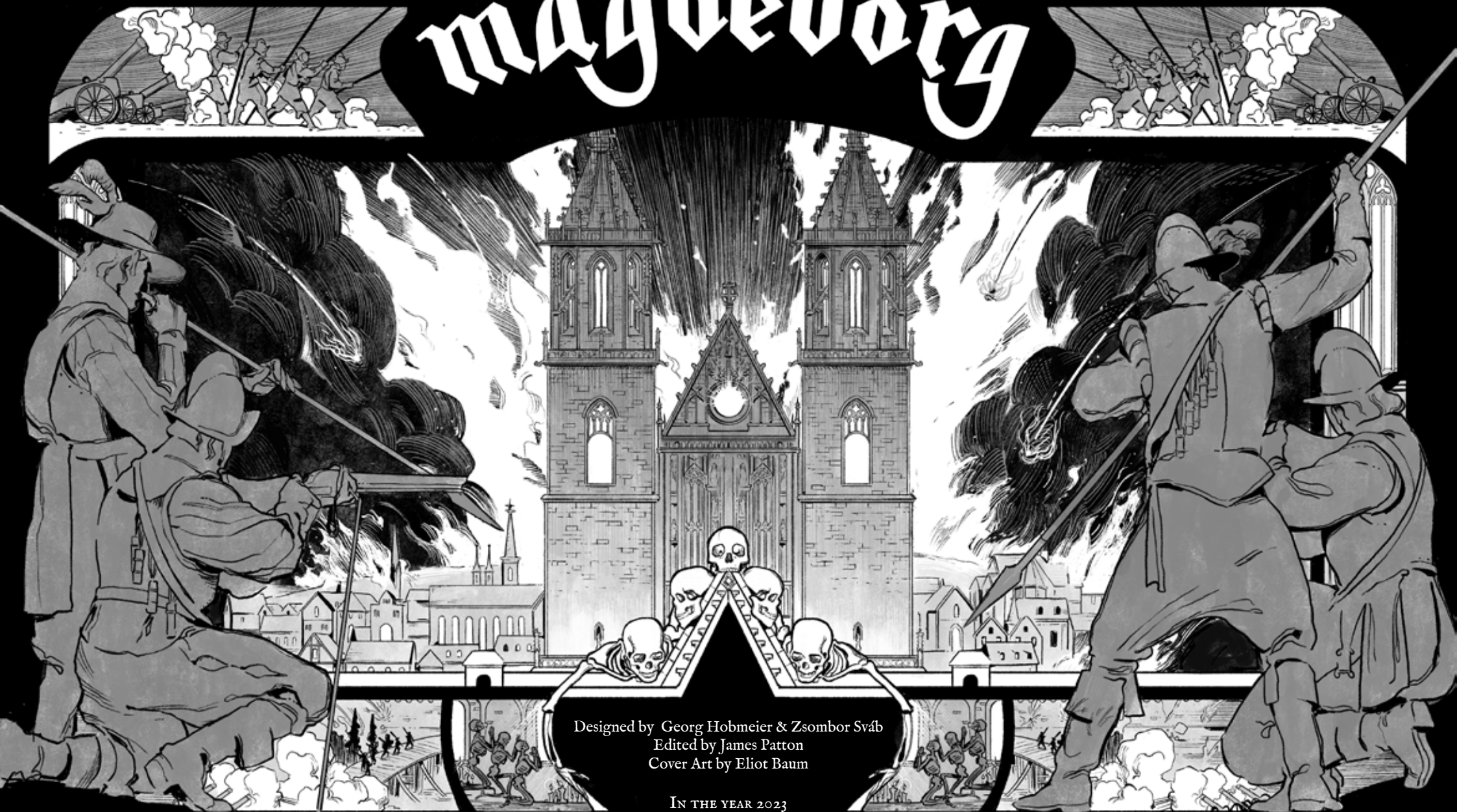


magdebörg



Designed by Georg Hobmeier & Zsombor Sváb
Edited by James Patton
Cover Art by Eliot Baum

IN THE YEAR 2023

A GAME BY

gold extra

BACKGROUND

“I believe that over twenty thousand souls were lost. It is certain that no more terrible work and divine punishment has been seen since the Destruction of Jerusalem. All of our soldiers became rich. God with us.”

Gottfried Heinrich Graf zu Pappenheim

The Thirty Years' War, which lasted from 1618 until 1648, is considered one of the most devastating conflicts in European history. By the time the imperial city of Magdeburg rose up against the Holy Roman Emperor, the war had been raging for about 13 years. At this point in the war, the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus decided to enter the war, landing in Pomerania on July 6, 1630. As a Lutheran Protestant, the Swedish king was seen as a potential ally in Magdeburg's struggle against the Catholic Habsburg emperor, Ferdinand II.

Not everyone trusted Adolphus's intentions, however. Some Protestant rulers within the Holy Roman Empire suspected Adolphus's motive for entering the war was to gain control of northern German ports, which would allow him to control commerce in the Baltic Sea. Despite this, Magdeburg had good reason to ally itself with him. Adolphus's army was one of the most efficient of the time, and he did not rely on mercenaries as much as other rulers did. Emboldened by Adolphus's intervention and the opportunity this represented, Magdeburg's city councilors declared their allegiance to Sweden.

Adolphus's army was primarily made up of Swedes, while the armies of the Holy Roman Emperor included a mix of soldiers from various countries. In a matter of months, imperial forces under the command of the Count of Tilly, advised by Field Marshal Pappenheim, laid siege to the city. Magdeburg hoped that Adolphus and his armies come to their rescue — a hope that would never be realized.

After two months of siege, and despite the Swedish victory in the Battle of Frankfurt on April 13, 1631, Pappenheim finally convinced Tilly, who had brought reinforcements, to storm the city. On May 20, 40,000 men under the personal command of Pappenheim began the assault. The Magdeburg citizens hoped in vain for a Swedish relief attack, which never came.

The attack on Magdeburg was brutal and devastating. The imperial forces bombarded the city with heavy artillery fire, then launched overwhelming infantry assaults. The city's defenders fought valiantly, but they were overrun by the sheer number of enemy soldiers. The citizens of Magdeburg suffered greatly during the attack; many were killed or wounded, and many more were taken captive. The city was left in ruins, much of its once-beautiful architecture destroyed.

Despite the tragedy of the attack on Magdeburg, the Thirty Years' War raged on for another 17 years. It is estimated as many as 8 million people died as a result of the conflict, which was fought between Protestants and Catholics across much of Europe. The war finally ended in 1648 with the signing of the Peace of Westphalia, which established the principle of state sovereignty and helped usher in a new era of European politics.

WHY MAGDEBÖRG?

THE 5TH COMMANDMENT SERIES IS A CYCLE OF SHORT GAMES THAT EXPLORE THE NATURE OF WAR AND KILLING. TO THIS END, WE USE VARIOUS TYPES OF GAMES TO ILLUMINATE WAR FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.

WHAT IS MAGDEBÖRG?

Magdebörg is a solo/co-op tabletop roleplaying game where you play an inhabitant of the City of Magdeburg during the sack of the city. It is heavily inspired by DARK FORT by Pelle Nilsson, the designer of MÖRK BORG, and many games that are Powered by the Apocalypse, such as Shawn Tomkin's Ironsworn.

In Magdebörg you will try to save as many people as possible within the city by getting them to the Cathedral where the invading forces will not follow.

This is not an easy task. Expect to fail.

HOW TO PLAY?

In Magdebörg you will be presented with Scenes where you can make a decision. To execute that decision, you will mostly roll dice. (These are polyhedral dice, with more than six sides; we recommend picking up a full set from your local hobby shop).

Rather than explaining the rules ahead of time, Magdebörg teaches its rules during the game itself, via the introduction scenes. For a comprehensive ruleset, refer to the **III. To The Cathedral!** chapter at the back of this zine.

Start reading from **0. 'Tis Lost, We Are Alone** to start the game.

O. 'TIS LOST, WE ARE ALONE

The council gather in the city hall as dawn approaches on the twentieth day of May. As the first hail of bombardment blasts the city walls, they panic. "Damn the King, we stand alone. There's only one solution: surrender now, or let Magdeburg burn!"

Roll 1d6 (a six sided dice) to decide how the game continues:

1- 3 TO THE WALLS!

You're a **Catholic mercenary officer** assaulting the city.

Today is the day. The reinforcements led by the Count of Tilly have arrived, and the city is ripe for the taking. Gathered in their captain's tent, your fellow officers are ready to lead a charge against the gate; you too feel the fire in your veins, ready to claim the city by force.

You now have **2 Reason**, and **2 Trickery**.

Roll for either **Reason** or **Trickery**. To do so, roll the **action die** (1d6 plus your skill value) and the **challenge dice** (two ten-sided dice). If the number on the action die is higher than both challenge dice, you **Succeed!** If the action die is higher than only one challenge die, you **Succeed at a Cost**. Otherwise, your action results in **Failure**.

REASON

Success - *Your deliberate words have found their way to your captain's ears. Reason and exemplary bravery will bring swift success at the gates.*

Continue with **1. Charge!**

Success at a Cost - *Although your captain agrees with your rational battle plan, the other officers disagree. You hear angry grumbling as you leave the tent.*

Continue with **2. Fog of War**

Failure - *Despite your reasoned arguments, your voice is swallowed by the loud officers around you. You are sent to guard the artillery.*

Continue with **3. Aim! Fire!**

TRICKERY

Success - *You know the officers around you: how they waste both manpower and supplies, their carelessness. When you inform the captain you gain some enemies, but also the position to lead the charge.*

Continue with **1. Charge!**

Success at a Cost - *You fabricate a web of lies, accusing your fellow officers of carelessness and incompetence. They are outraged by your allegations, but the captain insists you lead the charge. As you leave the tent, the officers' curses ring in your ears.*

Continue with **2. Fog of War**

Failure - *Your attempt to slander your fellow officers backfires. Your unfortunate choice of words, and the outrage they stoke, lands you the thankless task of guarding the artillery.*

Continue with **3. Aim! Fire!**



4- 6 WE CHANGED OUR MINDS!

You are **one of the defenders** of the city.

'Tis the hour of action! With no sign of reinforcements the city is left to fend for itself. The council urges you to deliver a message of peace to the Count of Tilly: maybe it's not too late! You rush out of the city hall, eager to find a swift way to reach the gates. Luckily the stables are nearby, and a guard is stationed there to keep an eye on the horses.

You now have **2 Reason**, and **2 Conflict**.

Roll for either **Reason** or **Conflict**. To do so, roll the **action die** (1d6 plus your skill value) and the **challenge dice** (two ten-sided dice). If the number on the action die is higher than both challenge dice, you **Succeed!** If the action die is higher than only one challenge die, you **Succeed at a Cost**. Otherwise, your action results in **Failure**.

REASON

Success - Rushing up to the guard, you acknowledge the fear in his eyes and lay out your desperate plan. Convinced, he fetches you a horse at once. There's no time to waste!

Continue with **4. To The Kröcken Gate!**

Success at a Cost - You argue for minutes until a second volley roars against the city walls. The terrified guard fetches a horse, but precious time has been wasted.

Continue with **5. Streets in Ruin**

Failure - The guard is not convinced, either by your words, or the council's seal on the missive. After an exchange of exasperated insults, you decide your feet will be swifter.

Continue with **6. Last Moments**

CONFLICT

Success - For the sake of the city you barrage the guard with an onslaught of authoritative bellows. Without even questioning your intentions he fetches a horse and sends you out of the city.

Continue with **4. To The Kröcken Gate!**

Success at a Cost - Your commanding voice certainly helps, but the guard insist on calling his sergeant over. After waving your credentials, and the council's seal, in their astonished faces you are finally granted a mount. Time has been wasted, but you're on your way to the walls.

Continue with **5. Streets in Ruin**

Failure - Your forceful demands fall on deaf, and doubting ears. As you reach for your credentials the guard scoffs, kicking you away in disgust. There's no time to waste: you decide to make a run for it.

Continue with **6. Last Moments**

1. CHARGE!

Leading your troops into battle, you approach the gate and are met with smoke, gunfire, and flames. Your fellow officers may envy your position, but suddenly an explosion tears open the gate, raining shrapnel and bullets. You feel a warm shock in your chest, then darkness takes you. The last thing you see is the silhouette of your killer, slipping away...

Continue with **I. Hold the Gate!** Your new character receives an additional **ITEM** (roll on the ITEMS TABLE) and **+3 hit points**.

2. FOG OF WAR

If you succeeded with **Reason**:

As you lead your troops towards the captured sconces in the city wall, rival officers bicker nearby. One charges before you, leading his men into a bloody rain of bullets and cannon fire. Opting for sound tactics, you leave cover with your fellow mercenaries just as the gates burst open from artillery fire. You usher your troops into cover, but as you slip into the lee off the gatehouse you are hit. In your last moments you lock eyes with your killer, a marksman on the barricades beyond the gate...

Continue with **I. Hold the Gate!** Your new character receives an additional **Axe** (3 uses, clears blocked path).

If you succeeded with **Trickery**:

You proudly lead your soldiers to the captured sconces in the city wall, waiting for the perfect moment to charge to the gate. Suddenly, a rival officer charges ahead of you, forcing you to order a charge and follow suit. As you run, the officer suddenly turns and levels his pistol at you, grinning. But before he can fire, you are hit by a gunshot from the walls above. You fall, hitting your head and losing consciousness as the face of your attacker fades to black.

Continue with **I. Hold the Gate!** Your new character receives an additional **+5 thaler**.

3. AIM! FIRE!

Since your efforts failed to get you closer to the front line – and to the bounties of a pillaged city – you have been tasked with guarding the artillery. Waves of gunfire graze the cover around you. Your worst misfortune is still to come: one of those damned bullets passes through your skull. In an instant all your thoughts are wiped away, leaving only the visage of someone in the distance...

Continue with **I. Hold the Gate!**, and see who killed you.





4. TO THE KRÖCKEN GATE!

You ride towards the city gate, grabbing a white sheet off a washing line to show as a sign of surrender. You ride past the barricade and approach the gatehouse, barking to the defenders to open the gate, when suddenly a cannon shot breaches the gate and a volley of fire and metal shreds both you and your horse. You fall to the ground, feeling death creeping towards you. The last thing you see is a face at the makeshift barricade.

Continue with **I. Hold the Gate!** Your new character receives an additional **ITEM** (roll on the ITEMS TABLE) and **+5 thaler**.

5. STREETS IN RUIN

If you succeeded with **Reason**:

Despite your horse the streets are chaotic, and impossible to navigate; people are panicking, rushing in different directions. Searching for a way through the crowd, you turn down an alley you recall from your childhood. Suddenly, an artillery shot devastates a nearby building. Your horse panics, throwing you off and burying you under the rubble. You hear muffled voices; as you are dragged out from under the heavy stones you glimpse a scared face, and pass out.

Continue with **I. Hold the Gate!** Your new character receives an additional **Shovel** (3 uses, clears blocked path).

If you succeeded with **Conflict**:

You ride your horse through the city's main street, but barricades and frightened people slow you down. You plead with them to clear a path, and some let you pass. After a few minutes you reach the gate; artillery has blasted it open, and mercenaries are pouring into the city. You turn your horse and hear gunshots. You fall to the ground, catching a glimpse of the mercenary who killed you. The last thing you see is a brave defender, fighting your killer.

Continue with **I. Hold the Gate!** Your new character receives an additional **halberd** (1d6+1).

6. LAST MOMENTS

Horseless, you have no recourse but to run for it. But while you are known as one of the swiftest in the city, you cannot outrun a massacre. Your luck runs out: one of the cannons hit a nearby building, dragging an avalanche of debris toward you. You suddenly glimpse a friend of yours dashing towards you out of the crowd, hoping to save your life. The world is suddenly dark and cold. May God have mercy on your soul.

Continue with **I. Hold the Gate!**, and see who tried to save you from the falling debris.

I. HOLD THE GATE!

In the wake of this chaos, you are now a defender of the city. All is lost: nothing remains but to save as many as possible. To see who you are, **roll 1d6**:

1. **You're a catholic peddler** - with **Conflict 2, Reason 4, Trickery 3**
and you have **5 thaler**, and **baubles to trade** (3 uses, automatically succeed on Reason tests)
2. **You're a protestant watchman** - with **Conflict 4, Reason 2, Trickery 3**
and you have **halberd** (1d6+1), and **breastplate** (-d4 against damage)
3. **You're a catholic artisan** - with **Conflict 3, Reason 3, Trickery 3**
and you have **3 thaler**, and a **tool of your trade** (1d6, can be used once to clear a blocked path, or to automatically succeed at one **Reason** test by giving it away)
4. **You're a protestant barber-surgeon** - with **Conflict 2, Reason 3, Trickery 4**
and you have **3 thaler**, a **barber knife** (1d4+2), and you are **Streetwise** (can re-roll Trickery tests once each encounter)
5. **You're a catholic officer** - with **Conflict 4, Reason 2, Trickery 1**
and you have **7 thaler**, **flintlock pistol** (2d4, but can use it only every second encounter), and a **sword** (1d6, +1 to **Conflict** tests)
6. **You're a protestant priest** - with **Conflict 1, Reason 4, Trickery 1**
and you have a **bible** (can re-roll **Reason** tests once per encounter), and a **club** (1d6)

Record your belongings on your character sheet, as well as any you earned previously.

Then roll 1d6 for additional equipment:

1. **+3 thaler**
2. **a shovel** (3 uses, clears blocked path)
3. **unremarkable garments** (+1 to **Trickery** tests)
4. **horse** (re-roll flee damage, take the lower value)
5. **valuables** (1 use, automatically succeed on a **Reason** test)
6. **bandages** (1 use, heal 1d6 hit points)

You have 15 hit points, and the will to live.

A life wasted in front of you. It doesn't matter who did it, or why – you see only what is left behind. Your ears ringing, the chaos of the battle rages around you. Did God plan all of this? Was this truly meant to be? Why?

Another explosion snaps you out of the shellshock.

Continue with **II. Officer Down!**



II. OFFICER DOWN!

With the gate broken, you watch as defenders fall under the attackers' fire. Another shot, fire, and smoke. Screaming and the smell of iron fills the air. In the distance, someone yells: 'Officer down!' You feel your heart in your throat, a glimpse of a familiar face painted by the rising sunlight, and the ever-flowing mortality around you. The Colonel is dead. You need to flee.

Continue with **III. To The Cathedral!**

III. TO THE CATHEDRAL!

From this point on, you will be fleeing through the city, saving others as you try to reach the **CATHEDRAL**. Start from the **Kröcken Gate** on the map of your character sheet. You have a choice of **three direction**, choose one and roll on the **STREET TABLE** (d8):

1. **Nothing** - The street is empty at the moment, **roll for DIRECTIONS**.
2. **Screams on the streets** - You hear cries for help from a side-alley. **Roll 1d6, 1-3:** someone got stuck behind debris, use a shovel or an axe to free them. **4-6:** a **MERCENARY HORSEMAN** is chasing a civilian, roll for **Conflict**. If you win, **roll for DIRECTIONS**.
3. **Piles of rubble** - Running along the streets, you hear screams from the debris and the rubble around. Roll for **Reason**, if you Succeed, you **rescue civilians** from the debris and **roll on ITEMS**, if you Succeed at a cost, **rescue civilians** but you **lose 1d4 hitpoints**. If you Fail, **you lose 1d6 hit points**. **Roll for DIRECTIONS**.
4. **Torched buildings** - A house is burning, heaving rubble across the street. Roll for **DIRECTIONS** but subtract 1 from the value. If the value is zero you must either turn back, or use an item to clear the blocked path.
5. **Barricades** - A makeshift barricade is in your way. Roll 1d6, **1-3:** It is unmanned (Either clear the blocked path or find a way around it with **Trickery**), **4-6:** It is a manned barricade (**Reason** with or use **Conflict** them to let you through)
6. **Mercenary extorting civilians** - You face a **MERCENARY** attempting to rob a civilian - Use **Conflict** or **Reason** with him. If you win, **roll for DIRECTIONS**.
7. **A group of looters** - **LOOTERS** are blocking your path, **Trick** them, or face **Conflict**. If you win, **roll for DIRECTIONS**.
8. **A dead body** - You find a dead body lying in the street and search its pockets: **roll on ITEMS**. Then **roll for DIRECTIONS**.

Whenever you need to **roll for Conflict, Reason, or Trickery**:

CONFLICT

Success - in case of a bout, inflict your damage against your opponent. If your opponent loses all their hit points, **rescue civilians!** Otherwise, you yell loudly enough to **rescue civilians**.

Success at a Cost - in case of a bout, both you and your opponent inflict damage. Otherwise, **lose an item** or **rescue one less civilian**.

Failure - in case of a bout, your opponent inflicts damage against you. Otherwise, you fail to rescue any civilians.

REASON

Success - You were able to reason with them, **rescue civilians**.

Success at a Cost - They are willing to listen, but need further convincing: **lose an item** or **1d4 thaler**. **Rescue civilians**.

Failure - Your words fail to reach them. **Lose an item** and **1d6 thaler**. You fail to rescue any civilians. If you cannot pay the thaler, they beat you up: **lose the remaining value in hitpoints**.

TRICKERY

Success - You trick them, leading them into unfamiliar alleys. **Rescue civilians**.

Success at a Cost - You trick them, but a little too late: , **rescue one fewer civilians**.

Failure - You couldn't shake them off, and you fail to rescue any civilians. Roll to **Flee**.

MERCENARY - 6 hp - d4 damage

MERCENARY HORSEMAN - 8 hp - d6 damage

LOOTERS - 9 hp - d6+1 damage

ITEMS TABLE

1. **+3 thaler**
2. **+5 thaler**
3. **a shovel or an axe** (3 uses; each use clears one blocked path)
4. **a helmet** (receive -1 damage)
5. **valuables** (1 use, automatically succeed on a **Reason** test)
6. **bandages** (1 use, heal 1d6 hit points)

DIRECTIONS TABLE

1. A **dead end**. Roll up a new character. Alternatively you can go back a street. If you go back the way where you came from, **roll 1d4** on a 1 you face a **MERCENARY**.
Roll for Conflict.
2. You see **a street** ahead.
3. The street forks in **two directions**.
4. You're at a crossroads, with **three directions** to choose from.

RESCUE CIVILIANS - Roll 1d6, the result is the number of people you save from the situation.

FLEE - Roll 1d6, on a 4+ you are able to run away from the danger. Otherwise roll the damage your adversary has. You can choose anytime in a 'bout to flee.

THE CATHEDRAL

After fleeing through **10 streets**, you reach the **CATHEDRAL** and deliver the survivors. You still hear screams coming from the city, so you head back to save more.. The CATHEDRAL **has 8 DIRECTIONS**, including the one where you reached it. Go, save as many as you can.

SURVIVING TOGETHER

In case you would like to share this story, you can play together with a friend with only some minor changes to the rules.

Both players start at the first chapter rolling separately for their results until they both reach **II. Officer Down!**. Afterwards we recommend two options:

LET'S STICK TOGETHER!

Both players' characters continue their endeavour together to flee and save throughout the city. They may share resources among themselves, and choose who will roll for the challenges (Conflict, Reason, Trickery).

LET'S SPLIT UP!

To cover more ground the players' characters split up. By taking turns, each player chooses a direction to explore, and rolls on the **STREET TABLE** and resolve their actions there. To find the **CATHEDRAL**, the both players must flee for 10 streets together, and the street that is the farthest away from the **Kröcken Gate** will be the place where the **CATHEDRAL** stands.

We recommend for both options the alternative character sheets and map.

PROGRESSION & GAME END

If you ever retrace your steps, roll 1d4 for each street you pass. On a 1 you face a **MERCENARY**.

If your hit points ever reach **0 or go below**, your journey ends and the game is over.

Each time you deliver 50 souls to the Cathedral, **increase one of your attributes** (ie. Conflict, Reason or Trickery).

As soon as **you saved more than 449 souls**, you rescued everyone who wasn't massacred or burnt.

Congratulations, you survived the siege.

magdebörg

Character Sheet

You are:



CONFLICT



REASON



TRICKERY

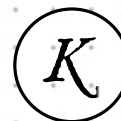
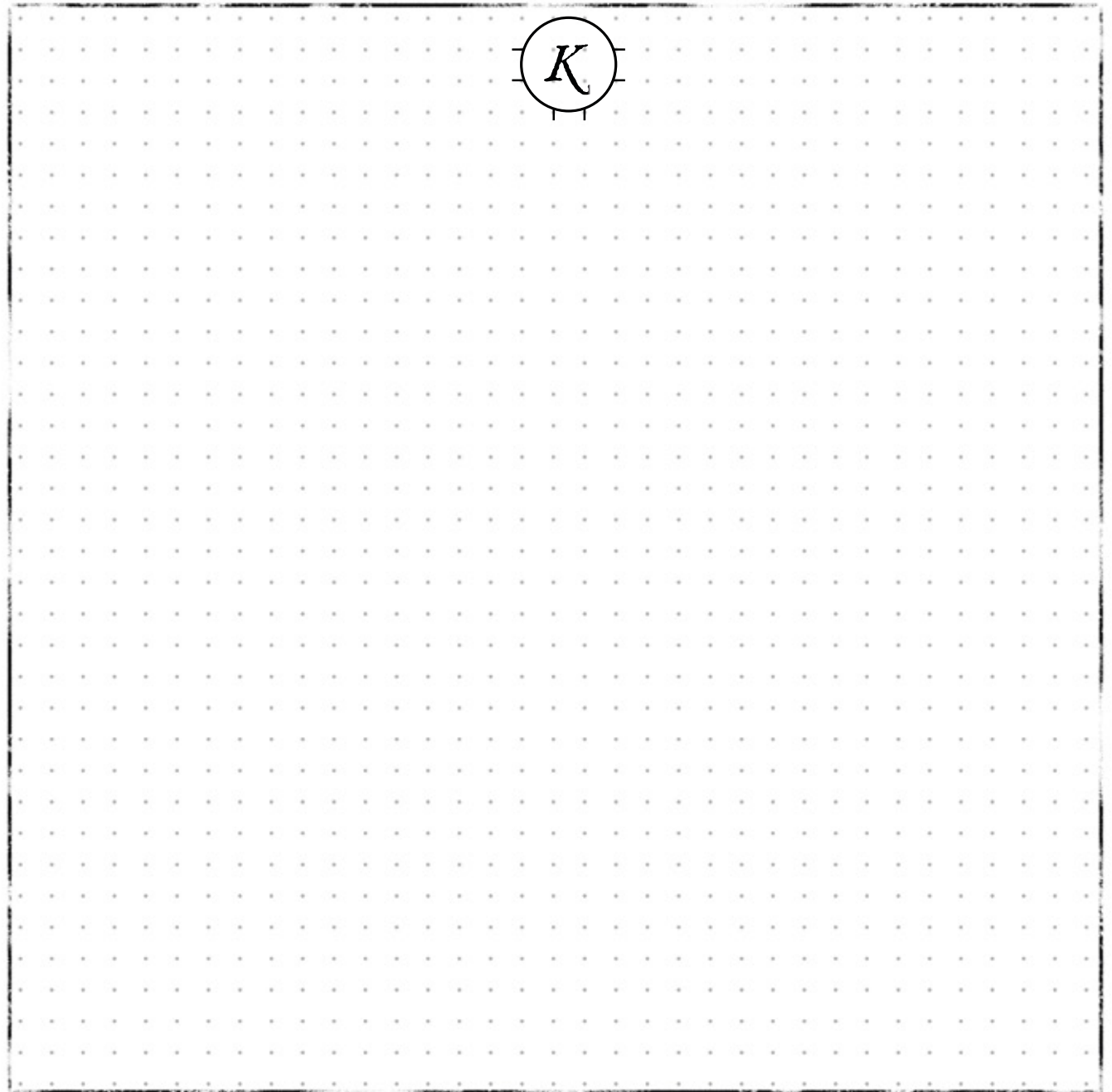
Weapons & Items

Hit Points: **15** /

Thalers:

Civilians:

Civilians Saved:



The Kröcken Gate



Cathedral

A street is one square on the grid map.

REFERENCES & ATTRIBUTIONS

Page 5 - Sebastiaen Vrancx: Soldiers plundering a farm (1573–1647), Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vrancx_Soldiers_Plundering.jpg

Page 6-7 - Matthäus Merian: Sack of Magdeburg (1593–1650), Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sack_of_Magdeburg_1631.jpg

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