DEAD MAN'S CABAL

RULEBOOK

60 MINUTES

AGES 12+

2-4 PLAYERS

Necromancers are a lonely bunch. Apparently, there is something off-putting about raising the dead. Maybe it's the smell? Anyway, you and your fellow practitioners of the dark arts have decided to throw a party, but since none of you have any friends outside of your dead cabal you'll have to conjure the partygoers yourselves. Of course, what is a party amongst malevolent sorcerers without a little friendly competition? You'll be researching your dastardly necromantic rituals, collecting and using skulls and bones to perform them, acquiring runes to augment them, and (of course) placing side bets on your own successes. When it's all said and done, the party is just the icing on the corpse!
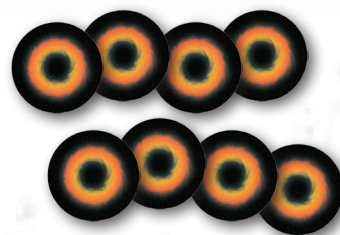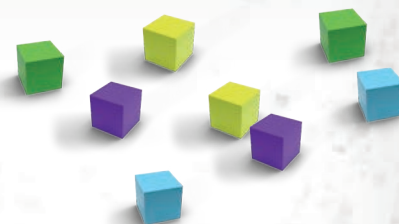
COMPONENTS

40 Bones (Used for currency)

64 Skulls (16 each in Black, Red, White and Gold)

8 Void Tokens

84 Cubes (21 in each player color; Green, Purple Yellow, and Blue)

30 Black-backed Rune Tokens (6 each in Blue, Green, Grey, Red and Wild)

32 White-backed Rune Tokens (8 each in Blue, Green, Grey, and Red)

35 Ritual Cards

1 Score Track Board
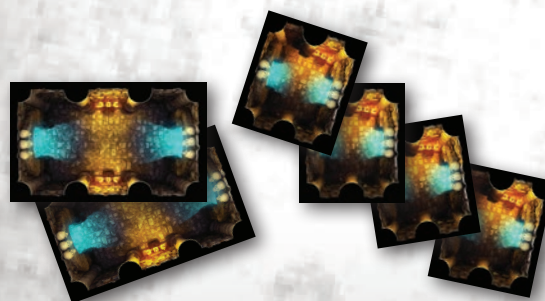
1 Ossuary Board

1 Ossuary Tracking Token

6 Connector Hallway Boards (to create a Necromancer lair connecting the boards for fun)

5 Action Boards (Athenaeum, Oracle, Sanctum, Scriptorium, and Sepulchre)

1 Skull Draw Bag

SETUP

1. **Sanctum (*Black*)**: Place the **Sanctum** board in the middle of the table.

2. Place the **Athenaeum, Ossuary, Scriptorium**, and **Sepulchre** boards around the **Sanctum**.
You can use the connecting hallways to create a Necromancer's lair if you choose! Place the Oracle and Score Tracker boards to the side of the play area, but in easy reach of all players.

3. Give each player 1 Skull of each color (White, Black, Red, Gold). Put all remaining Skulls into the Skull Draw Bag.

Setup the Action Boards as follows:

4. **Athenaeum (*Gold Skulls*)**: Shuffle the Ritual cards and deal 2 to each player; this is their starting hand. Players have a hand limit of 5 cards. Deal 3 face-up Ritual cards into the spaces on the **Athenaeum** board. Place the remainder of the deck facedown to the left of the **Athenaeum** board as a draw pile.
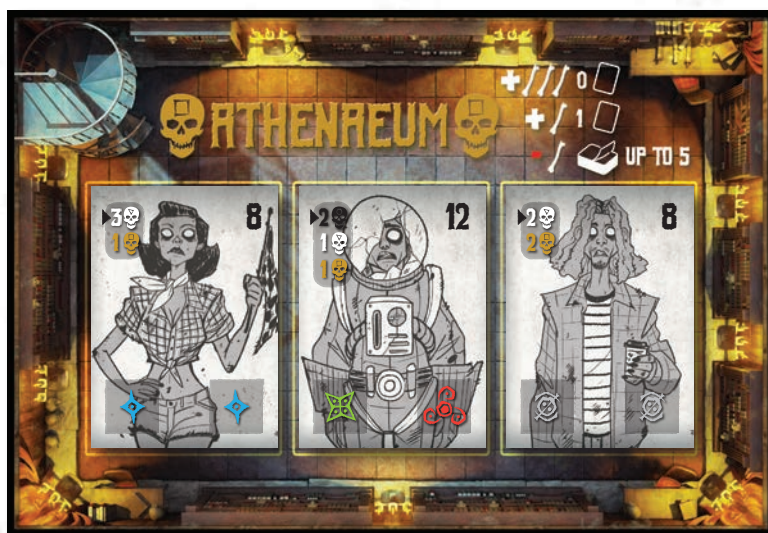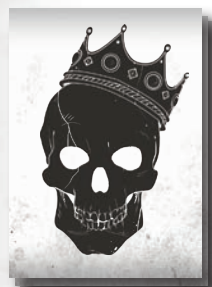
5a. **Scriptorium (*White Skulls*)**: Randomly place the white-backed Rune tokens face up in the spaces on the grid of the **Scriptorium** board. In a 3 player game, do not place Rune tokens on the spaces marked "4". In a 2 player game, do not place Rune tokens on the spaces marked "3" or "4". Return any unused white-backed Rune tokens to the box.

5b. Now, shuffle the black-backed Rune tokens to create a facedown supply next to the market column, and then randomly place 5 Runes face-up into the market. If any Wild ( ) Runes are added to the market during setup (only), they should be placed in the topmost (most expensive) slots first, and then other runes would randomly fill the rest of the market.

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6. **Sepulchre (*Red Skulls*)**: Draw Skulls from the Skull Draw Bag and randomly place one in each available space on the **Sepulchre** board. In a 3 player game, do not place Skulls on the spaces marked "4". In a 2 player game, do not place Skulls on the spaces marked "3" or "4".

7. **Ossuary**: Draw 9 Skulls from the Skull Draw Bag and randomly place one in each available space on the **Ossuary** board. Place the Ossuary Tracking token between the 4 skull colors in the Ossuary Tracker.

8. Sanctum: Place a bone piece on each of the 5 spaces with a bone symbol printed on them.

9. Give each player the 21 cubes of their chosen color, and then each player places 1 cube to the left of the Score Track board.

10. The last player to have raised the dead becomes the first Active Player and they are given the Skull Draw Bag. (If no one has performed necromantic magic recently, find a more mundane way to select the first Active Player).

You are now ready to Party!

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GAMEPLAY

Step 1: Private Action

Each round the Active Player first gets a **Private Action**, taking the following steps in order.

1. Draw a Skull from the Skull Draw bag and choose one of the 3 rows in the **Ossuary**.

2. Place the Skull to the **left** of the chosen row, and then slide all Skulls to the **right**.

3. The Skull that gets pushed off the row is placed into the Active Player's supply.

4. The Active Player then chooses any one of the Skulls in their supply and discards it back to the Skull Draw Bag, and then they take the action on the Action Board (**Athenaeum, Sanctum, Scriptorium,** or **Sepulchre**) matching the color of the Skull they discarded.

Note: The Player can use the Skull just gained or any other skull in their personal supply.

Step 2: Public Action

Once the Active Player finishes their **Private Action** then all players get to carry out a **Public Action** by taking the following steps in order:

1. Looking to the center column of the main grid on the **Ossuary** board (lightest of all the columns), the majority color of Skulls becomes the Public Action available for all players.

> • If there is a clear majority of skull colors, that is the action that **must** be chosen.
> • If the majority Skull Color is currently covered by The Ossuary Tracker (Cow Skull) then that action cannot be the Public Action. The Active Player must choose which action to take (from the other color skulls represented in the central column).

> • If there is a tie, the Active Player must choose which action to take (from those tied actions)
> • If there is only one color of skull present and the Ossuary Tracker is blocking that action color, then the active player may choose from any of the other three skull colors

2. Every time the Public Action is determined, cover the matching color Skull on the Ossuary Track with the Ossuary Tracking Token.

> • The Public Action CANNOT be the same two rounds in a row. The Ossuary Tracking Token (Cow Skull) is a reminder which action was the most recent public action.

3. Starting with the Active Player and continuing to the left (Clockwise order), all players **may** take the Public Action or Pass.

4. Once all players have either taken the Public Action or Passed, the round is over and the Skull Draw Bag is given the player to the **left** (Clockwise). They become the Active Player for the next round.

Step 3: Check for End-game

At the end of the round, if one or more players has either completed their 7th Ritual or placed their last cube then move onto the **End Game**.

ACTION BOARDS

On each Action Board you will have several choices on how you may interact with it.

ATHENAEUM (GOLD SKULLS)

Here you can research new Rituals to bring back the dead. You may choose one of the following:

  a) Collect 3 Bones and do not take any cards.

  b) Collect 1 Bone and take either 1 face-up Ritual card or the top Ritual card of the draw deck into your hand of cards.

  c) Spend 1 Bone and fully refresh your hand to 5 Ritual cards. You may take cards from either the face-up row or the top of the draw deck.

Note: The face-up Ritual cards are replaced as soon as they are taken, so you can take one card and wait to see what replaces it. Refill face-up cards immediately after they are taken so that there are always three face-up cards to choose from.

Remember: You have a hand limit of 5 Ritual cards. If you have more than 5 Ritual cards in your hand at any time, then you must discard down to 5 cards immediately.

Note: In the event that the draw deck runs out, shuffle any discarded cards to form a new draw deck. If there are no cards to form a new draw deck from no cards will be available for the remainder of the game.

SEPULCHRE (RED SKULLS)

Collect Skulls to use in performing your Rituals. Here you may choose one of the following:

  a) Collect 1 Bone and take 1 of the available skulls from the **Sepulchre** board.
  b) Spend 1 Bones and take 2 of the available skulls from the **Sepulchre** board.
  c) Spend 2 Bones and take 3 of the available skulls from the **Sepulchre** board.

The **Sepulchre** refreshes after each player uses it. Fill empty spaces from the Skull Draw Bag.

Note: There is no limit to the number of skulls a player may have in their personal supply.
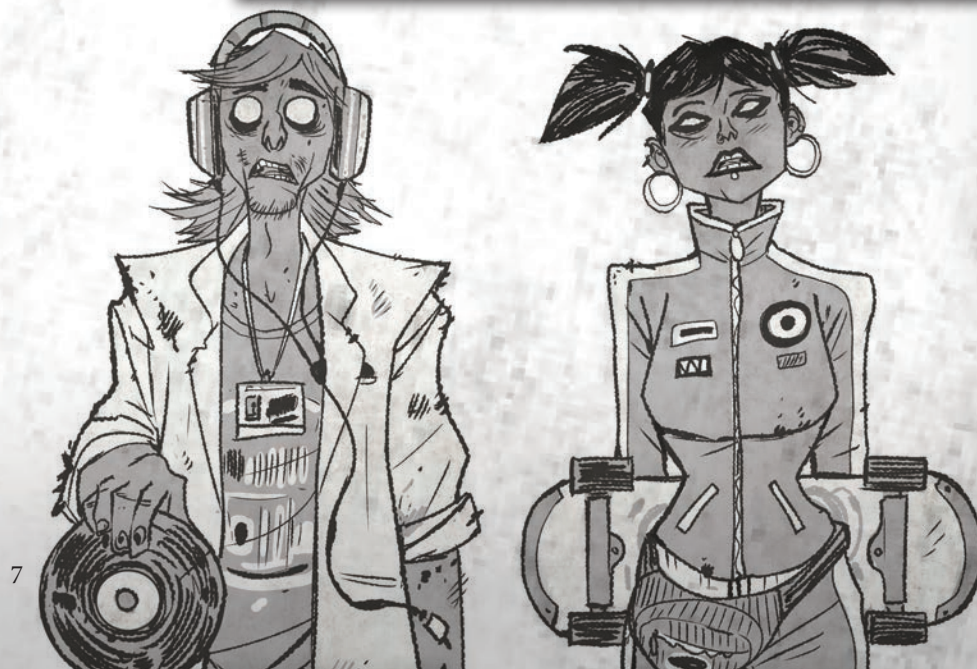
SCRIPTORIUM (WHITE SKULLS)

At the Scriptorium, you research and collect valuable Runes to use in conjunction with your Rituals. Perform the following tow steps in order:

Step 1. Choose one of the following:

a) Collect 1 Bone, and then collect 1 Rune from the main grid (white-backed runes) and replace it with one cube of your color.

b) Spend 1 Bone, and then collect any 2 Runes from the main grid and replace them both with cubes of your color.

Step 2. Now you may use Bones from your supply to acquire more Runes from the (black-backed) rune market. You may acquire as many Runes as you have the Bones for. The market refreshes after each player has completed their action. Runes not purchased from the market slide down, then new Runes are drawn from the supply to fill in the open spaces.

Note: There is no limit to the number of face-up runes a player may have in their personal supply.
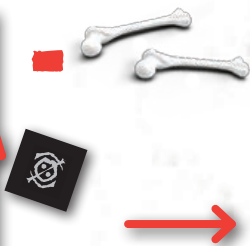
SANCTUM (BLACK SKULLS)

When using the Sanctum, perform the following steps in order.

Note: If this is a Public Action, all players complete Step 1 and then move onto step 2.

Step 1: Place Skulls
Place Skulls from your supply onto the available spaces to prepare for or perform your Rituals. You have two options:
- Gain 1 Bone and place 1 Skull on any open space on the **Sanctum** board.
- Use 1 Bone and place 2 Skulls on any open spaces on the **Sanctum** board.

Note: Several spaces on the sanctum have a bone printed on them. Bones should be placed on these spaces during setup. The first player to place a skull over one of these spaces gains the corresponding bone to their personal supply.

Step 2: Complete Rituals
Raise the Dead - If the Skulls that are currently on the **Sanctum** board allow you to complete a Ritual from your hand, you **may** do so. You have two options:
- Perform 1 Ritual at no cost.
- Spend 2 Bones and Perform 2 Rituals.

Rituals may be performed if the Skulls shown on the Ritual card are connected by unobstructed lines printed on the **Sanctum** board. An Unobstructed line is any line connecting the required skulls that can be drawn in such a way that
1) There are no empty spaces in the line
2) There are no skulls that do not match the card in the line.
3) You **may** have turns in your line, but may not use the same skull twice in a ritual.

Place any performed Ritual card(s) from your hand face-up on the table in front of you.

Note: Completed Ritual Cards do not count against your hand limit of 5.

For each Rune on a performed Ritual card you may spend a matching Rune token from your supply, placing it on the performed Ritual card, and then place 1 cube of your player color onto the **Oracle** board scoring space of your choice. (See oracle section for additional details)

Once all players have had a chance to perform their Ritual(s), at the end of either a Private or Public Action, each player will remove 1 Skull from the **Sanctum** board, in player order, that was used to perform their Ritual(s).

Note: The black arrow in the top left corner of the performed Ritual card(s) will indicate the color of Skull to be removed. The removed Skulls are placed back in the Skull Draw Bag.

Note: If the player(s) before you have removed the only Skull you would be able to remove, you do not remove any skulls.

Hint: It may be helpful for players to place a void token under a skull to help remind them which skull they plan to remove at the end of the round.

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ORACLE (ONLY AVAILABLE AFTER USING THE SANCTUM)

The **Oracle** is only accessed when attaching matching Runes to Ritual Cards. Up to two Runes may be attached to ritual cards when they are completed. Runes are attached by placing them on the corresponding spaces on the rune card from the players personal supply of Runes. After performing a Ritual you may place one cube of your color on any of the 7 scoring spaces for each matching rune attached to the completed ritual.

At the end of the game, the player(s) with the most or 2nd most amount of cubes on each of the scoring spaces will be rewarded the corresponding victory points.

Note: In the case of a tie for most cubes, all tied players get the lower victory point reward. No reward for 2nd most cubes is given if there is a tie for most cubes. If there is a tie for 2nd most cubes, no reward is given for 2nd most cubes.

Skulls (Black, Red, White, and Gold): Score 5 points (most) or 3 points (2nd most) for each of that color Skull you used to perform your Rituals.

Runes: Score 4 points (most) or 2 points (2nd most) for each cube in your largest orthogonal grouping of cubes on the main grid in the **Scriptorium**.

Purple has the most cubes on the Rune space of the **Oracle** board so that player gains

$3 \times 4 = 12$ points

Green has the 2nd most cubes on the Rune space of the **Oracle** board so that player gains

$1 \times 2 = 2$ points

Blue has two cubes in an orthogonal grouping, but no cubes on the Rune section of the **Oracle** board so scores zero points.

Cursed Star: Score 20 points (most) or 10 points (2nd most).

All Skulls: Score 4 points (most) or 2 points (2nd most) per leftover Skull (regardless of color) in your personal supply,

END GAME

The game end is triggered if either requirement has been met at the end of a round:
- One or more players have performed 7 or more Rituals.
- One or more players have placed their last cube.

Then every player, including the active player on whose turn the end game was triggered, gets one final turn as an active player. The Skull Draw Bag continues to get passed to the left until all players complete their last turn as the Active Player.

Scoring:

1. In player order, each player adds up the total victory points on their performed Ritual cards and then moves their cube on the Score Track said number of points.

2. Starting at the top of the Oracle and moving left-to-right and top-to-bottom, determine which players have the most, and then 2nd most, cubes on each scoring space. Once each space is tallied, move the winning player(s) cubes on the Scoring Track the rewarded number of victory points.
- In the case of a tie for most cubes, all tied players get the lower victory point reward. No reward for 2nd most cubes is given if there is a tie for most cubes. If there is a tie for 2nd most cubes, no reward is given for 2nd most cubes.

3. Once all victory points are tallied, the player with the most victory points wins! In case of a tie, the player who has the most remaining Bones in their supply is the winner. If there is still a tie, players should shake hands and share in the victory.

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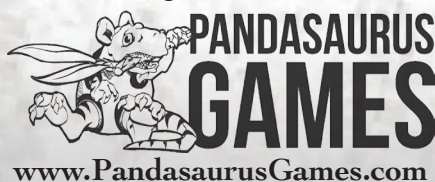
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