

THE SANGUINE DYNASTY

It is an age long past of swords and shields, aqueducts and torches. The Empire of Andorra breathes and grows. The neighboring countries have been swallowed up by war, their citizens turned into slaves of the Empire. Other countries look at the Emperor with a mixture of scorn, awe and fear. For now, all relations are tenuous but there's always the chance that things will go wrong fast. The Empire rarely wants for trade and supplies; the lands are lush with necessary goods. The craftsmen and builders have no trouble finding the materials they need as long as they profess fealty to the Emperor.

It's the citizens and slaves who want more than what they have. The Emperor is cruel and callous, their whims changing depending on their current plans. Whole city blocks can be destroyed by soldiers to intimidate the citizens and root out any resistance. There is always the fear that there will be war against other countries or a war against itself. Even the Gods have been banished. You are the only people with the privilege and opportunity to make a difference. You are the Children of the Emperor, sons and daughters allowed to live in the palace. The Emperor has had many children and you are those lucky few allowed within its walls to be groomed for their future plans. But you are not spared their wrath and cruel treatment. The Emperor must die to bring peace to the Empire and the lands, and you don't want to see the Empire destroyed in the process. And you're not capable of bringing them down while they're still in the peak of their health and mind.

Killing a god takes time, after all.

CHARACTER CREATION

As Children, you're afforded a certain degree of freedom to do as you will; your parent doesn't exactly care about you most of the time. This gives you freedom to plan and execute them when you're not being good boys and girls. In a few sentences, write down your character's story, personality, heritage and what plans the Emperor has for them. Children are generally (young) adults, old enough to know how to fight back.

Your character has four stats: Cunning, Finesse, Grace and Vitality.

Cunning is intelligence, knowledge, intuition.

Finesse is doing things carefully and delicately.

Grace is social manipulation and deception.

Vitality is agility, fighting and strength.

Characters start with a 0 in all stats. You can raise two of them by 1 and one of them by 2. You can't add them to the same stat.

Characters also start with **Health** and **Stability**. Both are set at 5. Health is decreased by damage and raised by time and care. Stability represents how mentally sound the character is. It can be spent one point at a time to force things to go your way, or help pull a victory out of a defeat through desperation, but it can never be replenished. Low Stability means your judgment is clouded and your mind isn't so sound; you're more likely to make mistakes or do things the wrong way.

HOW TO PLAY

Remove the Emperor without giving up the Empire.

That's the basic gist of the game. You and your siblings want the people of Andorra safe and secure. You want to rule on

your own and salvage what you can. But your actions have consequences, and success would be *so* much easier if you agree to the demands of powerful people. On the other hand, to promise power, land, people for aid might end up dooming the Empire you want to save.

Play is simple and just requires pencils, paper and a few d6s. To do anything, roll 2d6 and add the number of the applicable stat to the result.

7 or lower: failure

8-10: a weak success with complications.

11+: a complete success.

A weak success result means that technically what you did succeeded, even if it's rife with results you don't want. The Historian adds complications that result from your efforts and that you can choose to address and deal with. This can be anything from leaving evidence at the scene of your crimes, a diplomat adding their own stipulations to your negotiations or being able to climb a wall but getting spotted by the guards. Success should be attainable but not easy; your teeth are not as sharp as your parent's. You may be educated but you do not know how to use your abilities to their best strengths.

Combat and damage follows the same rules. Damage results from a failure or a weak success, depending on if it applies or not. Damage removes points from Health and can be healed by making a Vitality roll when you're not in combat to address the harm or at the rate of a point per session. 0 health means that the character is incapacitated and has to receive attention or rest to recover some health.

In case of death, the Emperor has many other children to bring into the palace. Besides, the death of one will serve as a good warning to the others. Feel free to roll up another to join the other Children.

THE EMPEROR

The Emperor can be male or female, depending on what the players or the Historian feel like. The Emperor has stats too. From the beginning of play, the Emperor always has 6 Cunning, 6 Finesse, 6 Grace and 6 Vitality. The Historian doesn't need to roll to use them; these just indicate that the Emperor is capable, smart and healthy. The Emperor also has Health and Stability. Stability represents their grasp of reality and control over their own mind and thoughts. The goal of the Children is to lower the Emperor's stats and stability through their sabotage, to make them mortal so they can win.

RUNNING THE GAME

You need 3-5 players and 1 person to be the Historian. The Historian is the game master and also controls the Emperor. When each player has a Child they should answer these two questions:

1: what do they fear most about the Emperor?

2: what does the Emperor love more than them?

The Historian should feel free to come up with other Targets for the Children to focus on.

For the Historian: you do not need to roll for anything. You simply react and set up obstacles depending on how good or bad the Children do. The point of the game is not to punish

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them for rebelling but to challenge them and give them hard odds to overcome.

Ideally, every session should involve the Children interacting with the Empire, its citizens and the Emperor by **picking** a Target near and dear to the Emperor's heart, **planning** out how to harm it, **asking** for aid (if they want to), **going through with the plan** and **dealing with the repercussions**.

Picking and **planning** involve scouting for knowledge and info and talking over their plan of attack with the Historian. It's a dialogue between the Historian and the players. You're also determining how this will hinder the Emperor. All plans will cost the Emperor one point of stability, but it will also cause their stats to weaken. The players get to choose which 3 of the Emperor's stats will have 1 point removed.

Asking is when the Children go to sources of aid and try to negotiate for something that would help make their plan easier. Distractions, poisons, keys, guard shifts, anything they couldn't get on their own or couldn't convince others to do things for them. All aid has a price, though, and the price should be something that would cost the Empire.

Going through with it involves getting your hands dirty, hiding evidence and cleaning up witnesses.

Dealing with the repercussions is very important. When the plan is done, the Emperor *will* look to see who is responsible. They will come home angry and they will wonder if you and your siblings have anything to do with it. Expect questions and accusations. When all's said and done, the Emperor will retaliate.

Retaliation depends on how the plan is committed, who is affected and what evidence and clues are left (if any). The Historian should think of a realistic retaliation depending on the Emperor's Stability and their character and personality. A first retaliation might involve rounding up a neighborhood of supposed resistance sympathizers while a fourth might involve a military purge of citizens to set an example. The Emperor might be spurred into a war against another country or they might just try to bring the Empire down to deny it to an imagined enemy. If any evidence is left behind that points to a Child, then the Emperor is more likely to try and punish or kill that Child instead. If things should escalate in *that* vein, however...

Children who are marked for punishment or death should do their best to escape the palace immediately. They may continue to be in play, but they will have to find safety outside of Andorra or find a sympathetic place to hide. Those who run can ask for aid from where they're hiding.

AID AND ENEMIES

These groups can be called upon for aid or they can be enemies, depending on how things play out and how the Emperor treats them.

The Resistance is a group of citizens and guards who are stockpiling arms to attempt to overthrow the Empire from the inside. The Resistance has eyes and ears everywhere and their infiltration of the Empire can be used to get damn near anything the Children could need. However, they tend to ask for power and control in return, meaning that you will have to share the throne and victory with questionable company. After all, a revolution is just a 360 degree turn.

Other countries will offer protection to any fleeing Children, or the Children can talk to a diplomat in the capital. The other countries offer military might and strength along with spies and assassins, able to provide goods and strength to your coup at the cost of future loyalty. They can ask for anything when you have the power. The other countries are:

Bayhelm: an icy country to the north in desperate need of lumber and goods they cannot grow, jealous of the prosperity of Andorra.

Isenveld: an insular religious country offended by the Emperor's proclamations and banishment of the pantheon.

Lycea: a large confederacy of city states who are uneasy with how fast Andorra is growing and absorbing everything around it.

Ricton: a southern country who despises Andorra's conquest of weaker countries and exploitation of slaves as cheap labor.

The Banished Gods are the polytheistic pantheon of gods that Andorra *used* to have until the Emperor chose otherwise. The Banished Gods come in many shapes and forms but yearn for recognition, scared of a country under the leadership of a person who claims to be a God. They will ask for worship in return, but their demands may increase.

The Old Ones are the primeval nature spirits and terrible creatures that ran free in the world until they decided to sleep. The Old Ones care not for the Emperor, but then again they hardly care for anything. The power and aid of the Old Ones is like fire: beautiful, wild, all-consuming. What will they ask for in return? Who can say.

ENDGAME

The game can end in two ways. First, they can bring the Stability of the Emperor down to 0. This places them at levels of helplessness *at the cost of* repeated retaliations that will get worse and worse. The Empire may survive or it may not depending on the actions of the Children and the Emperor, and the remaining citizens might have love or scorn, but this is a surefire way to bring down the Emperor. It's pragmatic to crush your enemy utterly, but it also makes you look no better. Second, the Children can try weakening the Emperor *some* and then attempting an assassination or coup (possibly with the help of their allies). In this case, the Empire *will* survive at the cost of a *chance of failure*. The Emperor will be able to fight back against the Children, but there is still a chance of success and it's more likely that the citizens will view your actions faithfully. If you fail, however, there is no trying again as new Children. The window is closed and it will be up to all the other forces in the lands.

After every successful plan, the Historian should ask the Children if they want to proceed to the endgame or if they want to continue with their plans.

After the endgame, the Historian should narrate what happens to Andorra, the Children and the world around it to close the story.

CREDITS: mad props to the Apocalypse Engine for inspiring me with the mechanics and conflict resolution. Everything else just stems from a love of low fantasy and healthy rebellion.