

PENANCE

Support Units System

Absolution Through Steel

Generated support-units

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Penance: Absolution Through Steel

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Support units are AI-controlled allies that accompany your Casket into battle. These units follow simple behavior cards and can be influenced by your Casket's command abilities.

v3.0 OPTIONAL: Support units gain +1 Morale when commanded by pilots with **Grit 2+**. Veterans inspire confidence. High-Grit pilots' Rally and Command actions are more effective (see [pilot-grit-system.md](#) for details).

Core Concept

Support Units are NOT controlled directly. Instead: - They have a **Behavior Deck** (4-6 cards) that determines their actions - Each unit type has unique behaviors and specializations - Players can influence them with **Command cards** and **Rally actions** - They activate **AFTER** all Caskets have taken their turns

Support Unit Anatomy

Each support unit has:

Stats

- **HP:** 5-15 (track with tokens, NOT a deck)

- **Movement:** 2-4 hexes per turn
- **Defense:** 0-2
- **Type:** Infantry, Artillery, Scout, Engineer, Mystic

Behavior Deck (4-6 Cards)

A small deck of AI behavior cards that determine what the unit does each turn. Shuffle at start of battle, draw 1 per turn, execute action.

Command Response

How the unit reacts when given a Command by a Casket.

How Support Units Work

Deployment

- **During Setup:** Deploy support unit within 3 hexes of your Casket
- **Cost:** Varies by unit type (2-4 Equipment Slots when building deck)
- **Limit:** 1 support unit per Casket maximum

Activation

1. **All Caskets take their turns first**
2. **Support Unit Phase:** Draw 1 Behavior card
3. **Execute Behavior:** Follow card instructions (move, attack, etc.)
4. **Discard Behavior card:** Reshuffles when deck empty

Command Actions

Casket players can spend SP to influence support units: - **RALLY** (1 SP): Move support unit up to 3 hexes - **COMMAND: ATTACK** (2 SP): Support unit attacks target you choose - **COMMAND: DEFEND** (1 SP): Support unit gains +2 Defense until next turn - **COMMAND: HOLD** (0 SP): Support unit skips its behavior this turn (stays put)

SUPPORT UNIT TYPES

1. PENITENT SQUAD (Infantry)

Category: Infantry Support **Faction:** Church of Absolution **HP:** 8 | **Movement:** 3 | **Defense:** 1 **Equipment Slots:** 2

Description

Zealous infantry squad armed with sanctified blades and fanatical devotion. They charge into melee and fight until death.

Behavior Deck (5 Cards)

CHARGE FORWARD

- **Action:** Move toward nearest enemy. If adjacent, attack for 3 damage.
- **Priority:** High

SURROUND ENEMY

- **Action:** Move to flank nearest enemy (try to position in rear arc). If already flanking, attack for 4 damage.
- **Priority:** Medium

PROTECT THE CASKET

- **Action:** If Casket within 4 hexes is under 15 HP, move toward Casket. Attack any enemy adjacent to Casket for 3 damage.
- **Priority:** High

DESPERATE STRIKE

- **Action:** If squad HP ≤ 4 , move toward nearest enemy and attack for 5 damage (suicidal charge).
- **Priority:** Critical

REGROUP

- **Action:** If no enemies within 4 hexes, move toward Casket. Otherwise, attack nearest enemy for 3 damage.
- **Priority:** Low

Command Response

- **RALLY:** Move up to 3 hexes (ignores behavior)
- **ATTACK:** Attack target for 4 damage (+1 bonus for following orders)
- **DEFEND:** +2 Defense, but cannot attack next turn
- **HOLD:** Stay in place, gain +1 Defense

Special Ability: MARTYRDOM

If Penitent Squad is destroyed, deal 3 damage to all adjacent enemies (explosive death).

2. IRONCLAD SENTINEL (Artillery)

Category: Artillery Support **Faction:** Dwarven Forge-Guilds **HP:** 6 | **Movement:** 2 | **Defense:** 2 **Equipment Slots:** 3

Description

Mobile artillery platform with a shoulder-mounted siege cannon. Slow but devastating at range.

Behavior Deck (4 Cards)

SIEGE BOMBARDMENT

- **Action:** Attack furthest visible enemy within 8 hexes for 6 damage. Ignore 2 Defense. +1 Heat to self.
- **Priority:** High

DEFENSIVE POSITION

- **Action:** If enemy within 3 hexes, move away 2 hexes. Then attack nearest enemy within range for 5 damage.
- **Priority:** High

SUPPRESSING FIRE

- **Action:** Attack nearest enemy within 6 hexes for 4 damage. Target cannot move next turn.
- **Priority:** Medium

RELOAD

- **Action:** Move 1 hex toward nearest cover. Gain +2 Defense until next turn. Next attack deals +2 damage.
- **Priority:** Low

Command Response

- **RALLY:** Move up to 2 hexes (slow, heavy unit)
- **ATTACK:** Attack target within 8 hexes for 7 damage (heavy bombardment)
- **DEFEND:** Deploy siege shield (+3 Defense, cannot move next turn)
- **HOLD:** Anchor position, next attack deals +3 damage

Special Ability: EXPLOSIVE SHELLS

When Ironclad Sentinel attacks, all enemies within 1 hex of target take 2 splash damage.

3. BONE THRALLS (Swarm Infantry)

Category: Swarm Support **Faction:** The Ossuarium **HP:** 12 (3 HP per thrall, 4 thralls total) | **Movement:** 4 | **Defense:** 0 **Equipment Slots:** 2

Description

Four skeletal thralls bound to your will. Individually weak, but they swarm enemies and can be resurrected.

Behavior Deck (6 Cards)

SWARM ATTACK

- **Action:** All thralls move toward nearest enemy. Each thrall adjacent to an enemy attacks for 2 damage (up to 8 damage total if all 4 are adjacent).
- **Priority:** High

SCATTER

- **Action:** Each thrall moves in a different direction (spread out around nearest enemy). Attack if adjacent (2 damage per thrall).
- **Priority:** Medium

FEAST ON THE FALLEN

- **Action:** If enemy died this round, move toward corpse. Recover 3 HP to swarm (resurrect 1 thrall if any are dead).
- **Priority:** High

RECKLESS CHARGE

- **Action:** All thralls move full movement toward nearest enemy. Thralls take 1 damage each, but next attack deals +1 damage per thrall.
- **Priority:** Medium

DEFENSIVE CIRCLE

- **Action:** All thralls move adjacent to Casket. Form defensive ring (+1 Defense to Casket until thralls move).
- **Priority:** Low

SPLIT ATTACK

- **Action:** Divide thralls between 2 nearest enemies (2 thralls each). Each thrall attacks for 2 damage.
- **Priority:** Medium

Command Response

- **RALLY:** Move all thralls up to 4 hexes to target location
- **ATTACK:** All thralls focus attack target (2 damage × number of thralls alive)
- **DEFEND:** Thralls form shield wall in front of Casket (block LOS, +1 Defense to Casket)
- **HOLD:** Thralls stay in place, gain +1 Defense each

Special Ability: RESURRECTION

When thralls are destroyed, place corpse markers. During your Support Unit Phase, if Casket is within 4 hexes of corpse, you may spend 2 SP to resurrect 1 thrall with 3 HP.

4. VERDANT STALKER (Scout)

Category: Scout Support **Faction:** Elven Verdant Covenant **HP:** 6 | **Movement:** 5 | **Defense:** 1 **Equipment Slots:** 2

Description

Elven ranger bonded with your Casket. Fast, mobile, applies Bleed stacks and scouts ahead.

Behavior Deck (5 Cards)

HUNT THE WOUNDED

- **Action:** Move toward enemy with most Bleed counters. Attack for 3 damage + 1 damage per Bleed counter on target (max +5). Apply 1 Bleed.
- **Priority:** High

SCOUT AHEAD

- **Action:** Move 5 hexes toward nearest unexplored area or nearest enemy. If adjacent to enemy, attack for 3 damage and apply 1 Bleed.
- **Priority:** Medium

HIT AND RUN

- **Action:** Move adjacent to nearest enemy, attack for 3 damage and apply 1 Bleed, then move 3 hexes away.
- **Priority:** High

SNIPER SHOT

- **Action:** If no enemy within 3 hexes, attack furthest visible enemy within 6 hexes for 4 damage. Apply 1 Bleed.
- **Priority:** Medium

VANISH

- **Action:** If Stalker HP ≤ 3 , move 5 hexes away from all enemies. Gain Stealth until next turn (enemies cannot target directly).
- **Priority:** Critical

Command Response

- **RALLY:** Move up to 5 hexes (very fast)
- **ATTACK:** Attack target for 4 damage and apply 2 Bleed counters
- **DEFEND:** Gain Stealth (cannot be targeted until Stalker attacks)
- **HOLD:** Aim carefully, next attack deals +3 damage

Special Ability: BLEED MASTERY

All Bleed counters applied by Verdant Stalker last 1 extra turn (ticks 3 times instead of 2).

5. FORGE GOLEM (Tank)

Category: Tank Support **Faction:** Dwarven Forge-Guilds **HP:** 15 | **Movement:** 2 | **Defense:** 3 **Equipment Slots:** 4

Description

Massive animated construct of stone and rune-etched iron. Slow, incredibly durable, draws enemy fire.

Behavior Deck (4 Cards)

TAUNT

- **Action:** Move toward nearest enemy. All enemies within 4 hexes must target Forge Golem next turn if able (taunt effect).
- **Priority:** High

CRUSHING SLAM

- **Action:** Attack nearest enemy for 5 damage. Ignore 2 Defense. Target is knocked back 1 hex.

- **Priority:** High

DEFENSIVE STANCE

- **Action:** If Golem HP \leq 8, do not move. Gain +2 Defense until next turn. Counterattack any melee attacker for 3 damage.
- **Priority:** Critical

SEISMIC STOMP

- **Action:** Deal 3 damage to all adjacent enemies. Push them 1 hex away. +1 Heat to Golem.
- **Priority:** Medium

Command Response

- **RALLY:** Move up to 2 hexes (slow but obedient)
- **ATTACK:** Attack target for 7 damage, ignore 3 Defense (massive strike)
- **DEFEND:** Golem becomes immobile, gains +4 Defense, blocks LOS
- **HOLD:** Anchor position, gain Regeneration 2 (recover 2 HP at end of turn)

Special Ability: RUNIC SHIELDS

When Forge Golem takes damage, roll 1d6. On 5-6, reduce damage by 3 (magical shielding).

6. WARP FAMILIAR (Mystic)

Category: Mystic Support **Faction:** The Wyrd Conclave **HP:** 5 | **Movement:** 4 (fly) | **Defense:** 0 **Equipment Slots:** 3

Description

Fae spirit creature bound to the pilot. Can teleport, phase through terrain, and disrupt enemy actions.

Behavior Deck (5 Cards)

REALITY SHIFT

- **Action:** Teleport to any visible hex within 6 hexes. Deal 3 damage to adjacent enemy.
- **Priority:** Medium

PHASE STRIKE

- **Action:** Teleport adjacent to nearest enemy (ignoring terrain/LOS). Attack for 4 damage. Teleport 3 hexes away.
- **Priority:** High

CURSE

- **Action:** Move toward nearest enemy. If within 3 hexes, give target 1 Curse counter (target's next card costs +1 SP).
- **Priority:** Medium

MIRROR IMAGE

- **Action:** If Familiar HP ≤ 3 , teleport 5 hexes away. Create illusory copy (decoy). Enemies attacking Familiar have 50% chance to hit decoy instead (roll 1d6: 1-3 = hit decoy).
- **Priority:** Critical

ELDRITCH BLAST

- **Action:** Attack nearest enemy within 5 hexes for 3 damage. Ignore LOS and cover (magic bypasses obstacles).
- **Priority:** Medium

Command Response

- **RALLY:** Teleport to any visible hex within 8 hexes (incredible mobility)
- **ATTACK:** Attack target for 5 damage and apply 2 Curse counters

- **DEFEND:** Phase out of reality (cannot be targeted until next turn)
- **HOLD:** Channel magic, next attack deals 6 damage and stuns target (loses next turn)

Special Ability: PHASE SHIFT

Warp Familiar ignores terrain and can pass through walls. Cannot be blocked by obstacles.

7. SCRAP HAULER (Engineer)

Category: Engineer Support **Faction:** Nomadic Scrap-Takers **HP:** 10 | **Movement:** 3 | **Defense:** 1 **Equipment Slots:** 3

Description

Salvage bot cobbled together from scrap metal. Repairs Caskets, builds cover, and scavenges resources.

Behavior Deck (5 Cards)

FIELD REPAIR

- **Action:** Move toward nearest friendly Casket with <20 HP. If adjacent, heal 4 HP (recover 4 cards from discard).
- **Priority:** High

BUILD COVER

- **Action:** If no cover within 2 hexes, create 1 hex of cover (blocks LOS, +1 Defense). Otherwise, move toward nearest damaged Casket.
- **Priority:** Medium

SCAVENGE

- **Action:** Move toward nearest corpse or destroyed equipment. If adjacent, recover 1 Scrap token (usable after mission).
- **Priority:** Low

IMPROVISED ATTACK

- **Action:** If enemy within 3 hexes, throw scrap metal for 3 damage. No special effects (just a desperate attack).
- **Priority:** Low

EMERGENCY OVERRIDE

- **Action:** If any friendly Casket has 3+ Component Damage, move toward them. If adjacent, remove 1 Component Damage marker (field repair).
- **Priority:** Critical

Command Response

- **RALLY:** Move up to 3 hexes
- **ATTACK:** Not applicable (Hauler is not combat unit, cannot be commanded to attack)
- **DEFEND:** Deploy portable shield (blocks LOS for 1 hex, +2 Defense to adjacent allies)
- **HOLD:** Fortify position, build 2 hexes of cover

Special Ability: SALVAGE

When enemy is destroyed within 4 hexes of Scrap Hauler, automatically gain 1 Scrap token.

8. BLIGHTED HOUND (Beast)

Category: Beast Support **Faction:** Vestige Bloodlines **HP:** 10 | **Movement:** 5 | **Defense:** 0 **Equipment Slots:** 2

Description

Mutated war-hound with grotesque mutations and bestial rage. Fast, vicious, spreads Blight.

Behavior Deck (6 Cards)

FERAL CHARGE

- **Action:** Move full speed toward nearest enemy. If adjacent, attack for 4 damage and apply 1 Blight counter.
- **Priority:** High

SAVAGE BITE

- **Action:** Attack nearest enemy for 5 damage. If target has Blight counters, deal +1 damage per counter (max +4).
- **Priority:** High

SPREADING INFECTION

- **Action:** Attack nearest enemy for 3 damage. Apply 2 Blight counters. All adjacent enemies gain 1 Blight counter (contagion).
- **Priority:** Medium

BLOOD FRENZY

- **Action:** If Hound HP ≤ 5 , gain +2 damage to all attacks. Move toward nearest enemy and attack for 6 damage.
- **Priority:** Critical

HUNT THE WEAK

- **Action:** Move toward enemy with lowest HP. Attack for 4 damage and apply 1 Blight counter.
- **Priority:** Medium

PACK TACTICS

- **Action:** If Casket is adjacent to an enemy, move toward that enemy. Attack for 3 damage with advantage (roll 2d6 for hit, use higher roll if using hit rolls).
- **Priority:** Medium

Command Response

- **RALLY:** Move up to 5 hexes (very fast beast)
- **ATTACK:** Attack target for 6 damage and apply 2 Blight counters
- **DEFEND:** Hound is too feral to defend (ignores this command, executes normal behavior)
- **HOLD:** Growl menacingly, enemies within 2 hexes have -1 to attacks (intimidation)

Special Ability: BLIGHT AURA

All enemies starting their turn adjacent to Blighted Hound gain 1 Blight counter automatically.

COMMAND CARDS (For Casket Decks)

Players can add these to their deck to better control support units:

RALLY CRY (Universal)

- **SP Cost:** 1
- **Type:** Utility
- **Range:** 6 hexes

- **Effect:** Choose 1 support unit within range. Move it up to its full movement distance to any visible hex.
- **Heat:** 0

COORDINATED STRIKE (Universal)

- **SP Cost:** 2
- **Type:** Attack, Command
- **Range:** Special
- **Effect:** Your support unit and your Casket both attack the same target. Both attacks gain +2 damage.
- **Heat:** 0

DEFENSIVE FORMATION (Universal)

- **SP Cost:** 1
- **Type:** Utility, Command
- **Range:** 4 hexes
- **Effect:** Move support unit adjacent to you. Both you and support unit gain +2 Defense until start of next turn.
- **Heat:** 0

FOCUSED ASSAULT (Requires Support Unit)

- **SP Cost:** 3
- **Type:** Attack, Command
- **Range:** 8 hexes
- **Effect:** Command support unit to attack target. Support unit makes 2 attacks instead of 1.
- **Heat:** 1

EMERGENCY RECALL (Universal)

- **SP Cost:** 0

- **Type:** Reactive, Command
- **Range:** 10 hexes
- **Effect:** When support unit would be destroyed, immediately teleport it adjacent to your Casket and prevent destruction (1 HP remains).
- **Heat:** 0
- **Keywords:** Reactive

INSPIRE (Universal)

- **SP Cost:** 2
- **Type:** Utility, Command
- **Range:** 6 hexes
- **Effect:** Support unit draws 2 Behavior cards, choose 1 to execute, discard the other.
- **Heat:** 0

EQUIPMENT SLOT COSTS

When building your deck, support units take up Equipment Slots:

Support Unit	Slots	Justification
Penitent Squad	2	Basic infantry
Ironclad Sentinel	3	Heavy artillery
Bone Thralls	2	Swarm, individually weak
Verdant Stalker	2	Fast scout
Forge Golem	4	Massive tank
Warp Familiar	3	Powerful mystic
Scrap Hauler	3	Support specialist
Blighted Hound	2	Fast beast

Trade-off: Taking a support unit means fewer equipment cards in your deck.

Example: - Scout Casket (Light): 1 Equipment Slot - Cannot take support units (not enough slots) - Assault Casket (Medium): 2 Equipment Slots - Can take Penitent Squad, Bone Thralls, Verdant Stalker, or Blighted Hound - Heavy Casket: 3 Equipment Slots - Can take any support except Forge Golem - Fortress Casket: 4 Equipment Slots - Can take any support unit, including Forge Golem

BALANCING SUPPORT UNITS

Advantages

- Extra actions per turn (support acts after Caskets)
- Tactical flexibility (flanking, drawing fire, objectives)
- Action economy (2 units acting instead of 1)

Disadvantages

- Uses Equipment Slots (fewer weapons/equipment)

- HP pool separate from deck (can be killed permanently)
- AI behavior can be unpredictable
- Requires SP to command effectively

Design Philosophy

Support units should feel like **force multipliers**, not replacements for player skill. They:

- Provide tactical options (zoning, flanking, tanking) - Create interesting decisions (do I command them or let AI handle it?) - Have weaknesses (low HP, predictable AI, costs equipment slots)

ADVANCED RULES

Support Unit Death

When support unit reaches 0 HP: - Remove from battlefield immediately - Place corpse marker (can be scavenged by Scrap Hauler) - Cannot be resurrected (except Bone Thralls with special ability) - Remains dead for rest of mission

Multiple Support Units

In larger games (3v3, 4v4), you can have 1 support unit per Casket. They activate in initiative order (roll 1d6 per support unit).

Support-Only Armies (Variant)

For scenario variety, one player can control multiple support units with no Casket: - 3 support units (total 8 Equipment Slots worth) - Example: Ironclad Sentinel + Bone Thralls + Verdant Stalker - Player draws 1 Behavior card per unit, executes all - Can use Rally/Command actions on any of their units (pool 5 SP total)

EXAMPLE TURN WITH SUPPORT UNIT

Setup: You control a Church Casket + Penitent Squad

Round 1:

1. Casket Turn

- Refresh 5 SP
- Play **MOVE** (1 SP): Move 2 hexes toward enemy
- Play **BLOOD OFFERING** (0 SP): Discard 2 cards, next attack +3 damage
- Play **FAITHFUL THRUST** (2 SP): Attack enemy for 7 damage (4 base + 3 Blood Offering)
- Draw 3 cards
- 2 SP remaining

2. Support Unit Phase (Penitent Squad)

- Draw 1 Behavior card: **CHARGE FORWARD**
- Execute: Squad moves 3 hexes toward nearest enemy
- Squad attacks for 3 damage (now adjacent)
- Discard Behavior card

3. Decision Point

You have 2 SP left. Do you: - **Option A:** Save SP for next turn - **Option B:** Spend 1 SP to RALLY squad into flanking position (rear arc) - **Option C:** Spend 2 SP to COMMAND: ATTACK for 4 damage instead of 3

You choose **Option B:** Spend 1 SP to Rally squad to enemy's rear arc.

Next Turn: Squad will naturally execute behavior from rear position (likely 4 damage due to flanking)

DESIGN NOTES

Why This System Works

1. **Action Economy:** Gives players more board presence without overwhelming control complexity
2. **Faction Identity:** Each faction's support units reflect their theme (Church = zealots, Dwarves = artillery/golems, Ossuarium = undead thralls)
3. **Strategic Depth:** Choosing equipment vs support unit is meaningful
4. **Emergent Gameplay:** AI behaviors + command system creates dynamic situations

Playtesting Priorities

- Are support units too powerful for their cost?
- Is the AI behavior system intuitive?
- Do Command cards feel impactful enough?
- Does the Equipment Slot trade-off feel fair?

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