

LORE

A groundbreaking discovery has been revealed to the entire world: a sprawling city underneath the very feet of humanity, appearing seemingly out of nowhere. Everyone is in a scramble to delve into the so-called Crumbling Expanse in an attempt to take away relics for their own, or to contribute to the every growing body of human history, which has been overturned.

Along the way, they realize they are being watched. Sentinels, the so-called Ancients of this bygone civilization, remain steadfast in its original duty: protect the city at all costs. With this immense task, each Sentinel has been given near-absolute authority over the area they patrol, being able to control the very fabric of time and space, and even the fates of the Expedition, with the exception of the Ruins itself, which acts on its own accord.

The so-called Expedition, composed by 4 Archaeologists shoved into the deep end, now has to make it out alive, with equipment being sent to them only by sending off Trinkets to the world above in exchange. They have to manage risks, being noticed by the Ancient, and salvage everything they can, including Relics which seemingly adapt to the notion of a “historic artifact” known by humanity, melding into false visages of fictional and real

The Ancient’s duty is the same as ever: protect the city, and protect its history.

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CREDITS



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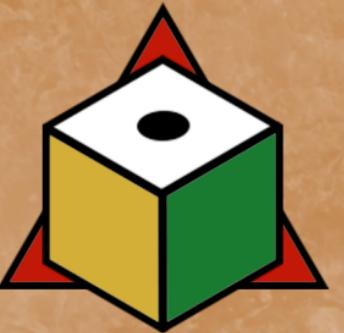
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AGAINST THE RUINS

Number of Players: 3-5
(5 Players are highly recommended)

For Ages 12+

1 ANCIENT BOARD



4 EXPEDITION BOARDS



5 RULE CARDS

1 Ancient, 4 Expedition



16 WHITE DICE



16 GREEN DICE



16 GOLD DICE



100 TRINKETS

optional: 25 each of unique patterns



4 RELIC TOKENS



DICE TOKENS

- 10 ±3 Dice Tokens
- 16 ±4 Dice Tokens
- 16 ±5 Dice Tokens
- 16 ±6 Dice Tokens



1 PHASE MARKER

COMPO

CARD TYPES - SPECIAL

SPECIAL CARDS

- Ability cards are permanent cards of the Expedition, allowing them to aid themselves or other Archaeologists out of phase. These cards do not count towards the hand size.



- Relic cards are analogous to Ability cards of the Archaeologists, except way more powerful, but also vulnerable to being stolen when Exposed. These cards do not count towards the hand size.



- Influence cards are event cards that are played by the Ancient right after the Refresh/Pre-Round. These are shuffled randomly within the Ancient's Deck. The Ancient cannot draw an additional card to replace the played Influence Card.



- Negative cards are detrimental cards for the Expedition, which are only shuffled to their deck via Influence Cards. These have a corresponding Risk Value, allowing it to be used to prevent Danger, but carries undesirable effects.

CLARIFICATIONS

DANGER - represents an Archaeologist's life, in reverse: a higher Danger means more peril. Each Danger Point is marked with a Green Dice of the corresponding Archaeologist, which means the more Danger they are in, the less dice they can roll. 4 Danger eliminates an Archaeologist from play.

HAZARD - is a mechanic preventing the Ancient from playing stronger cards. This value is determined by the Alert Value: Hazard One is equivalent to an Alert Value between 0 and 3, Hazard Two is equivalent to an Alert Value between 4 and 7, and Hazard Three is equivalent to an Alert Value between 8 and 10.

DISABLE/REMOVE - means that a dice is excluded from this round's Roll Phase. If the disabled or removed die is a Pip Dice, these are discarded after the round instead.

UNEXPECTED SCENARIOS

Insufficient Dice: If any player has insufficient dice to roll, either for themselves or against a particular player (for the Ancient), then they roll no dice. If they have Flat Value Tokens on play, these are added to their roll score, which is 0. If a player has insufficient dice either to give to another player, or to be disabled via card effects, whatever dice they have are given or disabled. If new dice are gained after, these dice does not fulfill the cards.

No Trinkets, but Relics in Play: If at the later parts of the game, the Ancient can no longer award Trinkets, but still has Relics in play, game continues, but the Ancient does not reward Trinkets anymore. If, through cards or Relics, the Ancient gains Trinkets, then normal game resumes. Trinkets that should have been gained in previous rounds are voided.

OVERVIEW

Take on the role of one of four Archaeologists as they delve to a strange ruin previously unknown to mankind, or be one of the derelict Ancient Sentinels brought to life by the wanton looting of your domain.

Play cards, use Abilities, expose Relics, and roll dice to earn Trinkets or prevent losing them. With a massive deck for both the Expedition and the Ancient, as well as multiple Abilities and Relics to choose from every game, each expedition allows for a varied playstyle where you have to constantly adapt and strategize.

Will the Expedition live to tell the tale of a bygone era, or will the Ancient prevent further destruction of the Crumbling Expanse?

CARD ANATOMY

Each card in *DELVE* contains various identifiers referring to the various mechanics in the game. Below is a basic breakdown of what each card may contain. Not all cards will have the same identifier; this is an asymmetrical game, after all.

HAZARD LEVEL

locks an Ancient Card
on low Alert Values

TRINKET COST

how much Trinkets to
spend in order to use a
card



PLAYER

which kind of player
can play this card

DESCRIPTION

contains card effects

CARD TYPE

distinction between
similar card
backgrounds

RISK SCORE

the sum of which is
compared to the Alert
Value on the Ancient
Board

COOLDOWN

determines when a relic
or ability can be reused

BOARDS

The Ancient Board is composed of a Trinket Field in the center surrounded by the Alert Meter, the Phase Segments, 4 Card Slots, an Ancient Draw Pile, an Expedition Draw Pile, and an Influence Discard Pile.



DICE TYPES

PIP DICE are temporary dice. When rolled or disabled, they are discarded and removed from play. They may be reused when a card says "Gain 1 Pip Die" or similar effects.



WHITE DICE are permanent dice. These are not discarded when rolled or disabled, but they do not count as "life" for the Archaeologists.



COLORED DICE are permanent dice of the players.

- GREEN DICE are used for Danger Tokens; once used this way, they cannot be rolled anymore unless a card removes Danger.



- GOLD DICE are the Ancient's Dice, representing the machinations of the Ruins they reside in.



CARP TYPES - STANDARD

- Starter cards are what every player holds during the beginning of the game. These are low-no cost, low value cards that allow players to still participate without much worry of thinking very early on.



- Effect cards are any card that primarily affects any other phase or subphase than the Rally or Roll.

Functionally, the only distinction between Action and Effect cards is its primary target: the Roll, or any other mechanic.



- Instant cards are cards whose effects resolve immediately. Some of these cards can only be played on a specific phase; the card's description will tell this.



- Action cards are any card that primarily affects the Rally or Roll Phase. Action cards may have Effects in its description.



MENTS

16 RISK TOKENS



**16
COOLDOWN
TOKENS**



10 ALERT TOKENS

5 additional
with the set



16 EXPEDITION STARTER CARDS

**5 STARTER
ANCIENT CARDS**

**80 EXPEDITION
CARDS**

**60 ANCIENT
CARDS**

**6 RELIC
CARDS**

6 ABILITY CARDS

48 PIP DICE



12 INFLUENCE CARDS

**12 NEGATIVE
CARDS**



SET

PHASE BREAKDOWN

RECOUP/DANGER PHASE

OCCURRING EVENTS:

- Discard all used or disabled Pip Dice
- Return any disabled or borrowed Permanent Dice to original holder.
- Compare Risk Score to Current Alert Level:
If an Archaeologist's Risk Score is equal or higher than the Current Alert Level, nothing happens.
Otherwise, Increase Danger by 1.
- Discard/Banish Placed Cards, returning all Tokens to the Common Pool.
- Reduce all Cooldowns by 1.

ELIMINATION METHODS

(ARCHAEOLOGIST)

An Archaeologist is Eliminated from play when their Danger reaches 4 at any point. Any Trinkets and Cards they hold are not discarded; these are permanently removed from the current game session.



VICTORY CONDITIONS

The game session ends in two ways: an Ancient Victory, or an Expedition Victory, depending on the conditions.

ROUND FLOW

ENTRY STAGE (ROUND ZERO)

- READY PHASE (EXPEDITION)
RALLY PHASE
ROLL PHASE
REWARD PHASE
RECOUP PHASE

DELVE STAGE (ROUNDS 1+)

- PRE-ROUND/REFRESH PHASE
READY PHASE (ALL PLAYERS)
RALLY PHASE
ROLL PHASE
REWARD PHASE
RECOUP PHASE

ANCIENT VICTORY

The Ancient wins when there are no more Archaeologists in play, which is achieved through increasing their Danger to 4.

EXPEDITION VICTORY

The Expedition wins when there are no more Trinkets AND Relics on the Ancient Board. Eliminated Archaeologists share the victory.

TOKENS

→ **TRINKET** - is the main resource of the game, one of the two goals of the Expedition, and one of the two lifeforce of the Ancients. There is exactly 100 physical Trinkets in standard play.



When Trinkets are spent during play, the spent Trinkets enter the shared Trinket Discard.

→ **DICE TOKENS** - used when adding or subtracting from the ROLL Score of any player (e.g. -5, +3). These numbers are represented by the Dice Tokens, which represent set values of the dice.



→ **COOLDOWN** - triggers when an Ability or Relic is used. Cooldown Tokens are placed on top of the used card, preventing use until there are no more Cooldown Tokens remaining.



ALERT - a mechanic designed to force the Expedition to riskier cards, as well as for the Ancient to be able to play stronger cards. Alert passively increases by 1 after the Entry Stage, unless prevented by specific cards.



HAZARD - Divisions for the Alert System. The Ancient can only play cards whose Hazard Value is equal or lower than the highest Hazard Level this round.

RISK - Risk is represented by the sum of the Risk Values present in most Expedition cards as well as additional Risk Tokens from other Archaeologists' actions. As long as the total Risk of an



Archaeologist is not lower than the current Alert Value, they will be safe. Otherwise, they will gain Danger.

Each Danger Point is marked with a Green Dice of the corresponding Archaeologist, which means the more Danger they are in, the less dice they can roll.

SET-UP

Each Archaeologist takes the following:

- 1 Expedition Board
- 1 Rule Card
- a 4-card deck containing Trowel, Scrolls, Precautions, and Cutter
- 4 Green Dice
- 2 White Dice
- 8 Pip Dice
- 1 Ready Marker

Optional: Each Archaeologist may hold a box or pouch to hold their components or to roll dice.

The Ancient takes the following:

- the Ancient Board
- 1 Rule Card
- 100 Trinkets (*bowl optional*)
- a 5-card deck containing 2 Guardians, 2 Loose Gravels, and 1 Surveillances
- a 12-card deck containing 4 of each: Ruin, Snare, Stumble
- 16 Gold Dice
- 16 Pip Dice
- 4 Relic & Exposed Tokens
- 1 Ready Marker

A Common Pool is placed on the side, typically a box with segregation, but may also just be a large empty space, which holds the following:

- Dice Tokens, sorted by value
- 16 Cooldown Tokens
- 16 Risk Tokens
- 10 Alert Tokens

The Ancient serves as the main facilitator of the game. Other players may aid the Ancient in this duty by allocating tokens or dice as the Ancient resolves cards.

The Expedition, or the Archaeologist Team, chooses an Ability from 6 cards. The Ancient chooses an ability from 6 cards. Players may either select the card, or draw from a shuffled pile face down. Everyone must decide which method to choose for all players to ensure fairness. The rest of the Abilities and Relics can be stored away; they will not be used for the rest of this game.

In the event that there are less than 4 Archaeologists during the start of the game, the Ancient removes 4 Gold Dice, 1 Relic Card, 1 Relic Token, and 25 Trinkets for each Archaeologist missing.

Note: This will make the game unbalanced!

PLAYER ACTIONS

IN PHASE

CARD DRAW/DISCARD - Draw or discard cards until you hold exactly 5 cards. Relic and Ability Cards do not count towards this hand limit.

If a deck becomes empty, discarded cards are reshuffled and added back to the deck.

REVEAL INFLUENCE (ANCIENT) - Show any Influence Card drawn, and resolve its effects individually. No cards are drawn to replace any Influence Cards.

ACTIVATE RELICS (ANCIENT) - Flip a Relic Card face-up to Activate it. If it affects Rerolls and Value Setting, the effect resolves during the Roll Phase, else effects resolve during the Rally Phase.

After the round, flip the Relic Token to its Exposed Side. Flip the Relic Card face-down, and place Cooldown Tokens equal to the number indicated on the card.

Activating a Relic is not considered as placing a card.

While there are Unexposed Relics, a Relic must either be Activated or Exposed (without activating) every round.

PLAYER ACTIONS

Upon placing a card, the corresponding Trinket Cost must be placed on top. Additive effects, such as gaining dice or replacing with Dice Tokens, are performed in advance if players wishes so.

To signify the end of one's turn, the Archaeologist place their Ready Token ahead of the Danger Meter, while the Ancient places their Ready Token on top of the Influence Discard Pile.

If a player cannot or refuses to play a card:

The Ancient discards 4 Trinkets during the Recoup Phase
The Archaeologist gains 1 Danger during the Recoup Phase.

OUT OF PHASE

PLACE CARDS - Every player must place at least one card on a Card Slot every round, aside from the Entry Stage where the Ancient cannot play any cards. Card effects are resolved after the Ready Phase.

Using an Instant Card are not considered as placing a card.

USE ABILITY (ARCHAEOLOGIST) - Abilities may be a persistent effect, a one-time use, or activated during specific phases (or any time). Abilities must be resolved once used before play can proceed. After use, Cooldown Tokens equal to the number indicated on the card is placed on top of the Ability Card, now face-down.

Ability Cards are only flipped face-up once there are no more Cooldown Tokens remaining, unless it is a one-time use.

Using an Ability is not considered as placing a card.

STRATEGIZE - ARCHAEOLOGISTS are free to converse and plan with each other, and may even look at cards of other Archaeologists.

However, they cannot:

- place cards for any other Archaeologist other than themselves;
- trade trinkets and cards with other Archaeologists; or
- roll for other Archaeologists unless a card states otherwise.

PHASE BREAKDOWN

REFRESH/PRE-ROUND

OCCURRING EVENTS:

- Resolve Effects from Last Round.
- Card Draw/Discard
- Reveal Influence Cards
- Alert Increases by 1 (Passive)

READY/CARD PHASE

OCCURRING EVENTS:

- Activate Relics
- Initiate Heist
- Place Cards

Ancient only participates in the Ready Phase after the Entry Stage.

RALLY PHASE

OCCURRING EVENTS:

- Placed Card effects are resolved, starting with the Ancient's, then by order of which Archaeologist readied first.

RESOLVING CARDS

If a card effect necessitates the use of a dice or token, these are placed on top of the said card. If the card affects other Archaeologists, dice or tokens are placed ahead of the Danger Meter. If the card affects the Ancient, tokens are placed on top of the opposing (or all) Ancient Card Slots.

Trinkets on top of resolved cards are placed on the Trinket Discard.

ROLL PHASE

Where strategy meets an immense amount of luck (based on the number of dice), the Roll Phase determines whether the Archaeologists succeed in an exploration.

OCCURRING EVENTS:

- All players roll all non-disabled dice on hand.
- Reroll effects from cards are resolved.
- Other effects during the Roll Phase are resolved.

REWARD PHASE

The Archaeologist gains Trinkets during this Phase, much to the Ancient's chagrin.

OCCURRING EVENTS:

- Archaeologist gains Trinkets:
On a Successful Roll, gain 4.
On a Failed Roll, gain 1.

If a Heist has been Initiated, Heist Mechanics are resolved. Refer to Player Actions for more detail:

On a Successful Roll, Claim Trinket, Gain 1 White Die.
On a Failed Roll, Danger Increases by 1.

-UP



- Place the Relic Cards of the Ancient on each Card Slot of the Ancient Board, face down. Order does not matter; each card may be placed anywhere.

- Place the Relic Tokens in front of the Relic Cards, Relic side up.
- Place the Ability Cards of each Archaeologist on the Ability Slot in the Expedition Board, face up. All other cards are either not placed in any of the boards, or held by the players in the case of the Starter Cards.
- The Common Pool is kept off the board. If it is in a box, it can be given around, but must always reside outside of the board.
- Place the Phase Marker on top of the Ready Segment.