still draw people into clicking. Just the thought of that image runs a shiver up my spine.

So, Making (meaning doing something creative) can be complex these days. I have been around the art scene long enough to see the change. I can not imagine trying to start creating today. But if it has changed once, we can change again.

The first thing we can do is to Turn Off and Keep Livin’. Put your energy into places where it is returned. Find private servers to discuss creativity instead of publicly posting on social media. Don’t pay attention to articles and videos that tell you that you “have to do this to be successful.” Being a successful creative person and making work that is worthwhile does not mean it has to provide a living. Your art’s worth is more than the money it brings in. Making anything is good. Don’t let others tell you that you are doing it wrong unless you asked them for their opinion. And even then, find your own path and decide if their way is the best way for you.

Also, support other creatives. Don’t critique unless asked. Try not to judge. Try not to label. We used to have a rule here in the studio, say two good things for every two negative things in any critique. When I started out in the profession, so many of the old guard welcomed me and helped me along the way. Ask if you are helping

or hindering those creatives around you. Be the support you wish you had on those dark nights when nothing seems to work out.

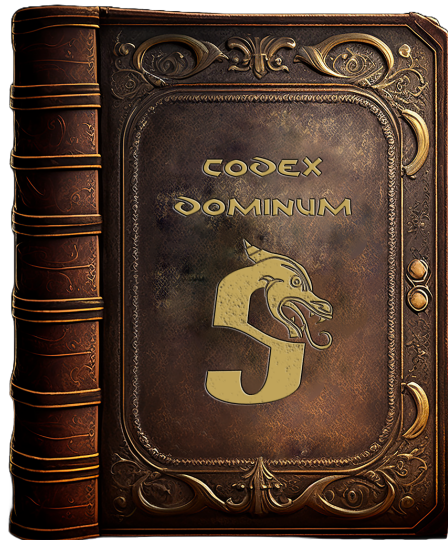
In the end, all we are is what we leave behind. So create something beautiful. Create something that makes you happy. And forget the critics.

—MIKE

GET MORE FROM YOUR GAME

The Codex Dominum, Master Book of Stories, contains all the knowledge needed for a Gamemaster to run the best tabletop games for their players.

A free resource at:
SAGABORN.COM





SAGABORN INKLINGS

INVESTIGATION RULES

Running investigations can feel daunting. It usually takes a lot of ad-libbing, juggling of clues, and memorization. So I have come up with some loose rules to keep myself focused and ready for the session.

MAKE A TIMELINE

I start an investigation with a goal and a time period in mind. We can not control our players, but we know what the NPCs are doing, so focus on that. I wanted my players to investigate a manor house. Inside, a warlock was planning to use an ancient tome to cast a horrible ritual. Since I had no idea how the players would approach this, I came up with the timeline of two days, what the warlock had to do beforehand, and what the schedule inside the manor was like. With those sketched out, it was easy to describe things the heroes investigated.

“Only two guards are awake at night, and they spend most of their time at the front door.” And “The warlock leaves every day from 2 until supper, and he comes back with a small crate of goods each day.”

But remember, improvise! Flow with what the players decide to

do. In this instance, they discovered the warlock gets a delivery of wine each week, so they went and bought wine and pretended to be the delivery people. This gave them access to inside the manor and they found out all sorts of information.

HOW MUCH INVESTIGATING CAN BE DONE?

A day only has so much time. Every day, I find myself about 3 hours short of all the things I want to do. Or I have time, but my energy levels just are not cooperating. This is the starting point for limiting investigations at my table. I usually allow the group to investigate two to three scenes in one day. A scene can be anything, but should always give some clue or information to the group. A visit to the scene of a crime. Talking to the people who work at the local tavern about the incident. Spying on the local lord to see where he goes at night. All of these would make for a great investigation scene. The reason I give for these events taking up so much time, is that there is not just the event, but preparation time, travel, and just general day-to-day tasks that also take away the daylight hours.

The players always want to find ways to circumvent these rules, so I have a few things to try and balance the common choices.

SPLIT THE PARTY

Never split the party! When it comes to investigations, groups almost always want to split up. And this is totally fine! But I do increase all investigation DC numbers by +3 when a group is split up. When a group is together and working well, they should all help each other out. For the last investigation I ran, the fighter and rogue were in the library, asking how they could help with research. I told them they would help grab books off top shelves, carry heavy tomes from the basement, etc., making it easier for the mages to research.

WHAT ABOUT NIGHT TIME?

Yes, the heroes can stay up at night and add another investigation event, but then they will be missing sleep. This leads to them being exhausted the next day. If they push themselves and do it again, they become fatigued.

MAKING IT FUN

Remember, players are not their characters. Players may have forgotten something the heroes never would. Or they may miss the significance of something. The player should not feel like they have to really be Sherlock Holmes, even if their character is. We want them to find the mysteries and feel rewarded, so read the energy at the table, keep them guessing and engaged, but a little helping hand is never wrong.



WHAT ARE WE EVEN DOING HERE?

So, for one of my groups, I decided to run a premade Pathfinder adventure to give myself “a little break.” What I did not expect was the amount of prep work to get ready to run a premade adventure. So many things referenced names I didn’t know, small tidbits of information I had to remember between the many characters, and then a sense of dread that I may do something early on that breaks the adventure at the end. I did find some help in having a PDF text-to-speech read the adventure to me (multiple times). I guess I am better at listening than reading these days.

So, for my adventures, I wanted to solve this. We all know games go off in weird directions, so what does the StoryGuide really need to know? I started writing summaries at the start of each adventure section that includes at least one of these: **Hook, History, and Goal.**

The **Hook** gives the SG a way to bring people into the event or adventure. It doesn’t have to be used, but even when running my own adventures, it provides me with an idea of how to get the heroes moving.

The **History** summary (which I can also name What Happened, Secrets, or other clever rewordings) gives the SG a short overview of what led to this Hook. Later I may give more detail, but this is all they need to ad-lib a scene or answer a question.

Finally, the **Goal** is what needs to happen to make the adventure move forward. It is also a place where I remind myself or the other SGs who run my adventure not only the main goal but also some side goals that may enhance the experience for the players.

With these three summaries, I find my adventures are much easier to run, giving me a clear start and finish and the knowledge that we can spend as much time as we want talking to those random elflings in the inn without breaking the adventure.

Example (from the upcoming SagaBorn Adventure - The Lay of the Land):

ADVENTURE 2: SOUNDS IN THE DARK

The people of Craven's Hollow have always cast a wary eye towards the well of the tower. They say that the blood of the dead warlord washed down into the well, cursing it. The noises and echoes that emanate from it at night are his spirit cursing those who damned him to an eternity in this valley. In truth, the well is inhabited by miglins, small malicious Navirites that delight in hurting and tormenting others. They have lived in the well for years, eating worms and insects, coming out occasionally to pilfer objects from the people of the Hollow.

Quest Hook:

Wez is frantically looking for a lost item (his locket containing a charcoal drawing of his deceased wife). He is distraught as he asks around the Hollow. Tolin says he saw someone or something go down the well the night before.

What Happened:

The miglins came out of the well last night and broke into Wez's house, stealing his locket and some food. They then scurried back to their lair to eat worms and gloat at their new treasures.

The Goal

This is a small quest to let the heroes meet some of the townsfolk and make some allies or enemies. Maybe they accuse someone of taking the locket. Or they follow the trail to the miglin lair and make everyone happy.

If the players seem unclear about how to investigate, ask for a Skill Challenge. This should be kept light, with a DC of 10 for successes that lead them to the miglin lair.

Example Skill Challenge Results

5 successes: the heroes learn about miglins and their weaknesses and find a bottle of alchemist fire in the tower.

4 successes: the heroes find the lair and get +3 to any thievery checks for hiding and sneaking.

3 successes: the heroes find the lair.

2 successes: the heroes find the lair, but the miglins are ready for them (no surprise).

1 success: the miglins have been watching the heroes and gain +1 to damage.

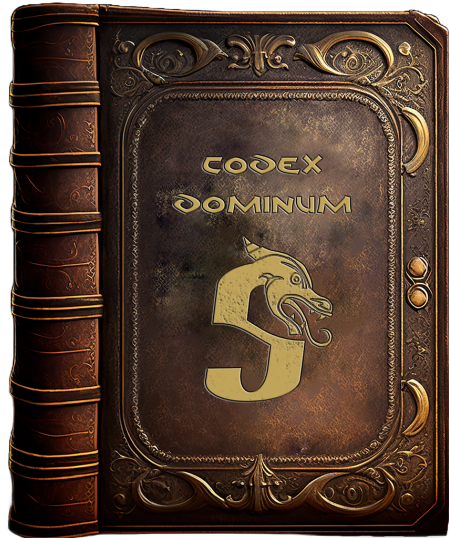
0 successes: the heroes find the lair but no miglins; instead, the miglins attack them at night!

GET MORE FROM YOUR GAME

The Codex Dominum, Master Book of Stories, contains all the knowledge needed for a Gamemaster to run the best tabletop games for their players.

A free resource at:

SAGABORN.COM





DARK RETURN

INTO THE WORLD

ALEDYN'S JOURNAL ON THE GODS

Religion. That is several tomes just unto itself, and even then, I would get it all wrong. But there are a few beliefs that have touched our lands and held strong and believed in by many. There are two main paths of faith in Atheles for the terans in the current age, the belief in the many as autonomous and powerful, or in the single Creator who made and watches over his creation. These beliefs come from the elves, and have changed, grown, morphed, and become the things that people find solace or fear in. There are also other beliefs, in the old gods, the things of the void that existed before the creator shed light on the darkness, but I will only touch on those, as there are no institutions that worship these ancient horrid things.

The elves believe the Creator sang and light was born. They then sang, and the universes sprang forth. The Creator wanted the universes to grow and expand on their own, so they sang to the worlds to spawn life, great and small. Many of these creatures grew and learned, some traveling the stars like the eldar and elves. Great beings whose knowledge and power rivaled the Creator came forth and for a time, our universe bowed to their power. There are many myths and thoughts on where these powerful deities went to, but we have seen no proof of their existence since before the time of terans on this world. The elves say that the gods fought a war and the only way to save this universe was for them to be locked away in another plane of existence. Until the gods or the Creator lay foot on these lands and explain, believers will have to leave it up to faith.

But that does not mean that these gods do not influence our world. A large portion of the beings here believe in greater powers, and where there is belief, there are those who will benefit from it.

BELIEFS WITHIN THE FOURTH AGE

The One

Of the religions of Uteria, worship of the one God is most prevalent. The ruling church is the Unelesia Church of the East, which is a dogmatic and powerful church. They focus less on the song of creation from the Creator, which originated with the elves, and more on the daily practice and sacrifice of the living souls in the world. This worship and piety will grant you a better life when reborn. Dworven and Teran cultures lean heavily into this single true god belief system.

Of note, these religions still see the other “gods” as powerful, but instead of distinct gods, they are seen as immortal and divine servants of the One.

Tanthias

Tanthias is the angelic personification of nobility and chivalry. The elves, fauns, and most other fey see Tanthias as a deity of the sun, guiding those of Uteria to the righteous path. Tanthias was tasked with watching over this world as the Creator moved on within Creation. The Unelesia Church marks him as a warrior and champion of God. He will come down from the heavens to fight alongside the armies of the world in the Cataclysm.



Arias

Arias is the spirit of love and offspring. She is very important within the mythology of the elves, sitting on her mountaintop throne so she can be close to her partner, Tanthias, as he crosses the sky. The Unelesia Church sees her as the overseer of marriage bonds.

Athana

Many elves have symbols of Athana scribed on their hunting gear or tattoos revering her as goddess of the hunt. She is aloof, and stays free of the politics of her other deities, spending her time alone on the hunt. The Unelesia Church downplays her importance, leaving her as little more than a thought for hunters to invoke.

Sartas

Sartas is an odd deity. While most of them can be traced back to elven beliefs, Sartas originated sometime during the Age of Kingdoms. His name is invoked by many who travel unsafe roads, and he is seen as a patron of many bards. Some elves have adopted this deity as a lower god who can hinder as much as he can help, but the Unelesia Church never references this being.

Rindlebok

Almost every belief system has a trickster of some sort. Rindlebok was almost more a fairy than a deity to the elves, but he was somehow immortal and played tricks on the gods. He enjoyed games and riddles and often visited the lands to “play with” the mortals. The Unelesia Church paints him as a long-nosed and pointy-eared minor demon, there to trick the faithful into breaking bonds.

Rom

Rom is the god of war. The elves say during the God Wars Rom fought for both sides, depending on who could convince him of their cause. When the Qudaar, the alliance of gods who believed only in dominion and might over others, created the Warmachine, also named Armageddecron, a god killer, Rom fully turned against

them and fought for the Vahdaar, the opposing side. This shifted the tide and ended the God War as, in the elven belief, the gods trapped themselves in an isolated plane away from Uteria.

Given Rom's importance to the elves, it is odd that the Unelesia Church paints him as little more than a faithful soldier to Tanthias and an unquestioning servant of the One.

Volinus

The god of weather, whose fickle desires can bring bounty or destruction. The elves see him as uncaring but always depict him as ultimately faithful to his brother Tanthias.

Unelesia priests often invoke Volinus as a servant of god who punishes the sinful and awards the faithful.

Moorukk

The god of death and how they are viewed is often a reflection of the culture and its core hopes. The elves see Moorukk as a figure who watches over the spirits of the passed. Often depicted as having multiple faces, they do not judge, but instead guide the deceased to the next plane.

In the Unelesia Church, Moorukk is the angel of judgement, decided how your soul will be reincarnated.

Dwyrgoth

The elves see Dwyrgoth as the great enemy. He is chaos and violence. He heard the song of Creation and wanted it to cease. The Creator sang, weaving Dwyrgoth out of the song. This is the only instance in any elven myth of something beings forsaken from the song of Creation. And still he existed, a force against the universe.

The Unelesia Church sees Dwyrgoth as the epitome of evil, the dark part of the soul that we try to silence, but can not get rid of.

Trund

The elves see Trund as an ally, an artist, and a maker who helped form the worlds of this plane. The Creator gifted his greatest tools to Trund, and allowed him freedom to make. The Dworvs hold Trund in a sacred place, to the right hand of the Creator, higher even than Tanthias.

The Unelesia Church sees Trund as the hand of God, and while Trund helped make things, he could not without the power of the One.

Lunare

The goddess of nature and the wild. For all the order that Trund brings, his sister Lunare brings things that grow and live on their own. The elves hold special love for Lunare and much of their magic mimics their myths of her. One of the greatest elven heroes even once became romantically entangled with her, a tragic story of mortal and immortal love.

Lunare also held a special place in the hearts of early polytheistic religions of the terans, so the Unlesia Church has distanced itself from any mention of reference of her.

Claravis

Claravis holds domain over magic with her twin brother Arcist. Claravis holds the balance of magic above all else. Any use of magic should be intentional and calculated. The elves follow her example, finding a balance between themselves and the world around them.

The Unelesia Church believes that magic comes directly from the One to his chosen, so Claravis and any belief in her as a power as independent from the One is heresy.

Arcist

Arcist believes in power, and that might is the true nature of the Song. He disapproves of his sister and wishes her harm in all ways.

The elves see Arcist as a balance to his sister, as most things in the universe need a counterbalance, but they dislike him and his doctrine.

Both the Dworven and Unelesia Church see Arcist as a demon under the power of Dwyrgoth.

Kala

Kala weaves the strands of time and produces the fate of the world. The elves have a complex view of this, and the word fate does not exactly match the beliefs of the elves. Osa is the elven word that means that time flows to important points in a cone, and that the actions of the creatures working within this cone funnel into important points in time and space. If one had the vision to see all things working together, you would see how certain points become inevitable. Kala has the ability to see these movements, and records them.

The Unelesia Church sees Kala as little more than a chronicler for the One.

Orum

Orum came into being the moment the song began and will cease to be if the song ends. The elves believe that Orum was once just a wanderer among the stars, enjoying the Song of creation. He came upon Kala, and swooned at her vision. He entreated her to come to travel with him, but she denied. He left, continuing to move among the stars. His mind thought back on her, and it was then that he became aware of the past, which then created an awareness of time. This is how the elves see Orum, a being of the Song, weaving and dancing through existence.

The Dworven and Unelesia Churches have a much darker view of Orum, that he is a timekeeper, counting down to the end of the Song, and the end of Creation.

Soth

Soth is mentioned in a few myths of the elves, but none for worship. Soth is the god of decay and loss. He is not an active god but more of a scavenger, feeding on the things that have lost life. There is mention of him being loyal to Dwygoth, as the destruction that god brings feeds the loathsome deity.

The Unelesia Church has little mention beyond Soth being a servant of evil.

Kaldrath

Kaldrath is a new deity, one born on Uteria and was a living soul. He brought about the end of the Eldar Empire, and, in doing so, fulfilled a prophecy. It was said that the One will bring balance to the world, and for the followers of Kaldrath, the destruction of the Eldar overlords was a balance. He also gained great power in this destruction, with some saying that he was granted this by the gods. The elves' beliefs are varied around Kaldrath, from seeing him as a savior or seeing him as a demigod-tyrant. He was imprisoned in a limbo realm, bound in magics and iron.

Some humans have also come to see Kaldrath as a savior, a liberating force that gained power and knowledge to bring a new order to the world.

The Unlesia Church does not acknowledge the existence of Kaldrath.

Jump into adventure with the free Sagaborn 1.5 Starter Kit!



SagaBorn.com/starter

Fun for all ages.

THE VINTAGE RPG PODCAST



Vintage RPG is an exploration of the world of tabletop roleplaying games: new and old, familiar and strange.

Available wherever you get to your Podcasts.

vintagerpg.com