

# GOBLINS IN SHADOW - READ ME FIRST!

May 8, 2020 – v0.2

Thank you for purchasing or claiming a community copy of **GOBLINS IN SHADOW**! Before you get into the game, I want to clarify and explain a few things about the current rulebook and game state.

## V0.2 UPDATES:

- There's a new playbook to try – the HEART. As the Heart of the cell, you try to keep your companions safe and bring about the revolution with passion and inspiration.
- A “Flow of Play” section has been added to “Playing the Game.” This explains more clearly how the game is meant to be played and how the game's loop is intended to function.
- A new “Arcade Mode” variant has been added! If you want to play the game as a one-shot and want a more exciting, high-stakes experience, follow these rules to create veteran characters about to embark on their final mission.
- Payoff rules have been overhauled so you're no longer paid in COIN, but FERVOR, a measure of other goblins' revolutionary spirit. There are rules for spending it to take additional actions or gain other unique benefits.
- You can now claim city districts for the revolution! The rules at the end of the PDF allow you to unlock permanent bonuses for your crew by spending Fervor you earn during missions.
- The HAND playbook now correctly tells you to mark the TINKER action.

## **The following information is still applicable and has not changed since v0.1:**

**This is not a finished game.** Don't stop reading – this game is fully playable right now (and if it's not, let me know on Itch or Twitter). This edition of **GOBLINS IN SHADOW** is in Early Access. That means it's not in the form I want it to ultimately be in, and it's going to take some time and effort to get there. I wrote this game in a blur for #goblinweek2020 as a challenge to myself and decided I liked the idea enough to commit to fleshing it into a complete game. Instead of releasing it as a free prototype, I charged for it because you're getting a fair amount of worldbuilding in this proof-of-concept. That money will help support me as I continue working on the game to write new mechanics, add more lore and playbooks, pay artists for illustrations, and layout everything in a slick and readable presentation.

**The current rulebook assumes you've played an RPG.** There are terms used often in the game text like NPC, 1d, etc. that you probably know if you've played another RPG. If this is your first time playing an RPG, this might not be the best entry point into the hobby. There are lots of other great games that make good one-shots and first games! Try one of those first, then come back to **GOBLINS**. I'll wait.

**The rules assume you're a little familiar with Blades in the Dark™.** If you've already read or played Blades, you may notice a lot of things are missing (i.e. Crews, Turf, a lot of lore details, varied character progression, flashbacks, etc.). That's because I wrote this first draft of **GOBLINS** based on a *hack* of Blades, called World of Blades, that strips things down into a more approachable one-shot game or first experience with the system's ideas and mechanics.

Here's a quick and dirty guide to getting started playing as soon as you finish reading the rulebook:

1. **Whoever's going to be the GM, read the book in full.** If you get lost or forget a rule, check the headings. If there's not a rule for something you're trying to do, just make a Fortune Roll for it. If it's more of a lore/setting question, or something a Fortune Roll wouldn't cover, just make a judgment call; I trust your judgment. Let me know if it's something you think I should mention in the next draft!
2. **Explain the basic premise of the game to everyone.** You and your friends are going to be telling a story about goblins in a clockwork fantasy world, trying to start a revolution against the elven invaders who conquered their home. It's like Styx: Master of Shadows meets Assassin's Creed and Thief: The Dark Project.
3. **Make characters.** Each playbook is unique, so you can't have two Arms in your cell of goblins. As you go, don't forget to ask a few questions about everyone's characters. There are no mechanics for turf, crews, or hideouts in **GOBLINS** right now; assume everyone has somewhere to live or a hideout of some kind, but nothing too fancy or secret. The characters have all been together for a little bit; assume you have already pulled a few jobs together and know how each other operates (and some, but not all, of their secrets). How does everyone know each other? How did the cell come together?
4. **Start in the action.** Once everyone has a character and introduces them, create a score together and jump into the action. Each score starts with you just inside wherever you're pulling that job. Describe the situation, consider what obstacles might be immediately nearby, and start playing. Always ask "**What do you do?**" after introducing a new story element or complication.

5. **Make clocks.** Add progress clocks for obstacles as they come up, and let them cover a variety of scopes. “Suspicious Guards” might tick every time players make noise or fail a roll while infiltrating an area; “Ticking Time Bomb” might start up after the cell plants an explosive and has to escape; and “Develop Elf-killing Poison” might come from a downtime project that ticks when players work on it after every score.
6. **Explore RP during downtime but keep the pressure on.** After a score, let players have some scenes between each other or with allies or contacts to set up jobs, gather intel, develop their characters, or handle their obligations. Remind them of the dangers of being a hunted revolutionary. Be a fan of their efforts but provide complications for them to overcome.
7. **Take a break and run another score.** The game is all about what happens during a score. What’s great about the way Forged in the Dark games work is that you don’t need to spend hours of a session planning a heist – you start in the action and work from there. The rules are all about doing things during scores, so keep them coming but don’t be afraid to take breaks to plan some ideas out beforehand. Scores also don’t have to be long! You can probably run two scores comfortably in a 3-4 hour session of gameplay.
8. **Always build towards the end.** Remember that this isn’t a game you just play forever until you get bored or everyone can’t make it to game night anymore. The game is *over* when everyone takes their sixth advance, and you pull one last job to try and kill one of the elven ministers ruling the city. After your first score, try to think of ways to connect what happened to a bigger picture. Did you learn something about how to access the Citadel? Did you save an NPC who could help you later on, or create an enemy who will chase everyone for the rest of the game? Do you know what minister you want to try and kill, and if so, how can you connect each score to their schemes and themes?
9. **Have fun!** I know it’s trite, but this is a role-playing *game* and a game is supposed to be fun over everything else.

Again, thank you for supporting this game and my game design journey. If you have feedback about the game, I’d love to hear from you – leave a comment on Itch or hit me up on Twitter. I have a lot on my plate so I can’t guarantee any kind of release schedule or roadmap, but I’d love to add more playbooks, thematic art, expanded lore, and exciting new mechanics that really make **GOBLINS** stand on its own apart from other Forged in the Dark games. I hope you enjoy your time with the game!

Cheers,

Simon (@LuchaLibris)