

THE WORLD OF Dragon Brigade

Aeronne is a fantasy world of swashbuckling action, intrigue, and romance. Magic is commonplace, and *Aeronne*'s kingdoms are built upon massive floating continents suspended in the Breath of God. Battles involve airships and flying fortresses reinforced with magical constructs. While the Church seeks to control and restrict the most dangerous uses of magic, kings and dukes engage their master crafters to produce greater instruments of war, and their spies to steal these discoveries from their opponents.

Years ago the finest military company in *Aeronne*, the Dragon Brigade, was disbanded by the King of Rosia, who considered them a relic of the past. The dragons they rode into battle returned to their own noble courts; the soldiers and officers turned to lives as mercenaries or simply retired. One decorated dragon rider, Lord Captain Stephano de Guichen, continues to fight for causes he believes in as the leader of the Cadre of the Lost, a rag-tag crew of misfits and mercenaries. Lately, however, he's had to settle for causes that keep the Cadre's coffers from being empty.

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY
Cam Banks and Chris Pierson

EDITED BY
Amanda Valentine

ILLUSTRATED BY
James Mosingo

GRAPHIC DESIGN BY
Kevin T. Stein

DRAGON BRIGADE RPG CREATED BY
Cam Banks, Dave Chalker, Tracy Hurley, Dain Lybarger,
Philippe-Antoine Ménard, Adam Minnie,
Andrew Peregrine, and Chris Pierson

BASED ON THE DRAGON BRIGADE NOVELS BY
Margaret Weis and Robert Krammes

MISSION BACKGROUND

The Cadre of the Lost has received a commission from the Crown to investigate reports of banditry in the inner provinces of Rosia near the Dragon Duchies. The bandits have been raiding merchant ships for several months now, but they recently struck a ship flying royal colors and robbed a tax collector who's a distant cousin of the king himself.

The bandits are holding the tax collector hostage, threatening to kill him if any direct military reprisal occurs. There's evidence that some of the bandits, possibly including those in charge of the band, are Trundlers—Aeronne's nomadic gypsy people—and a pistol lost by one of them appears to bear the distinctive sigil of the Dragon Brigade. Because of the proximity of the attacks to the Dragon Duchies and the nature of the pistol, the Dragon Dukes may have valuable information about the identity or location of the bandits.

Stephano, as a former member of the Brigade, is offered a modest fee to travel to the Dragon Duchies and safely return the tax collector, as well as apprehend the leaders of the bandits—dead or alive. His friendship with Trundler sisters Miri and Gythe makes the Cadre the perfect choice, as they can lend insight in Trundler matters. As always, his childhood friend Rodrigo and the stalwart Dag Thorgrimmon accompany him on the mission.

Brother Gaspard is joining the Cadre for this mission as an observer for the Royal Army and the Church; he's under orders to invoke religious censure against anyone of noble blood who might be acting to protect or aid the bandits.

The Heroes begin the mission in Miri and Gythe's houseboat, the *Cloud Hopper*, sailing the Breath toward the mountains of Rosia...



THE RULES

PLAYERS

This is a game for up to seven people. Six players take on the Heroes of the Cadre of the Lost: former Dragon Brigade officer **Stephano**, rakish courtier **Rodrigo**, mighty **Dag**, airship pilot and healer **Miri**, mute crafter **Gythe**, and Church liaison **Brother Gaspard**. The seventh person is the **Gamemaster**, who uses this book to present the mission to the players and rolls dice for the villains and other supporting characters. If you don't have seven people, some players can take on multiple Heroes, or the Gamemaster can play them as supporting characters. Hero Sheets for the Cadre of the Lost are provided at the end of this book.

DICE

The **DRAGON BRIGADE Roleplaying Game** uses dice of various sizes: four-sided (D4), six-sided (D6), eight-sided (D8), ten-sided (D10), and twelve-sided (D12). You will want several of each on hand, especially D6s and D8s. You might also want some glass beads or poker chips for **Plot Points**.

Dice are used to represent the value of **Traits** which are how we define characters and objects in the game. The die attached to a Trait is called a **die rating**. If there are multiple dice associated with the Trait, the quantity comes before the D.

Examples: DRAGON BRIGADE VETERAN D10, ENORMOUS PISTOL D8, BANDITS 2D6, ONE-ARMED D4

TAKING ACTION

As a player, you make decisions for your Hero in response to the challenging situations the Gamemaster presents. Whenever your Hero takes action, you choose two of your five **Action Traits**—COURAGE, FAITH, GUILF, REASON, and VIGOR—to form your **Action Pool**. You can use one Action Trait twice, instead of two different Action Traits.

The Gamemaster picks up dice based on what your Hero is up against. This is usually a difficulty die (D6 being average, D8 hard, and D10 perilous) and one or more dice based on Traits possessed by the opposition or the situation.

Usually, the Gamemaster rolls his dice first and totals them up. This is called **setting the stakes**. You then roll and total up your own dice from your Action Pool, hoping to **raise the stakes** by rolling higher. If you raise the stakes, your Hero succeeds in the action you were hoping to take. If you fail to raise the stakes, something else happens.

Sometimes you or the Gamemaster get more than two dice. In those cases, you add the two highest to set or raise the stakes. You can spend a Plot Point to add in your third-highest die to your total. Spending a second Plot Point lets you add in your fourth-highest die, and so on.

Certain Action Trait pairs are common. COURAGE + VIGOR is often used for battle involving bravery and physical action; FAITH + REASON is the default pair for crafting magic, and so on. For this mission, all the dice are figured out for you. Each section of the mission tells you the dice the Gamemaster needs to roll and what Action Traits the players should roll for their Heroes. Each time the mission calls for an action, we give you an idea of what happens when you succeed, and what happens when things don't go your way.

What Do the Action Traits Mean?

- ✧ COURAGE represents bravery, will, and mental fortitude.
- ✧ FAITH represents conviction and strength of spirit.
- ✧ GUILF represents craftiness, deception, and wits.
- ✧ REASON represents intelligence and the ability to understand.
- ✧ VIGOR represents physical endurance, strength, and effort.

COMPLICATIONS

If you roll a 1 on any of your dice, the Gamemaster introduces a **Complication**. Whether your Hero succeeds or fails at the action, a Complication means something else has gone wrong, making life difficult for the Heroes. Each section of this mission has a list of Complication ideas for when a 1 is rolled, such as **Pistol Misfire** or **Suspicious Diplomat**.

When the Gamemaster introduces a Complication, he hands the player a Plot Point; this is the main way for players to gain Plot Points. The Gamemaster notes down the Complication—sticky notes or index cards work well for this—and adds a “D6” next to it. For the rest of the mission, if that Complication comes into play, the Gamemaster gets to roll an extra D6. The Gamemaster may also choose to step up an existing Complication by one die size. A D6 becomes a D8, and a D8 becomes a D10. No Complication may step up to more than a D12.

If the Gamemaster rolls a 1 on his dice, any player can spend a Plot Point to step an existing Complication back to a smaller size die. A D6 becomes a D4, and a D4 goes away.

ASSETS

Players can use Plot Points to create **Assets**. An **Asset** is something beneficial—improvised tools, helpful circumstances, etc.—that any player can use to help the Heroes out on the mission. When introduced, the player notes down the Asset and writes a D6 next to it. For as long as that Asset is around, any player who can justify it may use the Asset to get an extra D6.

If the player spends two Plot Points, the Asset lasts until the end of the mission (or until something happens in the story that would make it go away). Otherwise, it lasts until the end of the current engagement and goes away when the next engagement starts.

If you use an Asset in a roll and your roll is a success, you may spend a Plot Point to step the Asset up by one die size. You can't step an Asset up more than a D12.

DISTINCTIONS, SPECIALTIES, AND TALENTS

All Heroes have some special skills, tricks, and abilities they can use; they're noted on the Hero Sheets. **Talents** are special rule-changing tricks that often require you to spend a Plot Point; **Distinctions** and **Specialties** usually give you more dice to roll. Your Hero may have one or more **Signature Assets**—these behave like the Assets you create using Plot Points, but they don't go away and they're free to use if they're on your sheet. You can step these Assets up with Plot Points during the mission, but they always reset back to their default dice at the end.

TESTS AND CONTESTS

Most of the time when you're rolling dice, it's called a Test. This is a simple case of one side setting the stakes and the other trying to raise them. Sometimes you want to represent a back-and-forth exchange of action, which is called a Contest. In a Contest, once one side has raised the stakes, the opposition may attempt to raise them higher. This goes back and forth until one side fails to raise the stakes or decides to give in. If you fail, you usually take Stress and are at the mercy of the opposition; if you give in, the other side wins but you pick up a Plot Point, a D6 Complication, and the freedom to decide where you end up.

STRESS

Throughout the mission, the Cadre of the Lost is challenged by dangerous opponents and thrust into difficult situations. There's plenty of opportunity to get bruised, battered, and even broken. This takes the form of a special kind of Complication called **Stress**. Each time you fail to raise the stakes in a Test or Contest and there's an opportunity for you to take some fallout from it, the Gamemaster may apply a Stress die to one of the Action Traits you used in the Test or Contest.

The size of the Stress die depends on the action, but it's usually the third-highest rolling die in the Gamemaster's pool. If there is no third die, the Stress defaults to a D4. If there was already Stress on the Action Trait, the Gamemaster may either step the Stress die up to a larger die size (if the new Stress is the same size or smaller) or replace the existing Stress die with the new one.

The Gamemaster may also step up existing Stress by one instead of adding a Complication when you roll a 1 on your dice. You still gain a Plot Point in this case, just as if he had activated a Complication.

When your Hero uses that Action Trait and the Stress die is D6 or larger, the Gamemaster adds the Stress die to his own pool to represent the increased difficulty facing your Hero. If your Stress die is a D4, you must include it in your Action Pool instead of the Gamemaster rolling it against you.

In addition, if the Stress die is equal or greater than the Action Trait it's assigned to, your Hero is **shaken** for the rest of the engagement and only keeps the highest rolling die of his Action Pool when that Action Trait is one of his dice in the pool. If your Hero is already shaken, he is **stricken** and is out of action for the rest of the engagement.

Sometimes it makes sense for a kind of Stress to apply to an action even when the Action Trait it's applied to isn't included in your Action Pool. For instance, the Gamemaster might decide that VIGOR Stress should apply to a COURAGE + GUILF roll, or FAITH Stress applies to a REASON + REASON roll. In these cases, the Gamemaster must give the player a Plot Point in order to use it against the Hero.

What Does Stress Mean?

Stress represents not just injury or exhaustion but mental and even spiritual crisis. It means something different depending on what Action Trait it's assigned to.

COURAGE Stress is fear and doubt, when events give rise to timidity, hesitation, or outright panic.

FAITH Stress is despair, melancholy, and hopelessness, when the spirit is weakened by anguish.

GUILF Stress reflects being tricked, deluded, or misdirected, making it harder to bring your own cunning to bear.

REASON Stress represents confusion, indecision, or madness, a paralysis brought about by shocking or unexpected circumstances.

VIGOR Stress is pain, weariness, or physical trauma, usually caused by exertion or injury.

Some of these types of Stress may seem to overlap. GUILF and REASON Stress, for instance, may resemble each other, while FAITH and COURAGE Stress could be caused by the same event. When in doubt, remember that Stress usually represents either the opposite of the Action Trait's qualities or what happens when that Action Trait turns upon itself.

Recovering Stress

To get rid of Stress or remove the shaken and stricken conditions, you need to take a **Recovery Action** at the beginning of the next engagement. Some characters, such as Miri, can help you recover earlier. Here's how this works.

If you took Stress in the previous engagement and you are not stricken, you may spend a Plot Point to step back all of the Stress you've taken by one—D8 becomes D6, D6 becomes D4, and D4 goes away. You need to describe how you're shaking off the pain, steeling your reserves, or clearing your mind of confusion and despair. If this reduces the Stress die below the associated Action Trait, your shaken condition goes away; otherwise, you remain shaken. You may spend as many Plot Points as you want, stepping back your Stress dice each time.

To recover when you're stricken, when you don't have Plot Points, or in the middle of an engagement, you need someone to take a Recovery Action for you. Because this can vary from first aid to counseling to spiritual assistance, backed with magic or not, we treat it as a general Test and rely on the player performing the recovery to explain how she's giving relief. Recovery Actions are generally only necessary when someone is shaken or stricken; if the Stress hasn't progressed that far, it probably isn't serious enough to require a healer's attention.

That player uses the following action, with the Gamemaster setting the stakes.

TEST: RECOVERY ACTION

Gamemaster (set stakes): D6 (if at rest) OR D8 (if traveling) OR D10 (if in a battle) + all target Hero's Stress dice (from all Action Traits)

Player (raise stakes): FAITH + REASON, REASON + REASON, or COURAGE + REASON, plus any Specialties or Distinctions. Matt's Healer Talent lets her roll in her Channeler Specialty and add the three highest rolling dice together, not just the two highest.

Success: Remove one Stress die or step back all Stress dice by one. With an Extraordinary Success, remove two Stress dice or step back all Stress dice by two.

Failure: Step back one Stress die by one, but step up another Stress die by one (or, if there are no other Stress dice, add one at D4 to the Trait of your choice).

Possible Complications: If the Hero rolls a 1, activate the Complication with a Plot Point and choose one of the following at D6: SHAKY HANDS, GUILTY CONSCIENCE, LOW SUPPLIES.

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS AND VILLAINS

The Gamemaster plays the parts of all of the supporting characters in the story, including the villains and other opposing figures the Heroes must face to achieve victory in their mission. These characters aren't as fully detailed as the Heroes. Some of them are only represented by one or two Traits, which the Gamemaster uses when rolling dice to oppose the Heroes. Others may have several Traits and one or two special tricks of their own much like the Talents the Heroes possess.

The Traits provided give you an idea of how to portray each supporting character, since they often describe personality, background, or other helpful elements. When a supporting character or villain appears in this mission, we also provide their motivation and preferred course of action to make it easier for you to play them.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I WIN?

This is a roleplaying game, which means all the players are acting the parts of heroic characters in a fantasy adventure. Your Heroes face difficult challenges against dangerous foes, but even failure can lead to interesting and exciting outcomes. What matters is not how the mission ends, but what hair-raising twists and turns the story takes to get there. So play your part, roll some dice, and have fun!

IS THAT ALL?

Not remotely, but never fear. You have what you need to get started. Throughout the mission, we'll introduce new rules as they come into play. If possible, provide the players with copies of these rules; permission is granted to print and share this content for the purposes of playing DRAGON BRIGADE: *Opening Salvo*.