

Rise and Fall of the Empire (A 9Qs-Hack)

Purpose: (1) To serve my own twisted desire to write stories about empires, (2) to generate sandbox campaign settings

What you need:

- 1) A random idea generator. According to 9Qs, a random idea generator is “any product or application that produces non-specific yet evocative words or images which trigger new ideas when combined with the contextual elements of a particular situation”. Examples would be Rory’s Story Cubes, the Mythic GM emulator, or a random word/image generator. For the sake of saving space, I will use the abbreviation RIG.
- 2) Pen and Paper to take notes.

Formation of the <Empire>

1: What is the Empire? Come up with the name of the Empire. Create the “Imperial Capital” (a planetary homeworld, a prosperous city, a military base, etc.) that serves as the headquarters of the Empire.

2: Why did the Empire come into existence?

Write down a slogan that the Empire uses to justify its territorial acquisitions to both others and itself. Use the RIG to generate the *real* reason the Empire is conquering territory, corrupting your existing slogan (but not actually contradicting it). Call this ‘real reason’ the “Motive”.

3: What does the Empire rule over? Write down three territories and describe each territory using one sentence. (Example: The Temple of Reus is in charge of the state religion of the Empire.) Use the RIG to determine how the Empire conquered each territory. Note that none of these territories willingly agreed to serve the Empire.

Golden Age of <Empire>

4: What did the Empire contribute to civilization? Write down one positive aspect about the Empire. Call this the “Virtue”.

5: What is the Empire’s hidden dark side?

Write down one negative aspect about the Empire. Call this the “Vice”.

6: How does the Empire’s period of prosperity change their moral character (for the worse)?

Corrupt the “Motive” for the Empire, using the Empire’s “Vice” as inspiration.

The Revolutionary Era

7: What major Crisis does the Empire face?

Use the RIG to generate the major Crisis. Write down why the Empire’s current ruling class refused to solve the major Crisis, using the Empire’s “Vice” as an inspiration.

8: How does the Empire solve this problem?

Create a Usurper who will take over the Empire and implement a solution to the Empire’s Crisis. This solution is guaranteed to work.

9: What other reforms does the Usurper do?

To better consolidate power over the Empire, the Usurper will corrupt one “Virtue”. Use the RIG to determine what the corruption is.

10: What is the reactionary response to the Usurper’s progressive reforms? Choose one province. This province declares independence from the Empire and seeks to restore the pure, uncorrupted “Virtue” of old in that province.

11: How does the Usurper respond? Determine a solution to explain how the Empire will deal with this rebellion. Use the RIG to determine how this solution ends up failing horribly, enabling the reactionaries to stay independent and continue harassing the Empire.

The Barbarians¹ Invade

12: Who are these Barbarians? Use the RIG to determine who these barbarians are. Also use the RIG to determine their motive to coming to the Empire.

13: How does the Usurper deal with these Barbarians? Determine a solution to the barbarian problem (either violent or non-violent). This solution is guaranteed to fail horribly. Use the RIG to determine how.

14: What damage do the Barbarians do to the Empire? Choose one province. The barbarians destroy that province. Choose another province. The barbarians settle in this province, turning it into their own independent kingdom. Use the RIG to determine how the barbarians corrupt their new province.

Revival of <Empire>

By this time, only the Imperial Capital remains.

15: Who will restore the Empire to its former glory? Use the RIG to determine the Savior, a charismatic barbarian who admires the Empire's superior culture. Also use the RIG to determine their motive to coming to the Empire and wanting to take it over.

16: How does the Savior take over the Empire? Write down how the Savior overthrew the decadent Usurper and bring much-needed strength and vigor to the Empire.

17: What reforms does the Savior do? Use the RIG to corrupt the "Vice".

18: What territory does the Savior try to reconquer? Choose a province that is undestroyed (either the independent reactionaries in Q9 or the barbarian kingdom in Q14). The Savior will try to conquer that province. Use the RIG to determine why he failed.

Collapse

19: What major Crisis does the Empire now face? Use the RIG to generate the major Crisis. The Savior ignores this Crisis, and instead focuses on conquering territory and restoring the Empire's former glory. The population becomes angry.

20: How does this Crisis lead to the Savior's downfall and the Empire's collapse? Now, you describe how the new Savior's inability to even try to solve this crisis leads to their overthrow, using the Empire's "Vice" as inspiration. Then the barbarian kingdom in Q14 will intervene to "restore order and stability". Describe how the barbarians conquer the Imperial Capital and then successfully resolve the major Crisis, using the Empire's "Virtue" as inspiration.

Rebirth (and Re-Death) (Optional)

The Barbarians has decided to adopt the Empire as their own, and now many Barbarians live in the Imperial Capital. Go back to Q3, and continue the game from there, ignoring Q4-Q6 and treating the Barbarians' previous kingdom as a province of the Empire. You may choose to have the barbarians conquer the independent reactionaries' province, or to ignore that province in favor of juicer conquests.

¹ Based on the time period that the Empire is located in, you may choose to replace "barbarian" with "extremist", "pirate", "terrorist", "aliens", or "imperialists trying to conquer territory for their own empire".