

LORDS OF VLACHOLD

“Beware, sir knight, for you are not in your homeland. Here the true monsters do not roam the forests or mountains. They reside in the high keeps of the realm. We do not fear the Orcish warcry or the Elven arrow. We fear when our Lords look upon us, and smile.”

- Doru, Voynik peasant, to Sir Iacob, Knight of Hawkshold.

Centuries ago the First Orc Invasion sundered the fledgling realms of men. Even after the tide was stemmed, many of the smaller Holds were surrounded and thought lost.

Vlachold was one of those Holds, but where other kingdoms perished they fought on. Using the rugged terrain and their own bitter determination, they exacted a heavy toll from the invaders. But their numbers were too few against Orcish rage and fury. The desperate lords prayed to the Holy Flame for salvation.

What answered was neither holy nor offering salvation.

Under a new moon the first Lord of Vlachold rode forth from his mountain keep against the Orc horde. Their swords and arrows bit into his flesh, but did not cut him down. His strikes were a blur to the eye, rending the enemy in half with a single blow. The Orcs fled from the monster in their midst.

More followed suit and these undying Lords stemmed, then turned back the tide of invaders. It was only then that the cost of their victory became known. The Lords of Vlachold had surrendered their souls in exchange for inhuman powers, and would wither away. Only by consuming the life essence of others could they maintain their immortality.

In the following centuries the Lords ceased to be Vlachold's protectors, instead becoming its oppressors. Serfs became chattel, to be raised, cultivated, and consumed. Fealty became slavery. Honor and valor became caprice and cruelty.

To the people, hope was replaced with fatalism, and courage with perseverance. All that was left was to endure, they said, until the sun shone on Vlachold again.

These are Playtest Rules. They are draft rules under consideration by our Rules Team, and are unofficial. If you wish to use them in a game you must have your opponent's consent beforehand. If you play in any Battleground event (such as a tournament), they may not be used without the organizer's agreement.

LORDS OF VLACHOLD

The Lords of Vlachold are the newest faction for Battleground Fantasy Warfare. The vampire Lords march to war beside their peasant levies. The Lords can Drain their mortal followers, inflicting damage to heal themselves or gain other supernatural powers. The mortal warriors of Vlachold endure both the depravities of their lords and the fury of the enemies only through their unyielding Perseverance.

The faction includes three units of vampire Lords:

- ♦ **Voivoide Knights** — These great dukes are the rulers of Vlachold. The eldest and most powerful vampires, their corrupted visage is only barely human. They ride to battle on horses conjured through dark magic, midnight steeds with fiery manes and flaming hooves.
- ♦ **Tepes Lords** — The second generation, the vampires were noble priests who lost their faith. Now they revere the dark power in profane parody of the Holy Flame. Wearing heavy armor molded to look like flayed muscles, they wield two handed swords wreathed in blue flame.
- ♦ **Marykyz Lancers** — The youngest generation, these border princes were recently elevated from the ranks of mortals. Riding steeds of broken spirit, these raiders strike with wild abandon. They are disdained by the older vampires who sometimes cannibalize those who displease them.

Accompanying the vampiric Lords are mortal levies who are both fodder and sustenance:

- ♦ **Voynik Swordsmen, Spearmen, and Crossbowmen** — The Voyniks are free peasants who have modicum of protection from the cruel whims of the undying Lords. These militia are battle-tested veterans, making up for lack of training through grit and experience.
- ♦ **Curteni Halberdiers and Heavy Archers** — Drafted from the ranks of unfree peasants, these court troops man the ramparts of the vampire Lords. Theirs is a lifetime of constant drilling and unending horror.
- ♦ **Czigany Hillfolk** — These itinerant wanderers are outside Vlachold's feudal order, able to come and go as they please in exchange for service to the Lords. Feared and hated by Vlachold's peasants, the Hillfolk are loyal only to their clan.
- ♦ **Voynik Thralls** — Whereas most Voyniks despise their Lords, some come to worship them as living gods. These sad creatures willingly offer their life's blood, this unholy communion driving them into a state of euphoria.

Finally, the armies of Vlachold are sometimes aided by mystical creatures and monstrous beasts:

- ♦ **Werewolf Packs** — Roaming the wild forests and mountains of Vlachold, these beasts are servants of the vampire Lords. Those not consumed soon find themselves transformed, becoming the very monsters that attacked them.
- ♦ **Warriors in the Mist** — These are the ghostly souls of those who took their own lives to escape the unending misery and terror. However they could rest seeing their responsibilities fall to their loved ones and now make amends in their hour of need.

LORDS OF VLACHOLD

UNIT AND COMMAND CARD PROXIES

On the following pages are proxy cards for Vlachold units and Command Cards. The artwork for these cards are still in progress. However you can print these out and insert them in sleeves containing existing Battleground units and Command Cards, allowing you to try the Lords of Vlachold faction.

To help you (and your opponent!) keep the units straight at a glance, below is a brief description of the nature and composition of each of the Vlachold units. Also included is a suggestion for which unit cards to use with these proxies.

Voivode Knights: this is a unit of heavy cavalry, similar to Hawkshold Knights, Dark Elf Dusk Lances or any other unit with 'Knights' in the title.

Tepes Lords: this is a unit of heavy infantry, similar to Hawkshold Great Swordsmen or Orc Axemen.

Markyz Lancers: this is a lighter cavalry unit, akin to units such as Hawkshold Scouts or Goblin Wolf Riders.

Voynik Spearmen: this infantry unit is similar to any unit with spears, but one that is more disorganized, such as Goblin Spearmen or Ravenwood Spearmen

Voynik Swordsmen: this is an infantry unit is similar to any relatively disorganized unit with 'Swordsmen' in the title, such as Hawkshold Militia or Goblin Raiders.

Voynik Crossbowmen: this is a mixed-weapon unit of crossbows and hand weapons & shields. We suggest using units such as Dwarven Crossbowmen , Orc Crossbowmen, or Wuxing Terracotta Crossbowmen.

Curteni Halerbiers: this unit of infantry is similar to any unit with "Spearmen" in the title but one that is relatively organized, such as Hawkshold Spearmen or Dark Elf Lowblood Levy.

Curteni Halberdiers: this is a unit of infantry, akin to any unit with the word "Bowmen" or "Archer" in the title.

Czigany Hillfolk: this is a unit of dispersed infantry, similar to High Elf Rangers or Ravenwood Wolfkin.

Voynik Thralls: this infantry unit is a mob, similar to Hawkshold Peasant Mob or Undead Ghouls.

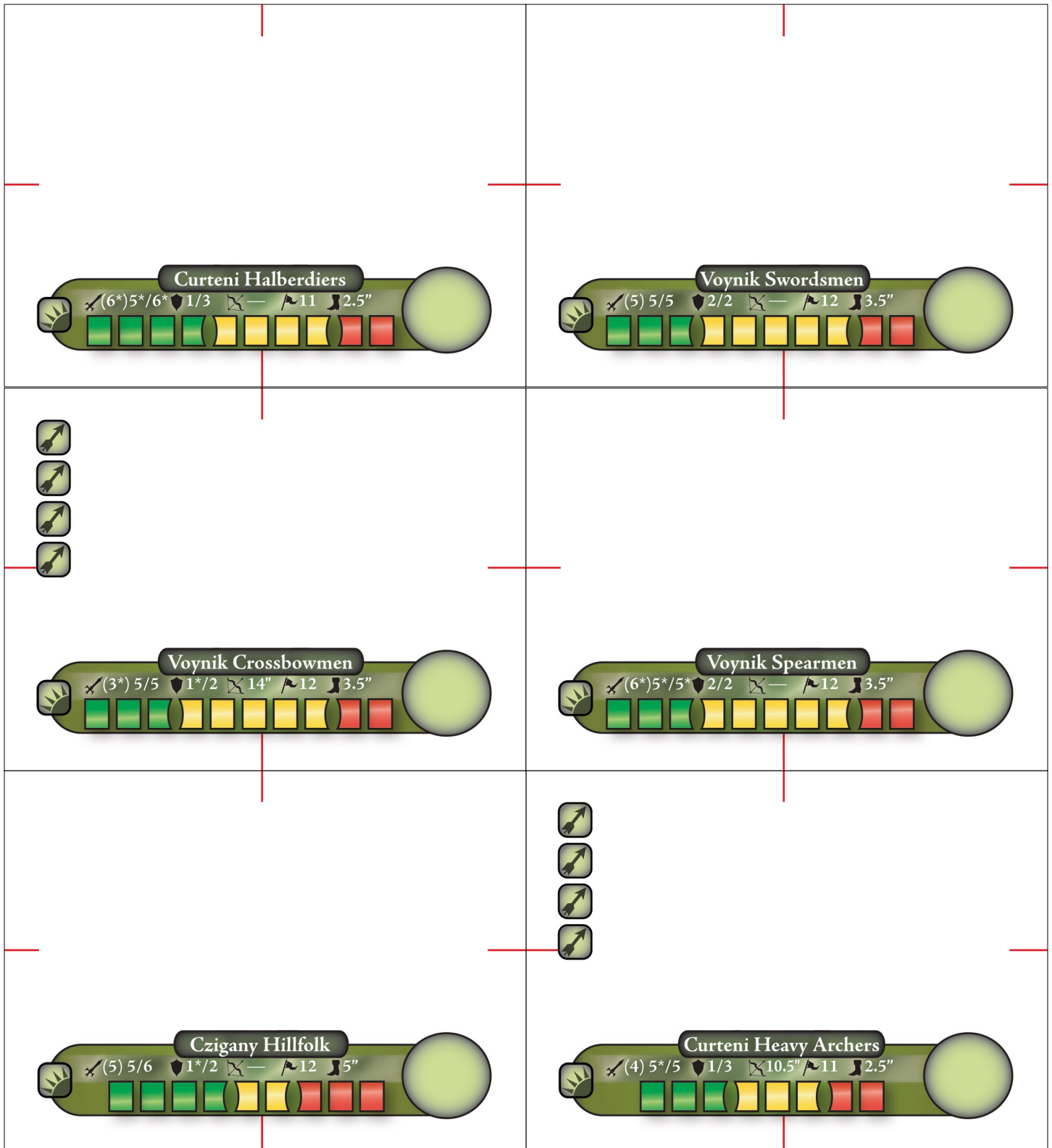
Werewolf Pack: this is a unit of monstrous infantry, similar to Ravenwood Bear Pack or Ogres from Monsters & Mercenaries.

Warriors in the Mist: this unit of infantry can be used by any disorganized unit, such as Umenzi Possessed or Dark Elf Slave Warriors.

Unit Proxies

(page 1 of 4)

Please note, these unit cards come with .25" bleed around all sides. They will need to be trimmed after being printed out.



Unit Proxies

(page 2 of 4)

Please note, these unit cards come with .25" bleed around all sides. They will need to be trimmed after being printed out.

Curteni Halberdiers

208 points - Core

Spears, Vassal.

The most ablebodied unfree peasants are drafted as bodyguards for the nobility, and although they receive the best training and arms, theirs is a life of constant horror.

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Voynik Swordsmen

190 points - Core

Vassal.

Voyniks are free peasants who own their lands. As part of their emancipation, they serve as levied soldiers defending their home.

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Voynik Crossbowmen

233 points - Core

Vassal.

The crossbow is the national weapon of Vlachold, as it is rugged and requires far less skill to master than the bow.

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Voynik Spearmen

212 points - Core

Spears, Vassal.

Although only commoners, a lifetime of battle has honed them into able warriors.

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Czigany Hillfolk

209 points - Core

Vassal.

♥ +1/+0 vs ranged attacks.

Itinerant merchants and mercenaries outside Vlachold's feudal order, Czigany are loyal only to their clan.

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Curteni Heavy Archers

190 points - Standard

Vassal.

✂ (-0)-1/-0 when Engaged.

Defenders of the ramparts and camps, these are men of broken souls.

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The image displays six army cards arranged in a 3x2 grid. Each card represents a different unit from the Warhammer Fantasy Battle game. The cards are as follows:

- Voivode Knights:** Stats: (6) 6/5*, 3*/2, —, 11, 6". Icons: 3 green, 2 yellow, 2 red. Special rule: None.
- Voynik Thralls:** Stats: (5) 4/5, 2*/2*, —, 12*, 3.5". Icons: 3 green, 1 yellow with a sun symbol, 1 yellow with a moon symbol, 2 red. Special rule: None.
- Tepes Lords:** Stats: (5) 6/6, 2/3, —, 11, 3.5". Icons: 3 green, 2 yellow, 2 red. Special rule: None.
- Markyz Lancers:** Stats: (6) 5/5*, 2*/1, —, 11, 7". Icons: 3 green, 1 yellow, 2 red. Special rule: None.
- Werewolf Pack:** Stats: (7) 5/6, 1/3, —, 13, 5". Icons: 3 green, 1 yellow, 2 red. Special rule: None.
- Warriors in the Mist:** Stats: (5) 5/18*, 1/11*, —, —, 3.5". Icons: 3 green, 1 yellow, 1 red. Special rule: C (Cautious).

C

Unit Proxies

(page 4 of 4)

Please note, these unit cards come with .25" bleed around all sides. They will need to be trimmed after being printed out.

Voivode Knights

373 points - Elite

Cavalry, Drain (Range: 6").
♣(+0)+0/+2 and ♥+1/+0 when
Charging. (This is in addition to
the normal Charging bonus.)

*The Great Princes are the mightiest
of their kind, their souls forever
tainted by their dark pact.*

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Voynik Thralls

148 points - Standard

Ecstatic Suffering, Vassal.

*When faced with madness, one either
embraces it or is consumed by it.*

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Tepes Lords

315 points - Standard

Drain (Range: 3.5").

*The high peaks and mountain holds
are ill-suited to cavalry, and so even
the dark souled nobility of the Tepes
Mountains fight on foot.*

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Markyz Lancers

217 points - Standard

Cavalry, Vassal, Drain (Range: 7").
♣(+0)+0/+1 and ♥+1/+0 when
Charging. (This is in addition to the
normal Charging bonus.)

*The petty nobility of Vlachold, these
Border Dukes rule conquered or
reconquered lands at the pleasure of
their patron lords.*

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Werewolf Pack

321 points - Standard

Fearsome, Uncontrollable.

*"Do not walk under the full moon.
For when the wolf-demon consumes
your soul, the clawed monstrosity
you become knows only hunger."*

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Warriors of the Mist

341 points - Elite

**Fearless, Incorporeal, Life Drain,
Terrifying, Uncontrollable,
Adverse (Ω).**

This unit's Movement Category is
unaffected by terrain.

♣See Life Drain. ♥See Incorporeal.

*Ethereal warriors appearing in
otherworldly mist, no one knows if
they are Vlachold's salvation or
punishment.*

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Command Card Proxies

(page 1 of 2)

Please note, these unit cards come with .25" bleed around all sides. They will need to be trimmed after being printed out.

Fatalism

Play during a Courage Phase after you fail a Courage Check. Reroll that Courage Check.

If the unit has the **Vassal** keyword, it gets +2  this turn.

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Tenacity

Play during an attack, either after you roll to hit or to wound.


Reroll that set of dice.


If you fail to cause any damage before damage prevention, cause 1 point and mark the unit's  box.

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Red Harvest

Play during an attack before you roll to hit.


Your unit gets  (+1) +1/+0 this attack.

Mark one  for every point of damage you do this attack.

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
Fatalism


Play during a Courage Phase after you fail a Courage Check. Reroll that Courage Check.

If the unit has the **Vassal** keyword, it gets +2  this turn.

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Desperation

Play during an engaged attack, before you roll to hit. Your unit gets  (+0) +0/+1 this attack.


If your unit is in the Yellow it gets an additional  (+2) +0/+0 this attack.


If your unit is in the Red it gets an additional  (+2) +0/+1 this attack.

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Red Harvest

Play during an attack before you roll to hit.

Your unit gets  (+1) +1/+0 this attack.

Mark one  for every point of damage you do this attack.

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Command Card Proxies

(page 2 of 2)

Please note, these unit cards come with .25" bleed around all sides. They will need to be trimmed after being printed out.

Undying Scorn

Play during an attack, after your opponent rolls to hit. Your unit gets $\heartsuit +0 / +1$ this attack.

If your unit has the **Drain** keyword, change the result of one die to a 6.

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Undying Scorn


Play during an attack, after your opponent rolls to hit. Your unit gets $\heartsuit +0 / +1$ this attack.

If your unit has the **Drain** keyword, change the result of one die to a 6.

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Dogged Toughness


Play during an attack, before your opponent rolls to hit. Your unit gets $\heartsuit +0 / +2$ this attack.

If your unit has the  box, it gets $\heartsuit +2$ this turn.

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Dogged Toughness

Play during an attack, before your opponent rolls to hit. Your unit gets $\heartsuit +0 / +2$ this attack.

If your unit has the  box, it gets $\heartsuit +2$ this turn.

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Reminder Proxies

(page 1 of 2)

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Also, each card is meant to go with the one adjacent to it on the same row.

Vlachold Abilities

Perseverance

Spend one Command Action to mark the Perseverance box on one of your units. You may erase the box:

- ◆ After you roll a Courage Check. Decrease one die by 1.
- OR
- ◆ During an attack after you roll to-hit or to-wound. Decrease the result of one die by 1.
- OR
- ◆ During an attack, after your opponent rolls to-hit or to-wound. Increase the result of one die by 1. You may not further modify that die.




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

Vlachold Abilities

Blood Powers

A unit with Drain has the following Blood Powers. Each power may be used once a turn as detailed below.

Blood is Life: You may use this power during the Movement & Command Phase. Erase the number of boxes shown below to erase one damage on the unit.

- ◆ Markyz Lancers – 
- ◆ Tepes Lords – 
- ◆ Voivoide Knights – 

Inhuman Agility: You may use this power during an attack, after you roll to hit. Erase any number of . Then lower the result of one die by one per  erased.


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Vlachold Abilities

Drain

During your Movement & Command Phase, this unit may Drain one unit in your army with the Vassal keyword.

Mark any number of damage boxes on the Vassal unit, starting with the right-most box and moving left (i.e. opposite the normal way damage is marked).

Then mark the same number of unmarked  boxes on the Draining unit.

The Vassal unit must be within Drain distance listed on the back on the Drain unit's card. The damage caused to the Vassal unit does not cause a rout check, but if the unit's last damage box is marked it counts as destroyed. A unit cannot Drain after using a Blood Power that turn.

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Unit Keywords

Spears

Units with the Spears keyword get the following Combat Modifiers for Engaged attacks:

- 1) $\cancel{\times}$ (-1) -0/-0 when Charging
- 2) $\cancel{\times}$ (+0) +1/+0 when attacking Cavalry, Large, or Colossal units.
- 3) $\cancel{\times}$ (+0) +0/+2 when Holding and attacking Charging Cavalry, Large, or Colossal units.



Cavalry



When Charging, this unit gets 1 Impact Hit. *This unit may get additional modifiers when Charging, see the back of the unit card.* Ranged attacks against this unit get $\cancel{\times}$ (-0) -1/-0.




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Vlachold Abilities

Blood Powers Continued

Unholy Strength: You may use this power during an attack, after you roll to wound. Erase any number of . Then lower the result of one die by one per  erased. Lowering the die by more than 1 counts as playing a Command Card.

Misty Form: You may use this power after you fail a Rout Check. Erase the number of  shown below to replace your  stats with \heartsuit 5/1 this turn. At the end of this turn rally your unit.

- ◆ Markyz Lancers – 
- ◆ Tepes Lords – 
- ◆ Voivoide Knights – 

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Vlachold Abilities

Ecstatic Suffering

For each hit box with a  that is marked because of Drain, this unit gets \heartsuit -1/+1 and \heartsuit +1.

Vassal

This unit can have damage boxes marked due to the Drain ability. Damage marked this way does not cause Rout Checks.

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Reminder Proxies

(page 2 of 2)

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Unit Keywords

Life Drain

When this unit rolls To-Wound, the defending unit uses its Courage instead of its Toughness. Fearless units use their Toughness and get $\heartsuit +0/+10$. Apply any General, Engaged, or Ranged modifiers and any combat modifiers from Command Cards, Army Abilities, or special rules. However Courage modifiers from Command Cards, Army Abilities, or any special rules do not apply.

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Unit Keywords

Fearsome

Units being Charged by this unit must take a Fearsome Check in the Pre-Combat Courage Phase. Other Fearsome units ignore this keyword.

Terrifying

Units being Charged by this unit must take a Fearsome Check in the Pre-Combat Courage Phase and get $\heartsuit -1$ this turn. Other Terrifying units ignore this keyword. Other Fearsome units do not get $\heartsuit -1$ this turn.

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Unit Keywords

Incorporeal

Attacking units use their Courage stat instead of their Power when rolling To-Wound against this unit. Fearless units use their Power and get $\spadesuit (+0)+0/+7$. Attacking units do not get any bonuses or impact hits from Charging. All other Command Cards, Faction Abilities, Combat Modifiers, and special rules that affect Power are applied, but any modifiers to Courage are not applied.

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Unit Keywords

Adverse (Ω)

You may not play Command Cards on this unit.

Fearless

This unit automatically passes all Courage Checks.

Uncontrollable

This unit always has the "Close" Standing Order and may not be given a Standing Order Modifier. It takes 3 Command Actions to Direct Control this unit. If this unit Routs, then it takes 2 Command Actions to Rally. When it is Rallied, its Standing Order is Close. The unit will move like normal but cannot Final Rush that turn.

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design notes

“A vampire faction? Oh, that’s easy. I’ll draft some rules for draining blood and we’ll be done.”
– Corey Somavia (circa 2012)

A vampire faction is in many ways very generous to rules design because it is both a strong archetype and one with a lot of variation. This gives the designer both structure and a lot of leeway for creativity.

The difficulty is that vampires are creatures of narrative. To preserve the horror themes, their powers are often ill defined and they are usually solitary in nature. Neither of those are well suited to highly structured wargames featuring entire units composed of similar warriors.

Our challenge in translating these themes into Battleground was where to bend the system to the archetype and where to adapt the archetype to the system.

The very first place where the archetype conceded to the system was in having vampire units at all. While we could have easily had “vampire” units be lone units surrounded by retainers, that would require even more special rules than the faction already had. Therefore we created entire units of vampires.

However creating entire units of solitary predators gave us a world-building opportunity. If there were units of vampires, that meant that Vlachold itself was a relatively structured society. We leaned into this idea of a caste system among the vampires, a corrupted version of a feudal society. Of course, anyone exposed to role playing games in the 90s is well aware this isn’t a completely novel concept. But this idea of a militarized feudal society was an interesting representation of fantasy army vampires.

In designing the vampires themselves, many of the stats were fairly self-evident. They would be relatively skilled, as befitting decades and centuries of training or experience. Both the Voivode Knights and the Tepes Lords have higher Offensive and Defensive Skill. The Tepes Lords seem to have only average Defensive Skill, but it is higher when compared to other two-handed weapon units (e.g. Hawkshold Great Swordsmen, Dwarf Longberads, or Orc Axemen).

For the Markyz Lancers, we decided to give them more average stats to reflect the fact that they are the newcomers to the vampire order. They have had, at most, decades to hone their skills.

What seems curious to many on first glance, though, is that for an elite unit they have a *lower* than normal Courage stat. In fact most elite units have a Courage 13 or higher. The one constant among the three vampire units is their Courage 11.

Our opinion is that heroic vampire is a contradiction-in-terms. Vampires are selfish, sadistic bullies. The second a fight goes sideways, they think nothing of abandoning their entire army to save themselves.

Moreover, vampires have perspective. They have eternity in front of them. They don’t care about glory, or having their names remembered for all time. They plan to be around for all time. And as long as they don’t

waste their immortality on some foolish last stand, they will be. If a battle turns against them, they have centuries to regain whatever is lost.

From a game play perspective this was an opportunity to have a type of unit that isn't often seen. Usually the elite unit is as good at breaking through the line as it is at holding its own. Vlachold vampire units are only good for the first part. They are meant to break the enemy, and if they end up in a grind, it is not going to end well for them.

The second decision we had to make in incorporating vampire lore into the faction, was the other units in the faction. While we couldn't have solitary vampires in the army, we also didn't want to swarm the army with vampires. Even when collected together in units, vampires are still very much the tip of the pyramid.

This left us with a choice as to what to include in the rest of the army: do we go with a legion of undead, or a force of living minions? We went with the latter for two reasons. First, the Undead faction existed. The game already had a faction of fearless walking dead and we wanted to avoid overlap. Second, having mortals in the army allowed us to really push the vampiric abilities of faction (more on that later).

Having human servants harkened back to the Dracula stories, and we populated the faction with several different varieties to reflect the different types of followers. There would of course be a unit of Renfield-types, whose minds and spirits had been suborned to their dark masters. There would also be the analogue of the Roma people, who would have a different fighting style and formation (and thus different stats and hit boxes) as the regular units.

And of course we would have the beleaguered peasants over which the vampires ruled. If Vlachold is a perverted feudal society, there would need to be a bottom to that societal pyramid. However even in there we tried to create different peasant types: the Voyniks and the Curteni.

The Voynik units seem to be fairly baseline, but they have one small tweak with major implications: their hit boxes are 3 Green / 5 Yellow / 2 Red. This seemingly small change means that they will take Rout checks early in a fight, and their average Courage doesn't help them with that.

These stats represent that Voyniks are militia, not professional soldiers. Due to frequent invasions, they are relatively highly skilled when considering they are a militia. But their competence comes from experience, not training. Their Courage is only average because although they are brave, a life of unending dread takes its toll. The most anxious moment is the initial crash of combat.

In many ways, their stats and hit boxes are a mirror version of Hawkshold units. They will take rout checks early, but once they survive the initial shock, they set their mind to grind out the protracted fight.

By contrast the Curteni units (especially the Halbdierdiers) have better hit box distribution to reflect their martial training. However they have a slower speed and lower Courage. Their speed represents the static, defensive nature of their training. The lower Courage represents the effect of living among the undying Lords. If the Voyniks live a life of constant dread, the Curteni live one of unending terror.

While the faction's unit composition presented a challenge to adapting vampires to Battleground, the army abilities was a place where the archetypes presented with a myriad of opportunities. Whereas in a roleplaying game the whole "blood draining predator" theme could get lost when everyone was a vampire, in Battleground having units of mortals and vampires together allowed us to build the faction around it.

The Drain and Blood Powers abilities are what drives Vlachold. And we went through numerous permutations of both to get it right. Our goal was always to have a system that rewarded you for Draining your mortal

Vassal units, but that it still carried some disadvantage. The trade-off had to be real, but not so punitive that you would not do it.

Blood is Life, the ability to heal, was of course the first Blood Power but we wanted the vampires to do more than just have a “hit box battery.” We struggled to find additional ones in previous drafts, but ultimately realized the answer was in the faction’s checkbox ability: Perseverance.

Originally the vampire units had this ability, but we decided it felt wrong for cowardly vampires to be stoic in the face of struggle. When we removed it, we realized that two of the Blood Powers could be based on the offensive uses Perseverance. By stealing life force from their vassals, the vampires could also temporarily steal the indomitable tenacity from the Vlachold mortals.

Misty Form was the last Blood Power added, when we feared that the Courage 11 of the vampires might be too hindering. Most gamers are familiar with the term spamming: taking multiple of something good produces a non-linear increase in effectiveness. The same is true when you spam a weakness. A faction with a lot Courage 11 units and 3 Green box units is a non-linear strain on Courage abilities or cards.

Rather than increase the number or power of those Courage boosts, we decided the best way was to mitigate the downside. We’re okay with routs happening more frequently with Vlachold, if they aren’t as crippling. Misty Form does that in a manner that is also incredibly thematic.

Perseverance started as much more of an army-wide rule that eventually got dialed back just to the mortal units in Vlachold. It’s a seemingly very strong ability: it can be applied to any of your attack rolls, your opponent’s attack rolls, or your Courage Checks. However, for any given roll, a Command Card is usually better.

Where it draws its strength is in its sheer utility. You can put it on a unit and expect that somewhere in there there’ll be a moment where shifting one die by one number will make the difference. Perseverance represents a small nudge from sheer willpower that can have cascading effects.

Thematically it fit best with the living units to represent their innate mental strength. Surviving the constant dread and hopelessness of Vlachold required a strength of will that exceeded that of the average commoner in other realms.

Each of the other units in the Lords of Vlachold have their own design story as well, but the one that really stands out is the Warriors in the Mist. Truthfully, when Vlachold was originally conceived this “army of the dead” unit was thrown in with clear inspirations from another famous epic fantasy. It was a controversial unit thematically and mechanically, and was always on the verge of getting removed. We determined that if we could not come up with a compelling story behind the unit, that it would be removed.

The story of restless spirits revolved around the torment of unfinished business. In Vlachold, death would often be a release against the pain and struggle, and so we didn’t see the souls of the departed unable to move on. We decided that a ghost from the living among Vlachold would be wracked with guilt at some great sin.

If the defining trait of Vlachold was their stoicism in the face of horror, then the restless spirits would be the ones who weren't. We decided that the Warriors in the Mist would be the souls of those who simply chose to give up. They opted to take their lives rather than continue to struggle.

However if a person dies or passed away, their obligations remain. A Voynik required to serve in the militia was fulfilling an inherited obligation. If a father was unable to fight, a son would have to step forward. Barring that, a wife or daughter would fulfill the obligation, lest the family slide into unfree peasant status.

A person who sought rest in death would have abandoned their obligations, and so be unable to find rest. The guilt of their family suffering would bind them to this world, and their spirit would roam the land, seeking to atone their sins. In times of greatest need, these souls would appear en masse, to stand beside their descendants or loved ones in battle.

(Please note, suicide is a serious topic, and these design notes are not meant to belittle anyone who has struggled with it or been affected by it. These notes portray the perspective and taboos of a different culture and is not any form of commentary by us on the subject, just as we are not endorsing feudal social structures or tyrannical despotism.)

From a rules perspective, the Warriors in the Mist were an opportunity to create something that has not yet been seen in Battleground: an Incorporeal unit. We decided that attacking a ghost is less about force of arms and more about force of will. It was not the blade that wounded the ghosts, but the mental energies behind it.

Similarly we determined that the ghosts would not strike at a person's tangible body, but would attack their soul. Against Life Drain, armor and physical toughness would be meaningless. What mattered was the person's resolve.

In both cases we determined that the best proxy for that in Battleground would be a unit's Courage stat. And strength of will wouldn't necessarily be something that is refined: an animalistic Troll could have the same resolve as a disciplined High Elf.

The new abilities allowed us to represent ghostly warriors as different than a strong or tough unit, while having a similar effect. However we did it without creating an entire new process and instead fit them into the existing Battleground system.

While the units represented challenges when drawing on the vampire archetypes and abilities represented numerous opportunities, Command Cards were much more of a mixed bag. On the one hand, Command Cards are a great way to thematically provide mechanical bonuses to a faction. However in a faction with both mortals and vampires, having cards that could be used on either type of unit could seem odd. But to not let them do so might result in a player having the negative experience of a handful of cards they couldn't use.

We struck a balance on this subject by having Command Cards apply to all units, but have a better impact when played on certain units. For example, cards such as Dogged Toughness and Tenacity provide a greater bonus when played on a unit with a Perseverance box (i.e. a mortal unit).

These cards could still be played on vampires, as even though they are cowards, these vampires are still of Vlachold. They are still people who stood against the Orc tide and other innumerable enemies.

Similarly, Red Harvest and Undying Scorn function better when played on the vampire units. That said, one could image a Voynik succumbing to blood lust or in the beginning stages of worshipping their Lords as living gods.

Fatalism is a relatively weak courage card when played on the Tepes Lords or Voivode Knights, but provide a greater bonus for Vassal units (including the Markyz Lancers, who are never allowed to forget their precarious state of existence).

And finally, we decided that Desperation could apply equally to all units in the faction. Whether living or undying, dire peril brings out the fury of a trapped animal.

We look forward to when Lords of Vlachold will be released and encourage you to try out these rules to see if they live up to the ideals we laid out here in these design notes. If you do, please share your thoughts and feedback with us, so that we can continue to improve this faction.

Till the Next Missive. . .

The Outlaw Alchemist