

Grail Quest

Part 3 of the Samhain Trilogy

Overview

Just as the heroes decide to leave the cursed barony of Samhain, a young knight stumbles from the forest and claims to be one of the character's long-lost grandfather. The man was lost in the mythical realm of the elves and swears to have seen the holy grail itself. Soon, several rival knights show up to find the entrance to the fey realm and take the grail as their price. The return of this artifact would have grave repercussions on the political structure of the Empire and it is up to the PCs to decide how they want to become involved.

Basic Adventure Concept

The adventure is based mainly on the conflict and intrigues between the different knights who quest for the grail. The journey into the fey realm itself is the climax but takes only a small time slot in the whole tale.

The progress of each knight is tracked in points and the first one to reach the end of his scale can enter the fey realm. However, the others might not stand by idly and try to ambush him before or after his grail quest.

Introducing the Heroes

200 years after his disappearance during the reign of Constantinus III, a knight called Ethelbert von Hirschhaupt has returned from his grail quest. The man was long wandering through the **realm of Faerie** and was even able to get a glimpse at the grail before he was driven off by Elven knights in charge of guarding the grail. He swears on his honor and there is enough evidence to suggest that he is really 200 years old, e.g. the lost signet ring of house Hirschhaupt and some insider knowledge that a lesser knight can confirm.

Ethelbert is found by a peasant, half-dead in

the forest. Rumors quickly spread about the grail and knights come flocking to Samhain. The heroes might just hear about this fantastic news or you might construct a **more personal involvement** based on their aspects:

- Ethelbert could be an ancestor in *their* house.
- A healer PC might be called to help
- Some aspect of a PC might connect him to the grail quest, Faerie etc.

The Competing Knights

There are different knights who compete in the search for the grail, mostly coming from nearby provinces. You should **make checks for them on the challenge** for finding the entrance to the fey realm and **make sure that your players get to hear about the progress** these knights make.

Lord Alric - The Military Challenge

Lord Alric von Drachengold is the ruler of the **Night Baronies**, a harsh fief ruled with an iron fist and home to many creatures of the dark. Alric is a pale blond man, slightly skinny for a knight. His face looks fatigued but his eyes betray his true bestial nature. Alric is a *feared and cruel lord with a love for burning people at the stake*.

Yet, what people outside of the Night Baronies do not know is that Alric is a Vampire. However, unlike in folklore, vampires are not exclusively creatures of the night and neither are they undead. Instead, Vampirism is a rare flaw in a bloodline that grants the afflicted *inhuman speed and agility* at the price of *sensitivity to light*. Also, vampires can *drain blood to gain strength*. This means that after a vampire has bitten a victim and has drained its blood, it will be stronger and more robust for about a day.

Family Crest: A blue dragon on a quartered field of black and red is the crest of Drachengold. The red fields contain tiny oak leaves.

Family Motto: "Fire is the best teacher!"

Personal Motto: "The Stake is the best

teacher!”

Grail Quest Motivation: *Alric wants personal power, nothing more, nothing less. With the grail, the vampire has a strong claim on the Imperial throne and this is his ultimate ambition.*

Resources:

- **Sir Dankwart**, a *sadist who is deathly afraid of his master* (use lesser knight stats)
- 4 squads of 10 swordsmen
- 2 squads of 10 archers with longbows

Activities/Tactics:

- Alric will frequently go out **hunting** at night to drink blood in order to keep up his strength.
- Alric will mostly **harass and intimidate other knights** in order to make progress in his quest, stealing the results of their research.

Lord Bentos von Drachenhort – Money will Buy the Grail for a Good Cause

Bentos is the **lord of Noel**, the fief west of Samhain. He comes from a Drachengold sideline that split from the main house for reasons that are unclear today. Noel is a place of great riches but is plagued by frequent raids of creatures from the depth of the sea as well as their hybrid spawn living on the coast. Bentos hopes to heal the many who suffer wounds in the constant fight and maybe find a cure for the hybrids.

Lord Bentos von Drachenhort is a *kind old lord who wants to heal, not hurt*. For this purpose, he makes liberal use of his *free access to the Drachenhort riches*. Bentos is a distant relative of Alric and *has a great dislike for that man* who embodies the worst aspects of knighthood. Some players might feel that Bentos is too good to be true but he is exactly what he claims and kindhearted characters might actually decide to support him.

Family Crest: A red dragon on a quartered field of black and blue. The blue fields contain tiny gold coins.

Family Motto: “Bring the fire to the suffering!”

Grail Quest Motivation: *Use the grail to heal people.*

Resources:

- **Sir Pippin von Drachenhort**, *nephew and loyal bodyguard of Bentos* (use lesser knight stats)
- **The red diamond of Zelkarnia**, a very valuable stone that represents his *Treasure Hoard* stunt.
- 2 squads of 10 swordsmen
- 1 squad of 10 crossbowmen

Activities/Tactics:

- Pay people for information about the grail (This will create an aspect for the search)
- Send his men on searches into the forest. (Who use their rather low skill)

Sir Helfried von Eichenfall

Sir Helfried is the underdog in the grail quest, a man of little resources and less strategic vision. He will blunder about and try very strange things that do not lead to success. He is known as a true knight but also as a bit of staunch traditionalist and many think he would be a poor ruler.

Family Crest: A black multibranch oak-tree on a split white and red field.

Family Motto: Faith never falls!

Grail Quest Motivation: Power for the family

Resources:

- 2 squads of 10 swordsmen
- 1 squad of 10 crossbowmen
- 1 squad of 5 rangers (who also have Investigation+1 and Survival+1)

Activities/Tactics:

- Talks to the weirdest people in town including well-known charlatans (Which yields nothing but might create fun distractions)

- Apes the activities of the player characters but with poor skill.

The Rabble

There are three lesser knights. They will not play a major role in the story and have no resources to speak of. Yet, they might be used as target's of assessments or be outfitted with aspects that complement those of the player characters. Here are some names you can use but make sure to leave them as **canvases for the players**.

- Duncard von Tintenfass
- Helmwart von Bocksbein
- Götz von Hinterseits

Challenges of the Grail Quest

Finding the grail is a relatively linear activity. However, it is complicated by the intrigues and machinations of the other knights, which is the focus of this story.



Find the Entrance to the Fey Realm

This step is mere leg work. The lost knight has described the site in great detail and it is merely a question of time to find it. You can either require 5 skill checks (Investigation) or run this as a conflict against the problem¹. Whoever solves this problem first will find the entrance.

¹ As explained in the Book of Challenges - <http://www.hardpoints.de/html/fate.html>

Otherwise, the heroes get into a long-term conflict with this problem, which attacks all PCs back either through Tediousness or Physical Danger. These attacks deal an automatic consequence, any stress is lost after the day.

Finding the Entrance to the Fey Realm	
Discovery Stress:	□□□□□
Fate Points:	4
Consequence:	
Attack with:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation • Survival (Supporting characters only) • Contacting (Supporting characters only)
Skills:	
	Complexity +2
	Tediousness +3
	Physical Danger +1
Aspects:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The forest is home to strange beasts • The feys' spells hide the entrance • The other knights do their best to stop you by setting up traps

Unlock the Entrance

The fey gate is a **ring of mushrooms** in the deepest part of the forest. Light hardly ever reaches the ground here and illumination is provided by palely glowing lichen growing on the old rotten trees. The place has the following aspects:

- Poor illumination
- Nerve-wracking silence
- Fey magic confuses the mind

Getting through the gate is just a formality but **should be based on an aspect of one of the characters** who has to roll the most appropriate skill. If no aspect really applies, the youngest and least belligerent character has to roll Resolve to enter through the gate.

Optional Added Drama: If you feel your players are going too fast, you can declare that

the gate only **opens at a specific time**. During the wait, you might let one of the other parties stumble across the heroes. They might not immediately recognize the gate and the heroes must pass a social conflict to hide the truth and get the others going. Or they might just go for the martial option right away.

The **fey realm itself is a land of bright colors and exaggerated natural features**. Its natives are elf-like creatures who will first use stern words and then violence to remove intruders to their lands.

Steal the Grail from the Fey

The area near the gate is guarded by **two fey knights**, beautiful creatures with pointed ears and greenish skin. The two have taken a *strategic position on a hill top*, 3 zones from the gate. They are protected by **three groups of minions** in the form of nature spirits. They will try to scare intruders away and then resort to violence. They will use nature magic to tie the heroes in place and then fire at them with arrows.

After the guards are defeated, the heroes can roam the land freely. There are a couple of civilians but these will not pose any threat. The grail is found in a shrine that is built into the heart of a huge and ancient oak tree.



Return to the Capital

If any of the other knights survive, they will try to stop the heroes on their way to the capital – some with friendly words, others with force. If the heroes manage to navigate this maze and return to the capital, they will be rewarded by the Emperor with a fief and become his special advisors on political matters – for the better or the worse. Ideally, there should be a **showdown combat** with one of the other knights, most likely Alric.

Keeping the Grail Secret:

- If the heroes manage to keep the Grail secret (through **Deceit or Stealth** vs. a *generic commoner* with skill level +1), they will have it easier in the final combat. They will stumble on **guard posts** but they have to fight only a fraction of the enemy knight. Unless one of them has an aspect to justify you bringing in the main bad guy, **they all get a FATE point** for you going so much for coincidence.
- **If they fail**, one of the enemy knights will actively seek them out with his full force for a climatic battle.

Special Plot Twist: If you want, there can be 1d6+1 years that have passed since the heroes entered the Fey Realm. Only the most hateful or determined knights would still wait for them after such a long time.

Not An Island

The heroes do not act in isolation, instead they are part of a network of competing interests and different parties. You should make sure that after any major action the heroes become aware that there are others acting in the same direction. The basic grail story is relatively simple, it only comes alive through the encounters and actions of the other knights.

Encounters with the Competition

During the grail quest there are several encounters with competing knights. Not all of these encounters will actually take place, they

depend on where your players are going and what their choices are.

- **Espionage:** An enemy knight enters the characters' camp or rooms and starts asking questions singling out a character who appears to be a weak talker. This is a social conflict that might end in the enemy coming up to the same level of the characters in the quest.
- **Sabotage:** An enemy knight sends his right hand man to sabotage/steal supplies or material in the characters' camp. This will result in the characters losing time unless they steal resources back or find some funding – Bentos would be just the right ally for that but what is his price?
- **Forest Encounter:** The heroes encounter another knight and his entourage in the forest, far away from the eyes of others. Will this be a civil encounter or an opportunity to get rid of competition?
- **Courtly or City Encounter:** The heroes meet a knight at court or in the city and get an opportunity to see what he is doing to get the grail. They might steal information or create alliances.

Events that Drive the Story

These events will trigger the interest of your players. They will find out about them by chance – even if they stay in the darkest forest, some chatty woodcutter will share them with the heroes. You can pick events that you think will fit the story best at that moment or you can roll randomly (1d6):

1. **Clash of Opponents:** Two competing knights are preparing for a showdown and are looking for allies. There are many conflicting rumors about the where and how. Drachengold and Drachenhort are very good candidates for this but any other knights the heroes met might also qualify.
2. **Unexpected Help:** One of the characters gets into deep trouble due to one of his aspects and gets help from one of his

competitors – and not necessarily one of the “good” ones.

3. **Major Breakthrough:** One of the other knights achieves a major breakthrough and his men get drunk and celebrate. This might be a good opportunity to steal information.
4. **Alliance:** Two of the other knights join forces and plan to sort out things later. The other knights get nervous and start to look for allies themselves
5. **Fey Attacks and False Accusations:** The Fey attack the knight who seems to be farthest in his quest and leave his dead body hanging in the trees. The heroes are the first to find him – and are spotted by a local woodcutter.
6. **Mysterious Murder:** Alric drains one of the lesser knights and leaves him dead in a back alley. This should give the players the feeling that they have to watch their back!

Wrap-Up

If you want, your heroes can now advance to the highest echelons of power. They might be granted a fief or gain other great rewards. However, if they grasp for the Imperial throne, they are in for a surprise. Because, though many people will support them (and not all without ulterior motive) a civil war will erupt that tears the Empire apart and will cause destruction and mayhem on a level that might feel morally strong characters feel quite bad.

Dramatis Personae

Alric von Drachengold

Alric von Drachengold (Good Elite)	
Physical Stress:	□□□□□□
Composure Stress:	□□□□□□□□
Fate Points: 6	Scale: Small (2)
Consequences: 3*	Mi: Ma: Sv: Ex:
Skills:	
Resolve +3 Intimidation +2, Melee Weapons +2 Athletics +1, Alertness +1*, Empathy +1, Endurance+1	
Aspects:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feared and cruel lord with a love for burning people at the stake • Gains strength through drinking blood • Inhuman agility and speed • Bright light irritates his eyes • Power hungry 	
Stunts:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unyielding: 1 Fate – turn physical into 2 Composure Stress • Military Training (+1 damage) • Ready for Anything (+1 initiative) • Major Whirlwind Attack (spend 1 FATE to attack all targets in zone) 	
Equipment/Notes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy Armor (-2, 1 minor, 1 major, 1 severe consequence, Heavy, Noisy, Hot) • Long Sword (+4* damage) • Warhorse (ill tempered) 	

Bentos von Drachenhort

Bentos von Drachenhort (Good Elite)	
Physical Stress:	□□□□□□
Composure Stress:	□□□□□□
Fate Points: 12	Scale: Small (2)
Consequences: 3	Mi: Ma: Sv: Ex:
Skills:	
Resources +3 Rapport +2, Empathy +2 Investigation +1, Alertness +1, Melee Weapons +1	
Aspects:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kind old lord who wants to heal, not hurt • Free access to the Drachenhort riches • Old and frail man with a kind face • Almost everybody likes Bentos at first sight • Strong dislike for Lord Alric • The grail will help to heal people! 	
Stunts:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money Talks (Use Resources instead of Contacting) • Treasure Hoard (+2 on a single Resource roll per session) • Five-Minute Friend (gain staunch ally for a FATE point) 	
Equipment/Notes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy Armor (-2, 1 minor, 1 major, 1 severe consequence, Heavy, Noisy, Hot) • Long Sword (+3 damage) • Warhorse 	

Helfried von Eichenfall

Lesser Knight (Good Elite)	
Physical Stress:	□□□□□□
Composure Stress:	□□□□□□
Fate Points: 9	Scale: Small (2)
Consequences: 3	Mi: Ma: Sv: Ex:
Skills: Melee Weapons +3, Athletics +3 Alertness +2, Ranged Weapons +2, Endurance +1, Resolve +1	
Aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • True followers of the knightly virtues • Poor leader and planner • Veteran of a bloody family feud • Takes damage without flinching 	
Stunts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weapon Specialist Swords (+2 damage) 	
Equipment/Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Armor (-1, 1 minor, 1 major consequence, Noisy, Hot) • Long Sword (+5* damage) • Sling (+1 damage, 1 zone, fast) • Warhorse 	

Lesser Knight

These are stats to use for the three lesser knights that are also involved in the quest and who make little meaningful progress.

Lesser Knight (Good Extra)	
Physical Stress:	□□□□□□
Composure Stress:	□□□□□□
Fate Points: 5	Scale: Small (2)
Consequences: 3	Mi: Ma: Sv: Ex:
Skills: Melee Weapons +3 Alertness +2, Athletics +2 Endurance +1, Ranged Weapons +1, Resolve +1	
Aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained as a knight • Limited resources of a minor house 	
Stunts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military Training (+1 damage) 	
Equipment/Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Armor (-1, 1 minor, 1 major consequence, Noisy, Hot) • Long Sword (+4* damage) • Warhorse (ill tempered) 	



Gynis - Fey Knight

Gynis (Good Elite)	
Physical Stress:	□□□□□
Composure Stress:	□□□□□□
Fate Points: 5	Scale: Small (2)
Consequences: 3	Mi: Ma: Sv: Ex:
Skills:	
Ranged Weapons +3, Athletics +3 Alertness +2*, Melee Weapons +2, Stealth +1, Resolve +1	
Aspects:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agile creature of the forest with highly tuned senses • Otherworldly, slightly unsettling beauty • Master of the bow • Knows the weak hearts of mankind 	
Stunts:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weapon Specialist Longbow (+2 damage) • Ready for Anything (+1 initiative) 	
Equipment/Notes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elven Chain Mail (-1, 1 minor, 1 major consequence, Hot) • Long Sword (+3 damage) • Longbow (+4* damage, 2 zones) 	

Melantir - Fey Knight

Melantir (Good Elite)	
Physical Stress:	□□□□□
Composure Stress:	□□□□□□
Fate Points: 5	Scale: Small (2)
Consequences: 3	Mi: Ma: Sv: Ex:
Skills:	
Nature +3 Alertness +2, Ranged Weapons +2 Stealth +1, Resolve +1, Melee Weapons +1	
Aspects:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agile creature of the forest with highly tuned senses • Otherworldly, slightly unsettling beauty • Skin is hard as tree bark • Knows the weak hearts of mankind 	
Stunts:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defensive Archery (Use Ranged Weapons skill to avoid ranged attacks) • Draw Power (Spend a FATE point to pass on a consequence to the surrounding plants – roll Nature to determine the amount of stress soaked up by this) 	
Equipment/Notes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elven Chain Mail (-1, 1 minor, 1 major consequence, Hot) • Long Sword (+3 damage) • Longbow (+2 damage, 2 zones) 	

Minions

These are the minions used by the various factions. You might want to go for more or less of these goons, depending on the number of characters in your group.

10 Swordsmen (Average Minions)	
Stress:	□□□□□□□□□□
Skills:	+4 Melee Weapons (+3 bonus)
Aspects:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not as well equipped as knights

10 Crossbowmen or Archers (Average Minions)	
Stress:	□□□□□□□□□□
Skills:	+4 Ranged Weapons (+3 bonus)
Aspects:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not as well equipped as knights

5 Rangers (Average Minions)	
Stress:	□□□□□□□□□□
Skills:	+4 Ranged/Melee Weapons (+3 bonus) +1 Survival +1 Investigation
Aspects:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not as well equipped as knights

10 Nature Spirits (Average Minions)	
Stress:	□□□□□□□□□□
Skills:	+4 Melee Weapons (+3 bonus)
Aspects:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small satyrs of mischievous nature

