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INTRODUCTION

Did you hear the story of the Forbidden Lands? Beyond the mountains, beyond the mists of the north? Once, it was called the Ravenland, our promised land. These days, strange creatures haunt those valleys, beasts that should not be, for the land is cursed.



Once, Zygofer the Spellbinder was one of us, leading the passage through the mountains into the new land. But when faced by the savage orcs, he opened dark gates to seek the help of demons. That was his undoing. Zygofer turned on us and placed himself on the throne of the Ravenland, his daughter Therania by his side.

To keep their vile corruption from spreading, our wise king built a great wall across the mountain pass and forbade all to ever speak of what had happened. Since then, the Spellbinder's domain is known as the Forbidden Lands.

To this day, the demon-king and his daughter still rule there. Using the feared Rust Brothers, and the demonic Blood Mist sucking the life out of anyone who dared stray too far from their hearth, Zygofer and Therania have kept the human folks who still live north of the wall under their heel.

Yet, not all is lost. For now, the Blood Mist has lifted and there are those who dare defy the de-

mon-king and his daughter. Adventurers. Treasure hunters. Scoundrels. Not heroes, far from it, but men and women who dare travel the land as they choose and make their own mark on it, unbound by any fate or story set for them. They hunt for ancient treasures, they fight whomsoever gets in their way, they build a new world for themselves on the ruins of the old.

They are the raiders of the Forbidden Lands.

FORBIDDEN LANDS

Welcome to *Forbidden Lands*. In this tabletop roleplaying game, you are not heroes sent on missions dictated by others – instead, you are raiders and rogues bent on making your own mark on a cursed world. You will wander the wild lands, discover lost tombs, fight mon-



sters, and, if you live long enough, build your own stronghold to defend. During your adventures, you will uncover the secrets of dark powers lurking in the shadows and, in the end, you can be the ones to decide the fate of the *Forbidden Lands*.

THE PLAYERS

Each player except one portrays an adventurer, a player character (PC). You decide what your PC thinks and feels, what she says and does – but not what happens to her. It is your job as a player to immerse yourself in your PC. She may be an adventurer from a faraway fantasy world – but she is still, at heart, a person with feelings and dreams, just like you. Try to imagine – how would you react if you were in her shoes? What would you do? The player characters are always the protagonists of the story. The game is about you. Your decisions, your adventures.

THE GAMEMASTER

The final player is the **Gamemaster**, the GM. She describes the **Forbidden Lands** to you, she plays the people you meet during your journeys, she controls the monsters roaming the forests, she decides where the treasure is buried. The game is a conversation between the players and the GM, back and forth, until a critical situation arises where the outcome is uncertain. Then it's time to break out the dice – read more about this in Chapter 3.

It is the GM's job to put obstacles in your path and challenge your PCs, forcing them to show what they're really made of. But it is not up to the GM to decide everything that hap-

pens in the game – and above all, not how your story is supposed to end. That is decided in the game. That is why you are playing the game, to find out how your story ends.

Make sure the players help move the story forward! Being the GM can be overwhelming and fraught with responsibility, as if the whole game rests on your shoulders. It does not. There are plenty of tools and materials you can use in the *Gamemaster's Guide* (the second book in this box). And perhaps the most important piece of advice: have the courage to let the players help you. If your imagination runs dry when you are about to describe an NPC or a ruin? Let a player describe it instead.



WHAT DO YOU DO?

There is no one to hold your hand and show you where to go in the *Forbidden Lands*. It is up to you and the other players to decide where you are going, together. The GM will let you make fantastic discoveries and face tough challenges, but in the end the stories of the game are created by you, they are not written down beforehand. You have control over your adventurers' lives and, one day, the fate of all of the *Forbidden Lands*. And there is plenty to do:

EXPLORE THE WORLD

The demonic Blood Mist that covered the lands for three centuries, draining the life out of anyone who dared to wander too far from their village, has suddenly and inexplicably



lifted. You, and other restless souls like you, are finally free to leave your homes and travel far and wide in the Forbidden Lands, looking for treasures and adventures.

To explore the Forbidden Lands, you will use the big map in the box. It is divided into ten different types of terrain and has a hexagonal grid that will help you navigate through the wilderness. How all this works is described in Chapter 7. All the tools the GM needs to create exciting encounters along the way for your adventurers are available in the *Gamemaster's Guide*.

DISCOVER ADVENTURE SITES

If you look closer at the big map, you will find small symbols in many of the hexes. They denote three kinds of adventure sites – villages, castles, and dungeons. An adventure site is an exciting location your adventurer can visit, filled with intrigue, horror, and treasure. Exactly which adventure site goes with every specific symbol on the map is up to the GM to decide.

There are three complete adventure sites described in the *Gamemaster's Guide*, as well as a plethora of tools for the GM to create her own adventure sites using dice. Another large number of adventure sites are available in the campaign book, *Raven's Purge*, which is sold separately, and even more will be published by Free League Publishing over time.

UNCOVER THE SECRETS OF THE LAND

When the game begins, your adventurers don't know much more than you do as players. The Blood Mist covered the land for centuries and

contact between the different regions of the Forbidden Lands has been sporadic. The history of the land has been forgotten or become myth.

During the course of the game, you will discover the history and secrets of the *Forbidden Lands* piece by piece. This happens through so-called *legends*, short stories about a place, a person, or an artifact. The GM will give you these legends in the form of handouts. Some such handouts are collected at the back of the *Gamemaster's Guide*, and more are available as for download from the Free League website. By collecting the legends you will be able to piece together the history of the Forbidden Lands.

SEARCH FOR THE FOUR ELVEN GEMSTONES

Dark powers are stirring in the Forbidden Lands. Zygofer's henchmen, the feared Rust Brothers, still haunt the land, but the spellbinder himself has not been seen for centuries. His enemies and his allies are setting plans in motion. The Blood Mist covering the land has lifted and the deathly calm that has reigned for so long is about to shatter.

While your adventurers are free to roam the land as you see fit, there is a larger scheme behind the scenes that you can get involved in. In *Raven's Purge* campaign, your adventurers hunt for four powerful artifacts, adorned with Elven gemstones that together have the potential to decide the future of the Forbidden Lands.

Raven's Purge is not a linear story and it has no set goal that your adventurers are expected to follow. Instead, it is a rich tapestry of legends, locations, characters, and events that the you can interact with in a multitude of ways.