



The Gift

Of all of the Burning Wheel demos and con scenarios that I've run, The Gift is my favorite by far. Why? Because it's so deceptively simple. It's just Dwarves vs Elves. But it brings into play all of the stereotypes and misconceptions we've formed about various gamer archetypes and uses them to create a really cool scenario.

At its root, The Gift is a game about the prejudices and tradition of two fantasy genre stereotypes—about Dwarves and Elves and their petty rivalries. Underneath that, it's about the prejudices that we gamers bring to the table.

In this scenario, the players take on the roles of high-ranking and powerful Dwarves and Elves. The two factions meet under diplomatic pretenses and are forced to confront each other's prejudices. The ending is completely open-ended. It is up to the players to determine a solution to The Gift, there is no predetermined outcome. And that's the final reason I love it so much: It's different every time I run it.

The Hook

Before distributing characters, tell the players that they will be playing in one of two groups. Either the household of a recently crowned Dwarven Prince or the entourage of an Elven Prince. The Elven Prince and his people have come to the Dwarves in delegation to congratulate the young prince and to reopen long dormant relations.

The Set Up

Who Wants to Be the Prince?

There are eight characters in this scenario, two sides of four. Each side has a prince, an advisor, a military leader and a rogue element.



Burning Wheel Demo Scenario

First, ask the players who prefers to be a Dwarf and who needs to be an Elf. Some folks don't have a preference, but most do. Let them choose their sides based on that predilection. It's part of the game.

Then get the Princes out there. I usually start with the Dwarf. Out of the players who opted to be Dwarves, I ask: "One of you must be the Prince, who wants it? You get to be the boss."

Then I offer the Warden and Seneschal the same time. Let the players wrangle over who gets the axe and who gets the power. Lastly, I offer up the Uncle. I'll go into these characters more in a minute.

After the Dwarves are out, I offer up the Elves. The Prince is offered first; someone must play the Prince. Then the Captain and the Loremaster. Then the Ranger. All the characters are discussed in detail below in the Characters section.

Have the players read their Beliefs, Instincts, Relationships and the brief set up that's written on the back of their character sheets.

Secrets

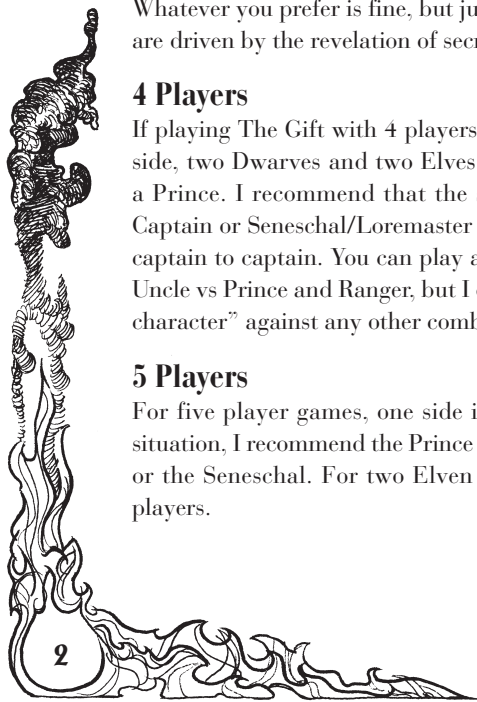
The characters in this scenario have secrets. Therefore, I prefer that the players don't share their Beliefs and their histories. I like them to come out in play. However, some groups like to get all that out on the table beforehand so they can make sure everyone gets in on the action. Whatever you prefer is fine, but just be aware that parts of the scenario are driven by the revelation of secrets.

4 Players

If playing *The Gift* with 4 players, you must have two players on each side, two Dwarves and two Elves. One player on each side must play a Prince. I recommend that the second player take up the Warden/Captain or Seneschal/Loremaster position. Play advisor to advisor and captain to captain. You can play a four player version with Prince and Uncle vs Prince and Ranger, but I do not recommend Prince and "crazy character" against any other combination but the same.

5 Players

For five player games, one side is going to be down a man. For this situation, I recommend the Prince plus the Uncle and either the Warden or the Seneschal. For two Elven players, use the guidelines for four players.





For two Dwarven players, it's got to be Prince plus the Warden or Seneschal. Leave the Uncle out. For three Elven players, throw in the Prince, the Ranger and either of the other two characters.

6 Players

If playing with six players, I recommend simply not using the Ranger and the Uncle.

7 Players

For a seven player game, the side that's down a man needs the full strength of the prince/advisor/captain combination. Leave the Uncle or Ranger out of the three-person side.

8 Players

The scenario functions best with all eight characters in play. Try and get your friends over and fill in all the slots. The game is designed to run four hours at full strength, so it's a solid night of gaming goodness.

Couples and Friends

If there are groups of couples or friends in the group, I try to split them up and put them on different sides of the conflict.

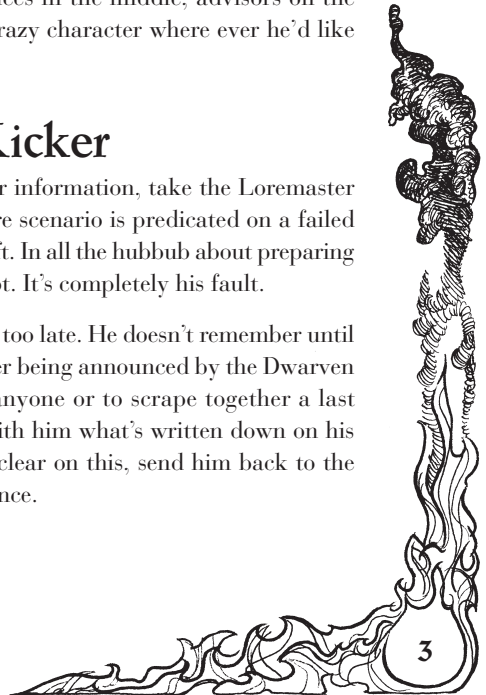
The Right Hand of the Prince

After everyone has got their characters, I make them rearrange their seating to reflect their station. Princes in the middle, advisors on the right, captains on the left and the crazy character where ever he'd like to sit.

The Kicker

As the players are reading over their information, take the Loremaster player aside. Tell him that this entire scenario is predicated on a failed Etiquette test: He forgot to bring a gift. In all the hubbub about preparing the Prince for this moment, he forgot. It's completely his fault.

When does he realize this? When it's too late. He doesn't remember until he's actually in the audience chamber being announced by the Dwarven Heralds. There's no time to warn anyone or to scrape together a last minute offering. And he only has with him what's written down on his character sheet. Once the player is clear on this, send him back to the table and start with the grand entrance.



The Grand Entrance

After the Loremaster has been informed of his plight and everyone has read over their characters, the first scene is kicked off by the GM. I usually describe how stout and splendid the Dwarven hold is. The Prince sits proudly on his throne in the audience chambers, flanked by his advisors. I describe a whole clan of his cousins, the Narn, singing him great songs and thanking him for his hospitality these past few years they've been his guests.

Then, making a great show of it, I tell how the Narn come forward and lay gifts of silver and gold, jewels and gems, and various other riches at the feet of the Prince—in payment for his hospitality, of course. But the real trick is to remind the Dwarven players that gifts are customary and to be expected at a time like this. The Narn exit and the Elves are conducted into the gift-laden hall.

When I announce the Elves, I describe them in all their grandeur and splendor; their mellifluous voices, their radiant halos, their sumptuous clothing. I prefer to let the individual players embellish on their own personal details. Let them each step forward and say a few words by way of introduction. Kind of like letting them dig their own graves.

Dwarven Hospitality

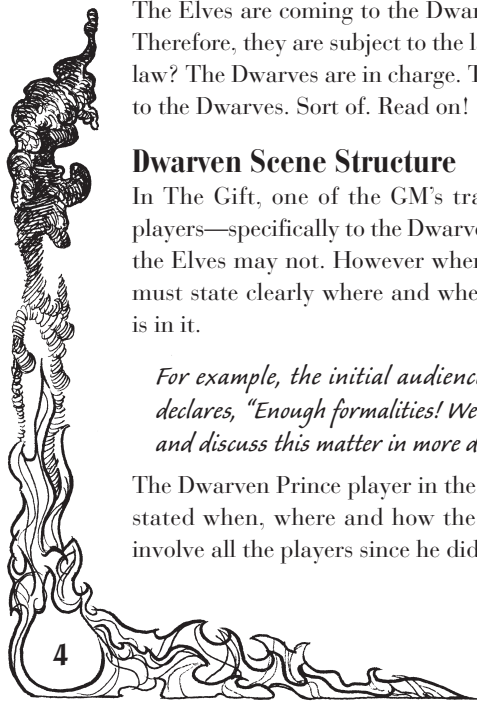
The Elves are coming to the Dwarven hall as guests and ambassadors. Therefore, they are subject to the laws of Dwarven Hospitality. The first law? The Dwarves are in charge. The second law? Everything else is up to the Dwarves. Sort of. Read on!

Dwarven Scene Structure

In *The Gift*, one of the GM's traditional powers is devolved to the players—specifically to the Dwarves. *Only the Dwarves may end scenes*, the Elves may not. However when a Dwarven player ends a scene, he must state clearly where and when the next scene will begin and who is in it.

For example, the initial audience is over. The Dwarven Prince Vost declares, "Enough formalities! We shall dine in my chambers at sunset and discuss this matter in more detail. Take them to their chambers."

The Dwarven Prince player in the example above ended the scene, and stated when, where and how the next one will begin. The scene will involve all the players since he didn't indicate otherwise.





This power starts with the Prince; he's the boss. The other Dwarves may exercise this power if they're not contradicted by the Prince or if they're not in the Prince's presence.

That's the rule: They have the power to end any scene. But to do so, they must begin the next scene.

In *The Gift*, the GM only has the power to begin one scene and end one scene: He describes the opening situation and he closes the final scene.

There is No Hold

The other metagamey rule is that there is no map of the Dwarven Hold. If the Dwarves need an armory, there's an armory. If they need a feast hall, there's a feast hall. Arena of death? Fine. Any geographic location appropriate to a Dwarven Hall is acceptable, so long as it doesn't break genre. The GM has veto power over questionable additions to the Hold.

One thing the Dwarves cannot have is mithril. No mithril mines, no mithril plating, no mithril cutlery. Nothing. None. Not a bauble, not a hairpin. If they ask for such riches, tell them flatly that they are too poor to even hope to have it!

Dwarven Servants and Staff

Dwarven servants are called Ardents. Royal soldiers are called Axe Bearers. Crossbowmen are called Arbalesters. Smiths and such are called Artificers. The Warden and the Seneschal both have a staff of all the necessary and appropriate personnel. The GM plays the role of any and all of these secondary characters. Usually, all they do is guard doors or relay messages. Any important action in this scenario must be taken by one of the player characters. Of course, the GM should use his role as the servants and staff to heat up the situation. He should gossip about what he heard so-and-so talking about, or scream bloody murder if he sees it.

Private Conferences

In between scenes, it's often necessary to let the players have short private conferences to determine their course of action in the next scene. These private conferences are usually limited to each side conferring with their own. It's ok to have an occasional private conference between a Dwarf and an Elf player. However, most of what goes on between the two sides should be played out at the table. Even if the other players aren't involved, they'll make a captive and appreciative audience to any



back room dealings. More often than not, players will use this “out of character” knowledge to make the subsequent scenes even more intense and cool.

The Characters

As the GM, it’s really important for you to familiarize yourself with the Beliefs, Instincts, Relationships and histories of the characters. I’m not going to regurgitate what’s written on the sheets here, but I will tell you how the characters tend to manifest in play and what problems arise.

The Dwarven Prince

Players take the Dwarven Prince in two directions, either rambunctious and obnoxious or earnest and frustrated. Being obnoxious is about the surest way to bring the scenario to a violent conclusion. The earnest and frustrated player will more often fight for the peaceful resolution.

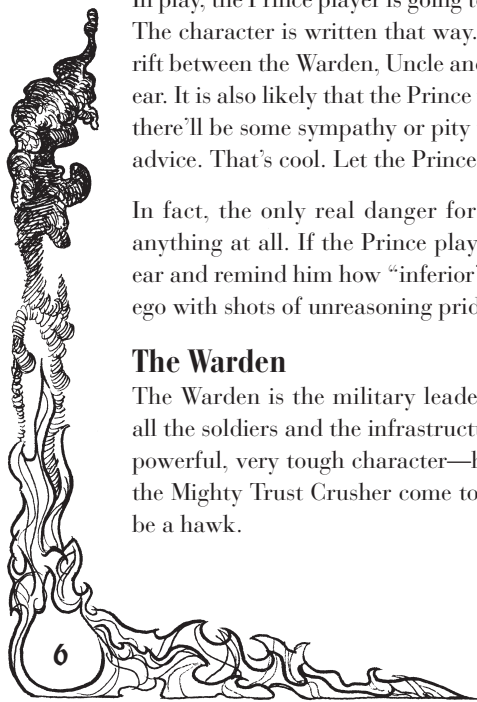
The Prince is written to be young and inexperienced. He’s not half of the character that the Seneschal and Warden are. Therefore, his player is likely going to make bad and/or bizarre decisions that the other players are going to be superficially obligated to follow. He’s the ranking noble in this situation. His word is law. Doesn’t mean he’s right, though. And it certainly doesn’t mean anyone else has to like what he’s doing.

In play, the Prince player is going to rely heavily on the Seneschal player. The character is written that way. The intent is to cause an immediate rift between the Warden, Uncle and Seneschal over who has the Prince’s ear. It is also likely that the Prince will start off ignoring his Uncle. Sure, there’ll be some sympathy or pity tossed around, but he won’t take any advice. That’s cool. Let the Prince run wild; he’s the troublemaker.

In fact, the only real danger for the role of the Prince is not doing anything at all. If the Prince player retreats, make sure you get in his ear and remind him how “inferior” he is to the Elves. Try to jack up his ego with shots of unreasoning pride.

The Warden

The Warden is the military leader of the Dwarven Hold. He controls all the soldiers and the infrastructure which supports them. He’s a very powerful, very tough character—he’s got kick-ass social skills and he’s the Mighty Trust Crusher come to earth in a fight. He’s also written to be a hawk.





For reasons I don't fully comprehend, some players love to turtle up with the Warden and watch the game go by. Don't let them. Get in there and remind the Warden player that the Uncle is a villain and must be dealt with. Remind him that he could rule this clan better than this incompetent child who used to be under his command!

And remind him not to take any shit whatsoever from the Elves. The Warden is low-born. He's not a noble like the rest of them, so he's extra proud. His position grants him some status, but the Elves and their inherent snobbery are an affront to the sensibilities which allowed him to fight his way to the top.

If the Warden wants to place guards on every door or have the Elves guarded day and night, let him.

If there is a physical contest of any kind, it's the Warden who should step forward. Even if the Prince feels he should undertake danger himself, the Warden can't risk harm to the throne, can he? Or can he...

The Seneschal

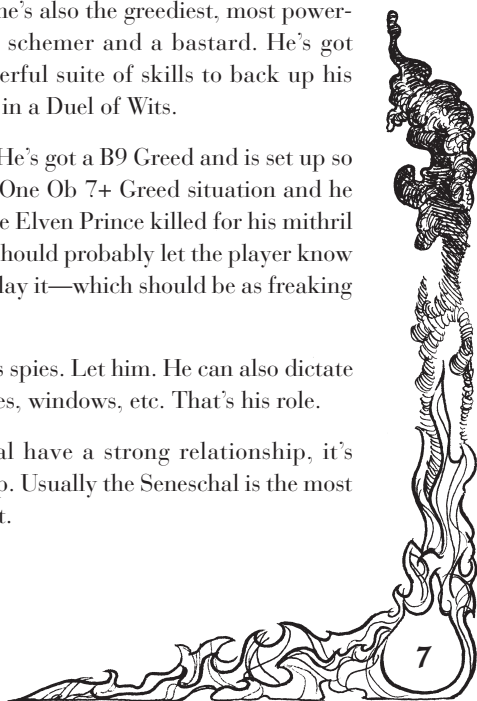
The Seneschal seems so innocuous at first. He's the head of the Prince's household: He handles all material matters outside of the military and the kitchen, which is the Uncle's province. He arranges for accommodations, tours and hospitality.

Seems pretty innocent, right? Well, he's also the greediest, most power-hungry Dwarf in the game. He's a schemer and a bastard. He's got the Prince's ear and he's got a powerful suite of skills to back up his manipulations. He'll do quite nicely in a Duel of Wits.

And when I said, greedy, I meant it. He's got a B9 Greed and is set up so he's one test away from going over. One Ob 7+ Greed situation and he goes stark raving looney. If he has the Elven Prince killed for his mithril mail, the Seneschal is done for. You should probably let the player know this off the bat so he knows how to play it—which should be as freaking greedy as possible!

The Seneschal can use his Ardents as spies. Let him. He can also dictate the structure of hold—secret passages, windows, etc. That's his role.

Since the Prince and the Seneschal have a strong relationship, it's unlikely that this player will turtle up. Usually the Seneschal is the most active and scheming player in the lot.



The Uncle

Out of all of the characters in this scenario, the Uncle is the most problematic. On the surface, he's a smelly old drunk, who's adventuring days are done and who hates politics. But underneath that, he's the smartest, most insightful and pragmatic of all the characters at the table. Most players have a very hard time with this dichotomy. They choose him thinking it'll be fun to play a crazy drunk. And it is, for about a half hour. Then they get tired, sit back and watch the game go by.

It's this bizarre phenomenon! Even though the Uncle's Beliefs are loaded, players just back right off and turtle up. So if you see the Uncle sliding off or sitting by, get in his ear and remind him about his Beliefs: The Warden and the Seneschal are buffoons, they're ruining his favorite nephew, they're ruining the clan and they're going to get someone killed. Only he can see this. More importantly, only he can do something about it. Why? Because he's the only character in the lot who doesn't buy into prejudice and tradition. It's his first Belief: *Tradition is only so much air from the bellows, fanning the flames of pride and hatred.*

The great thing about playing the Uncle is you can choose your side. If the Dwarves turn into real jackasses, he can easily join the Elves. But if the Elves are disrespectful or really cold, he can just as easily toss his substantial weight behind the clan.

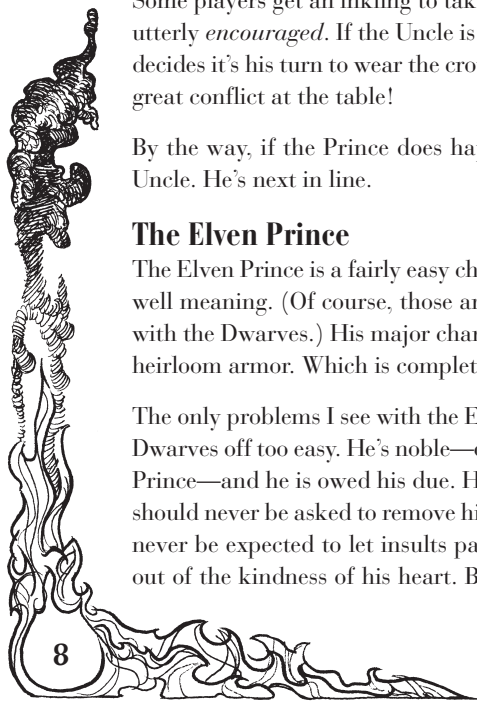
Some players get an inkling to take over with the Uncle. This should be utterly *encouraged*. If the Uncle is so fed up with all the bullshit that he decides it's his turn to wear the crown, that is going to create some really great conflict at the table!

By the way, if the Prince does happen to die, the crown passes to the Uncle. He's next in line.

The Elven Prince

The Elven Prince is a fairly easy character to play. He's noble, proud and well meaning. (Of course, those are traits which just get him in trouble with the Dwarves.) His major character flaw is in his obsession with his heirloom armor. Which is completely justified!

The only problems I see with the Elven Prince player is when he lets the Dwarves off too easy. He's noble—of higher rank than even the Dwarven Prince—and he is owed his due. He should never be talked down to, he should never be asked to remove his sword or go unarmed and he should never be expected to let insults pass unchallenged. If he does, it's done out of the kindness of his heart. But he is also well within in his rights





to give the Dwarves a lesson in manners via the Duel of Wits or even to challenge anyone else at the table to a duel of swords. Remind the Elven Prince player of all of this at certain uncomfortable junctures.

And remind him of how awesome his mithril armor is, too. And how he has some and the Dwarves have none.

The Loremaster

Some folks like to sit back and play the quiet and thoughtful Elf with the Loremaster character. It's the wrong move. The game's going to zip by them and, by the time they realize things are out of control, it's going to be too late for them to intervene. I've seen it. The Loremaster player waits until the end of the game to make a stand, but everyone else has been playing throughout, so they just ignore the player and focus on the conflicts that they have been building.

Therefore, it's important to get the Loremaster into the conflict early. And to stick him in there good. If the Prince and the Loremaster are at odds, the Loremaster player will of course defer to his Prince. Do not let this happen. Make them play out a Duel of Wits. The Loremaster should kick the Prince's ass, and convince him of his alternate plan.

The Swordsinger Captain

This character is a walking pile of awesome. He's the tragic samurai, called out of retirement for one last service to his lord, doomed to fail and die disgraced. His history is so tragic, he's one Grief test from going over the edge. He's at B9 with only a single test until he advances. He's also got the Mourner trait. So any test at Ob 7 or higher is going to push him over. Having to kill the Ranger, losing the Prince or betraying him (if the Prince is being a complete ass) are all going to push him into the abyss of Grief.

So if the player just sits back, this character is almost certainly doomed—if left unchecked, the Dwarves will kill for that mithril. He's got to participate in order to ensure that he's not driven mad with Grief by the end of the scenario.

This means he's got to push strongly for peace in the face of Dwarven insults and greed. It means he's got to push for peace when he is best suited for war. He's got some great social skills, but he's no match for the Seneschal or the Loremaster. So there's this great temptation to use the sword and end it all quickly and decisively. Play this up. Urge him to do



what he does best. It's a win-win situation for everyone. Either he fights passionately for peace and saves the day, or succumbs to his Grief and wades into the scenes committed to pure cathartic violence. Cool.

When players take on this guy, they love to pull the “strong silent type” bullshit. I'm amazed. They've got four hours to play and to bring the conflict to boil, but they just sit there and glare. Before they know it, it's over and they've done nothing.

Even better, I love it when kids who play this guy say afterwards, “He was great, but I wish there was more fighting.” You know what? If you want more fighting, you've got to make it happen. The players are in complete control of the direction of this scenario. If the Captain's player wants bloodshed, he's got to spout inflammatory remarks at the table and push things in that direction. Sitting and glaring will not initiate a duel. Spitting at the Dwarven Prince when insults are hurled and then tossing the gauntlet down to defend the Elven Prince's honor, that will turn the heat up.

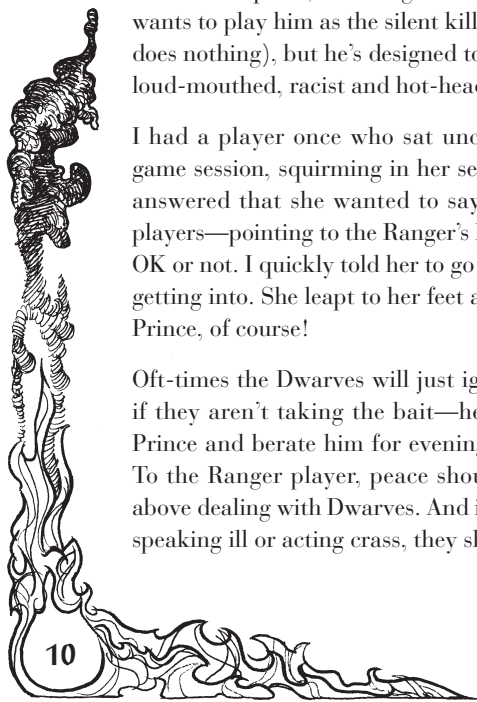
So if you see Captain just sitting by, prod him to action. Remind him, if he wants a certain course of action—whether bloodshed or peace—he's got to undertake it himself!

The Ranger

Like the Captain, the Ranger is meant to break stereotypes. Everyone wants to play him as the silent killer guy (who sits around all night and does nothing), but he's designed to be the thorn in everyone's side. He's loud-mouthed, racist and hot-headed.

I had a player once who sat uncomfortably for the first half of the game session, squirming in her seat. I asked her what was wrong. She answered that she wanted to say all these mean things to the other players—pointing to the Ranger's Beliefs—but she didn't know if it was OK or not. I quickly told her to go for it, everyone knew what they were getting into. She leapt to her feet and dove right in—attacking her own Prince, of course!

Oft-times the Dwarves will just ignore the Ranger. If that's the case—if they aren't taking the bait—he's got to go toe to toe with his own Prince and berate him for even considering dealing with Dwarves. To the Ranger player, peace should not be an option. The Elves are above dealing with Dwarves. And if the Dwarves add insult to injury, by speaking ill or acting crass, they should be put down. Forcibly.





It's worth noting—and reminding the Ranger player—that he can be effectively invisible if he wants to be. The Threne of the Chameleon spell is very powerful (and usually causes a great deal of consternation for the Dwarves). The Ranger can disappear and move stealthily around the hold. Only the Uncle has any chance of actually detecting his whereabouts with his G7 Observation skill. However, if the Dwarves have spies or even trusted servants watching, it's pretty easy to notice that one of the four Elves is missing. The Seneschal's spies will report something like that very quickly unless the Elves take precautions to deceive them. It's also pretty easy to notice bizarre phenomena like doors mysteriously opening and closing, or crowns floating across the room. The Dwarves have every right to get pissed about this nonsense.

Anyway, don't let the Ranger player sit back and watch. Ask him if he likes to watch his lifelong friend of two centuries parleying with foul Dwarves? What's he going to do about it? Possibly the best Gift scenario I ever played was one where the Ranger became so incensed over the peaceful negotiations, he tried to assassinate the Dwarven Prince. When that failed and only served to turn his own Prince against him, the Ranger promptly assassinated his liege and friend. He declared *him* a traitor. The Swordsinger, weeping and lamenting, tracked down the Ranger in the Dwarven halls and slew him—but not before the Ranger had time to spit in his face and call him a traitor as well. That is Grief manifest, my friend. The Dwarf players watched in shocked horror. They willingly offered peace and trade to the Loremaster after that!

If your Ranger isn't creating situations like that, knock him upside the head and ask him why he's dragging everyone down.

The GM as Gadfly

The GM doesn't dictate the plot and he doesn't begin or end scenes, he doesn't even instigate conflicts. What does he do in The Gift?

Well, he plays the few NPCs involved. That's pretty standard. And he gets to embellish on scenes and descriptions. Again, pretty standard stuff. But that leaves him with a lot of free time. What to do with it all?



Listen and Watch

First and most importantly: Listen. Get into the private conversations and really listen to what the players are saying to each other. Watch. When conflicts are slinging across the table, watch everyone's reaction—especially that of the players who aren't directly involved.

Encourage Them

As players lose focus or become lost or tired. Talk to them. Get their feedback. Find out what their plans are. Remind them about their Beliefs if they are foundering for direction or uncertain. Play their consciences. Be the devil on their shoulders. Don't tell them what to do, but feel free to make lurid and dangerous suggestions.

Remind the players that they are in control here, it's their chance to shine.

Bring the Roleplay Down into the Dice

Ground the conflict in the dice. Players are going to roleplay the hell out of this scenario, but after about five minutes of roleplay in a scene, you should encourage them to move on or start a conflict. Don't be mean or rude, but definitely let them know that this game is about conflict, not just talking.

Once you have a conflict, use the Duel of Wits rules. Use them well. Use them often. They really drive this scenario. One compromise is just fuel for the next conflict. A mistaken agreement gives way to a duel at dawn, gives way to a respectful declaration of peace... whatever ends up happening, the stakes in the various conflicts are going to be the seed.

Greed

Dwarven Greed is a powerful tool in this game. I recommend you read over pages 65-68 of the Character Burner before running the scenario. As soon as the Dwarves see the Elven Prince's mithril armor, they all must make Steel tests. If their Greed is higher than their hesitation, use that exponent for hesitation instead. If they fail, they have to choose I Must Have It or Stand and Drool.

Wonderment

The Elves have a powerful weapon at their disposal in the form of Wonderment. If successfully sung, their songs require the Dwarves to make Steel tests. If they fail the Steel test, they become entranced. When



you're not in the Fight! mechanics, don't worry about the exact length of time for this. The Wonderment simply causes the Dwarves to hesitate for a moment. The Elves can use this opportunity to roleplay out some point or perhaps even to try to make their escape!

Playing the Gift

The Road to Nowhere

This scenario can go in any direction. Literally! In the games that I've run, it's gone down into the mines, off to war, been fought in arenas, had mountaintop rituals, explored abandoned Dwarven holds and captured currently occupied ones. If the players want to bring it to a new location, let them. So long as it doesn't break genre. And, so long as it obeys the one restriction of the game: no mithril. I'm not saying that the Loremaster couldn't use his *Obscure History* to find a lost mithril mine, or that the Dwarven players couldn't decide that their cousins have a mine and they don't. But if the players want to create this particular solution, there has to be a conflict in front of it—a big one. The mines have to be infested with Orcs. The cousins will never willingly give up their treasure trove. Adding these complications is the GM's job.

Also, I don't like to take *The Gift* is back to the Elven lands. If a solution lies there, then it's too easy. Any solution should force the players into new and unknown territory.

The Gift is Whatever You Want it to Be

It is customary for guests to present their host, a newly crowned prince, with a gift. The Elves have none to give.

They will obviously want to produce something for the Dwarves. They only have what is on their character sheets—the mirrorwine, the Elven swords, the *Tome of Lore*. That's all nice, but it's not enough. They cannot go home and get something else. They travelled a year to get to the hold in the first place. They can't test their *Resources* to produce something. Either they give what they have, manufacture something out of thin air—like a song—or lie about it.

The most obvious choice for a gift is the mithril mail, but convincing the Prince to give that up should be a titanic struggle. A nice four-hour game's worth, actually!



Tract of Enmity or Verse of Friendship

The Loremaster will often want to start by singing one of these songs as the Gift. Have him wait. These are the big guns. If the Dwarves acquit themselves well, then you sing the Verse of Friendship. It is not something given lightly. The spell identifies the recipient as a friend to *all* Elves. And we wouldn't want to mistakenly grant that privilege, would we?

If the Dwarves are miserable curs, the Loremaster should threaten them with the Tract of Enmity. All Elves will forever know them as Enemy. It's very bad news.

The Nature of the Armor

Occasionally the nature of the Elven Prince's armor comes into question. Technically, the stuff is Dwarven made and given as a gift to the Elven King ages ago. But feel free to change this if the group wants to take it in a different direction.

The Starting Positions

This scenario begins in the audience chamber to the Ibuniz hall. All characters are present. The Dwarves are in attendance of their Prince, the Elves have just been escorted in and announced.

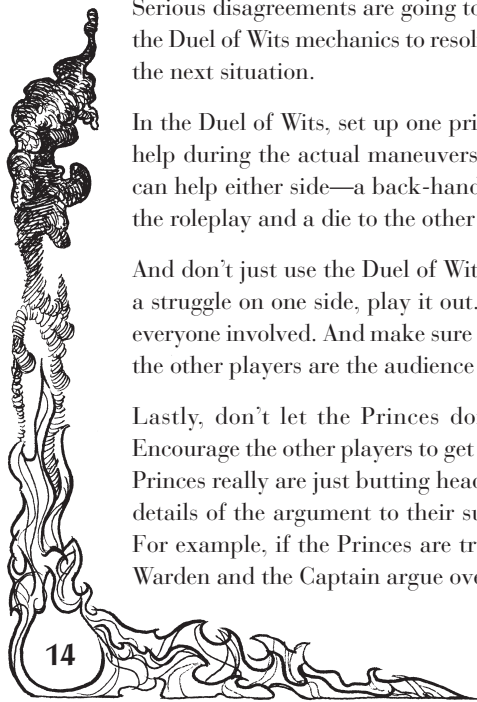
Social Conflict Resolution

Serious disagreements are going to arise in the course of this game. Use the Duel of Wits mechanics to resolve them. Each compromise will create the next situation.

In the Duel of Wits, set up one primary for each side and let the others help during the actual maneuvers. Remind the other players that they can help either side—a back-handed comment can add a nice touch to the roleplay and a die to the other side!

And don't just use the Duel of Wits for Dwarf vs Elf conflict. If there is a struggle on one side, play it out. But do it quickly, because you want everyone involved. And make sure everyone can watch these little asides, the other players are the audience after all!

Lastly, don't let the Princes dominate the Duel of Wits conflicts. Encourage the other players to get in there and start their own. Or, if the Princes really are just butting heads the whole time, delegate the actual details of the argument to their subordinates and let them play it out. For example, if the Princes are trying to set up an actual duel, let the Warden and the Captain argue over the terms. It's their job after all.





Versus Tests

There aren't too many instances in *The Gift* where a straight versus test is going to resolve a conflict. But use them for any conflicts that happen "away from the table" and for any kind of non-violent, physical contests/conflicts that arise in play. One group held a contest to see who could hold a large rock in their outstretched arms for the longest time. We resolved it with a versus Forte test. The Elves won and, of course, it ended up devolving into a declaration of war...

Violence

The violence in *The Gift* is high-stakes. When axes are raised and swords drawn, there is going to be blood and suffering. I strongly urge you to use the full Fight! mechanics for any physical violence that erupts. The Swordsinger Captain deserves his due in a fight, and the only way the Warden can beat him is by outwitting him.

Violence usually comes in the form of a challenge to a duel, an assassination attempt or an outright bloody-minded attack. Don't shy away from violence in this scenario. Both the Princes and the Captain and the Warden are built to take a lot punishment. The axe and sword are their birthright!

Resources and Circles

The Elves are intentionally cut off from their Resources and Circles for this scenario. It's part of the conflict—they're away from home and at the mercy of the Dwarves. The Dwarves, however, can use the Resources and Circles rules as normal. Any type of significant item they wish to produce requires a Resources test. Any significant NPC they wish to bring into play that wouldn't be part of their regular staff—a Dwarven assassin, for example—requires a Circles test.

Remember, they can't bring in any mithril whatsoever.

Etiquette and History

Players often want to use their Etiquette and History skills against one another. For Etiquette, I let the players roleplay and describe their intent. Then I let the other side set their obstacle for the test. Etiquette is an attempt to behave in a traditional and pleasing manner in a codified social structure. It's important that the recipient of this behavior have a stake in the results. Therefore, the players set the obstacles for these tests, not the GM. Obstacle 2 to 4 is usually an appropriate range, but anything goes, really.



For History skills, players will ask questions like, “Can I recall a time when Dwarves and Elves were at odds and then resolved it peaceably?” Set an obstacle using the guidelines on page 245 of the Character Burner. If the player meets the obstacle, what he wants is a fact and true. The player should embellish the details and tell the others about it. As the GM, you should back him up, “What he says is true.” If the player fails the history test, he’s wrong and/or lying. The other players are free to contradict him.

The End

When does this end? When the players reach a satisfying agreement or conclusion. There’s no fixed end, but the GM has to watch for that big conflict building up, push for it and then, when it’s over, bring the players back to earth. The Gift plays out in one four-hour session.

If the players manage to come to an agreement and end with handshakes and peaceful negotiations, great! There’s an obvious end there.

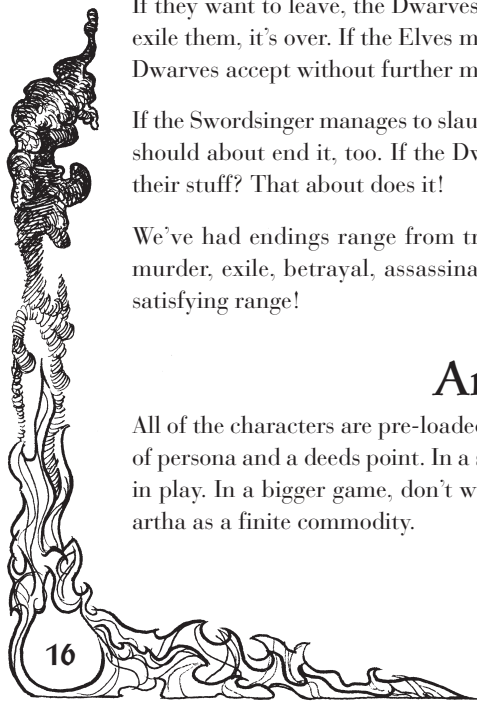
If the players can’t find any middle ground and are constantly in conflict, the GM has to push them to resolve it. Either fight it out, negotiate via a Duel of Wits or try to escape. If the Elves flee the Dwarven hold, the scenario is over. (Remember, the Elves can’t just leave because they can’t start scenes on their own. Sucks, but they are essentially prisoners. If they want to leave, the Dwarves have to let them go.) If the Dwarves exile them, it’s over. If the Elves manage to come up with a gift that the Dwarves accept without further manipulation, then it’s over.

If the Swordsinger manages to slaughter the Prince and the Warden, that should about end it, too. If the Dwarves murder the Elves and take all their stuff? That about does it!

We’ve had endings range from treaties signed, war declared, bloody murder, exile, betrayal, assassination and eternal friendship. Quite a satisfying range!

Artha

All of the characters are pre-loaded with three points of fate, two points of persona and a deeds point. In a smaller game, you might award artha in play. In a bigger game, don’t worry about it. Just play and burn the artha as a finite commodity.





The Unimportant Bits

Maps, floor plans, traps or anything else that gets in the way of the players invoking their Beliefs and engaging in conflict have no place in this scenario.

Actual Play

Have fun, and be sure to post your actual play experiences using this scenario on burningwheel.org, indie-rpgs.com or rpg.net.



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