

Blades of the Damned

GM Guide, v1

It is the year 2007 of the Imperial Calendar. For eight years, the city of Mordheim has been a burnt out husk, full of precious wyrdstone drawing adventurers to their doom with the promise of riches. But for the last few years, the wyrdstone has dried up- warbands risk their lives for a single shard, or worse a purse of copper coins found in an old ruin. The long established mercenary companies began to disperse, the Elector Counts began to discuss reasserting control over the wayward region, and unreliable madmen babble about mass migrations of rat-men leaving the city. The ShadowLord must have looked on upon all this with a disappointed frown.

That all changed the night a young lad stumbled into Sigmar's Haven on the outskirts of the city, lacerated with a thousand cuts but grinning with a smile of pleasure. Driven nearly mad, he was carrying a hoard of wyrdstone. Suddenly the city was flush again with wealth which led to two things- senseless slaughter and endless hedonism. Rumors of dark powers swirled- surely this could not be a blessing from some benevolent power. New adventurers band together, reforming warbands for fame, glory, violence, and decadence.

And somewhere, a grin spreads over the face of the ShadowLord...

Getting Started

Blades of the damned is a narrative Mordheim campaign intended to run for 6 games. It consists of a series of linked scenarios culminating in a multiplayer scenario. The campaign is intended to help center the player's warbands as the main 'character' in their emerging narrative. In this campaign, while the city of Mordheim is brutal and unforgiving, players do have the chance to change the fate of the city for better or for worse. It utilizes narrative scenarios, the Mordheim map, and a simple 'Warband Experience' sheet to provide a more fulfilling narrative experience than an unstructured Mordheim league.

The Narrative Hook

The campaign takes place in the year 2007, 8 years after the comet of 1999. Wyrdstone has dried up, leaving Mordheim's streets empty. The Elector Counts are discussing restoring control over the area and warbands have begun to disperse. You the GM know (do not tell your players yet, they will find out over the weeks to come) that the Shadowlord, the mysterious unaligned demonic presence overseeing the pit, is displeased with this turn of events. He lures two empire nobles to Mordheim, Johann and Lothar von Gottleib, to Mordheim. Johann is an aspiring champion of Khorne, seeking to become a demon prince through a reign of blood. Lothar is an aspiring demon prince of Slaneesh, seeking to become a demon prince through unbridled decadence. This has led to a blood feud between the brothers.

After reaching the pit, Khorne opens a demonic portal for Johann, spilling demons into the street and attracting followers. Slaneesh does the same for Lothar. Both portals begin to spew

wyrdstone, which propagates through the city. Soon, both rumors of riches unseen since 1999, combined with violence in the streets, draws back aspiring warbands. This includes our players.

In session 1, things are comparatively quiet as the players make their way into the ruins in search of riches.

In session 2, a routine scrap with a rival warband is interrupted by a demon (Khorne or Slaneesh depending on the table), revealing the forces of Chaos in the city

In session 3, magical mists descend over the city, providing cover for players to fan out into the city

In session 4, rumors reach the warbands of young empire nobles drawn to the city to follow Johann or Lothar, and their attempts to find the princes are interrupted by chaos cultists

In session 5, the players search the ruins for a magical grimoire to gain knowledge of demons (for better or worse)

In session 6, the players have a multiplayer showdown at the pit confronting each other and Johann and Lothar. The outcome will decide the fate of the city for the coming years. Johann and Lothar will attempt to ascend to demon princehood, and if cast down will become gibbering spawn.

This story arc is drawn from the Realms of Chaos Slaves to Darkness books, which describe Khorne and Slaneesh in detail for the first time (including their rivalry). Johann and Lothar are characters in the marginalia fluff stories. You could easily reskin this to include any two competing magical factions as needed based on your campaign.

What you need as a GM

To run this campaign as a GM, you'll need some players! Ideally they will help you get appropriate minis and terrain as well. This can be scaled up and down, but 3-8 is a great starting range. You'll also need:

1. The Mordheim map in a shareable format, as well as a way of marking this up. I printed mine physically on the poster printer at the shop at work, but roll20 or a similar digital platform would be workable
2. Enough Mordheim terrain and tables to make 1v1 or 1v1v1 games for your players
3. Printouts/digital copies of the Warband XP sheet and weekly scenarios for your players
4. NPCs and terrain (you can reskin this campaign easily to match your collection based on any two feuding factions)
 - a. (Optional) A halfling thief per table (Session 1)
 - b. One Khorne or Slaneesh demon per table (Session 2)
 - c. Cool cotton batting or similar to serve as the Mists (Session 3)
 - d. One wandering prince per table and 3-4 cultists of Khorne or Slaneesh per table (Session 4)
 - e. Treasure/grimoire markers (Session 5)
 - f. Two chaos portals, Two aspiring demon princes (one of Khorne one of Slaneesh-possessed models would work well), and 3-4 cultists of Khorne or Slaneesh (can be same as Session 4). Option is a Chaos dragon (Session 6)
5. A copy of the warband tracker spreadsheet for record keeping

6. (Optional) cool little freebies for your players, like stickers or kitbashed minis as end of campaign prizes

Getting The Campaign Started

To get this Campaign started:

1. Decide on house rules and share the player packet which each player, who creates a warband as normal
2. Share the warband XP sheet with each player, who should fill in the starting information of Name, Lore, and Warband Archetype
3. Have each player select a starting location on the map with appropriate bonus, and mark on the Map and the Warband XP sheet
4. Initialize your warband tracker spreadsheet with each player and warband name

New Mechanics

This campaign uses two new mechanics for a little spice from a rules and narrative perspective:

1. The map- each battle is fought over a location on the map determined per table. After the battle, the winning warband gains the location as turf and places a marker at that location (multiple markers may stack). The losing warband does not gain this location and must remove a marker at that location if they already have one. In a multiplayer game, the losing warband is the first to rout, and any other warbands gain the turf. Any warband with a marker on a map location may take advantage of the benefit (multiple warbands may benefit at the same time). Map locations should be marked down as turf in the Warband XP tracker.
2. Warband XP Tracker- This provides some flavor for each warband. Critically, it defines a warband archetype that determines themed secret objectives and upgrades. The warband gains XP after each battle as described in the XP Tracker as well as special scenario bonuses. When a Warband hits a new tier, they roll a warband upgrade (D6).

Weekly instructions

1. Set up your boards. I recommending printing out the scenario for each board, as you can then flip over to reveal random events on Sessions 2, 4, and 6
2. Have each player roll a D6 given their warband archetype and give them their secret mission- you may want to have these cut out in advance. If a player has a secret objective already from a previous mission, they may choose to keep the old one or replace it with the new one.
3. Read the weekly fluff to the players to set the scene
4. Pair up players - if you have an odd number allow for a 3-player multiplayer game using the Chaos in the Streets rules
 - a. Each player rolls a D6
 - b. The highest number gets to choose the location they are battling over in the city. On a tie, the warband with the lowest Warband XP chooses (if the same, reroll)
 - c. This map location will be added to the turf of the winning warband (and a marker placed on the map)
5. Play the scenario

6. After the scenario, help each table count up their Warband XP. Players may keep any unaccomplished secret objectives. If a warband hits a higher tier, the Player should roll a D6 and get the appropriate upgrade
7. Players should do the post-game sequence as normal
8. If a player can't make a given week it's ok- they can simply take +1 exp for surviving with all heroes and henchman groups, roll upgrades as normal, roll exploring with up to 3 heroes, and shop as normal (this should help keep them in the fight)
9. Each week in your Warband Tracker Spreadsheet, keep track of
 - Number of enemies out of action
 - Number of your own models out of action
 - Number of wyrdstone shards total (scenario and exploring)
 - Win/Lose/Draw
 - Number of turf locations
 - Warband XP and Tier
 - Notes on cool stuff that happened

Wrapup (Session 6)

Session 6 is intended to be a multiplayer game involving all players. If you have more than 6 players, you may need to split into 2 or more tables, with a portal on each table. Resolve the game as usual, the map location is always the Pit.

At the end of the game, you can read out one of the possible endings:

All players rout, two demon princes live:

The warriors of Mordheim fled in terror from the brothers. Their titanic struggle consumes the streets of Mordheim, and still does to this day. Demons and cultists prowl freely, locked in an endless death embrace. Your warbands cannot hold on in the city. One by one, you abandon your turf and slink back from whence you've come. The city of the damned is awash in riches, yes, but also an endless cycle of bloodshed. Somewhere, eyes glinting, the Shadowlord smiles. This had all gone perfectly according to plan....

All players rout, one demon prince live:

The warriors of Mordheim fled in terror from the triumphant Johann, who ascends to a Demon Prince of Khorne, while Lothar is cast down as a hideous spawn. His demons and cultists prowl freely, raiding out into the countryside beyond, a new chaotic cancerous sore deep in the heart of the Empire. Your warbands cannot hold on in the city. One by one, you abandon your turf and slink back from whence you've come. The city of the damned is awash in riches, yes, but also an endless cycle of bloodshed. Somewhere, eyes glinting, the Shadowlord smiles. This had all gone perfectly according to plan....

The warriors of Mordheim fled in terror from the triumphant Lothar, who ascends to a Demon Prince of Slaanesh, while Johann is cast down as a hideous spawn. His demons and cultists prowl freely, raiding out into the countryside beyond, a new chaotic cancerous sore deep in the heart of the Empire. Your warbands cannot hold on in the city. One by one, you abandon your turf and slink back from whence you've come. The city of the damned is awash in riches, yes,

but also an endless cycle of bloodshed. Somewhere, eyes glinting, the Shadowlord smiles. This had all gone perfectly according to plan....

Two demon princes are destroyed:

(Portals remain)

Howling in defeat and disbelief, Johann and Lothar are cast down from their lofty perches. Their ambitions shattered, they are transformed into gibbering spawn. Their swirling portals remain, filling the pit with eire light. From these, endless wyrdstone spews forth, continuing to flood the streets of Mordheim. New warbands arrive every day, challenging your dominance. But you are now the seasoned blades of the city, dominant as you control your turf and assert your will. The day may come when you are supplanted, but it is not this day. Blood and wyrdstone run in the streets, and things are as they were when the comet hit in 1999. Somewhere, eyes glinting, the Shadowlord smiles. This had all gone perfectly according to plan....

(Portals destroyed)

Howling in defeat and disbelief, Johann and Lothar are cast down from their lofty perches. Their ambitions shattered, they are transformed into gibbering spawn. Their chaotic portals are destroyed, and an eire calm settles in on the pit. Without these, the endless wyrdstone streams halt, and the city begins to dry up. Your warband remains dominant, vying for territory and the remaining resources, but slowly the explorers and adventurers begin to disperse. You hang on, but each day you grow poorer, and your conquests less great. Soon the city will be quiet again. Somewhere, eyes glinting, the Shadowlord frowns slightly. Their plans had been thwarted, but it would soon be time to try again anew.

Recommended End of Campaign Awards

At the end of the campaign, announce rewards to your players. If you have participation freebies, this is a great chance to give them out

- Deathstalker- most enemy OOO
- A good day to die - most models OOO
- Powered by wyrdstone- most wyrdstone found
- The blades of the damned - highest warband tier, tiebreaker most warband xp, then warband rating
- The turfmaster- most turf remaining

I also recommend themed awards for anyone who helped with terrain, logistics, and models.

You can also do special achievement awards for ridiculous narrative events (when that skaven slinger single handedly takes down a possessed)!