Warlock: Maldorf's curse.

Build an empire in the magical world of Norkobia

In search for a hidden treasure, five mysterious figures sneak trough the forest. Only the sound of snapping twigs and old leaves beneath their feet interrupt the whistling sound of the wind through the branches in the trees. Not long ago this place was full of life. All creatures relished from what the forest had to offer, now everything is withered and dead.

Suddenly something draws their attention. They come to a halt in front of an enormous wooden door, in what appears to be a tomb … Dauntless one of them opens the heavy, wooden door. A loud crack echoes from within the tomb. As they enter through a narrow opening, a cold draft escapes. Their burning torches extinguish …

It's pitch-dark… A deafening roar of laughter reverberates … a sudden feeling of panic and chaos arises … A torch is lit again, they gasp for air … All five are rooted to the spot …

In front of the flame they see a shape that challenges imagination. The shape produces an neverending laughter, meanwhile mumbling undefined words. Although no one understands, the words appear to be threatening. The shape strengthened his words with wild gestures. His abnormally long fingers enlighten. A flash of lightning escapes each finger and strikes all five right into the heart. Just below the ceiling a dark chasm appears … One by one all five vanish … The chasm evaporates into the night …

A seemingly lifeless creature is lying on the ground. A scar on its chest hints at what happened. The scar swells and meanwhile a strange sort of energy fills up the lifeless carcass. It appears as if the Devil himself is trailing trough the veins of its host. The creature awakens and drags itself to the window overlooking a stunning countryside. On the horizon several castles emerge and it dawns upon the creature that it is also inside a castle. On the other side of the room, just where the sunlight hits the wall, a string of words appears … :

Freedom is your part
If you do as I state
Mortal creature don't ever thwart
Feel the power and have faith
Build an empire,
Form your estate

Lord Maldorf

Purpose of the game

Each player takes on the role of a cursed creature. He possesses a castle in the magical land of Norkobia. The challenge is simple: build an empire on behalf of Lord Waldorf. Who builds the best defences against the dark powers? Who manages to exploit the most from other villagers, creatures… By strategically playing your cards, each player tries to develop his empire. The one who develops the greatest empire, wins.

1. Game material and setup
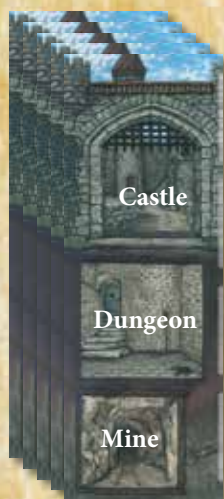
5 player boards with a castle, dungeon and mine.
Each player chooses one and places it in front of him. **A**

2 figure cards: Elrohir, the elf, and Tonar, the dwarf.
Give Elrohir, the starting player figure, to the starting player and Tonar, the auctioneer, to the player to the right of the starting player. **C**

120 creature cards:
25 giants (blue), 25 wizards (purple), 20 humans (Yellow), 20 orcs (green), 15 gnomes (red) and 15 goblins (brown).
Shuffle the cards and put them as a face down draw pile on the central board. **B**

15 reference cards of which 5 are language independent.
Each player takes one of the 3 different reference cards an places it next to his or her player board. **D**

25x   25x

20x   20x

15x   15x

15x   14x

15 dragon cards and 14 devastated city cards.
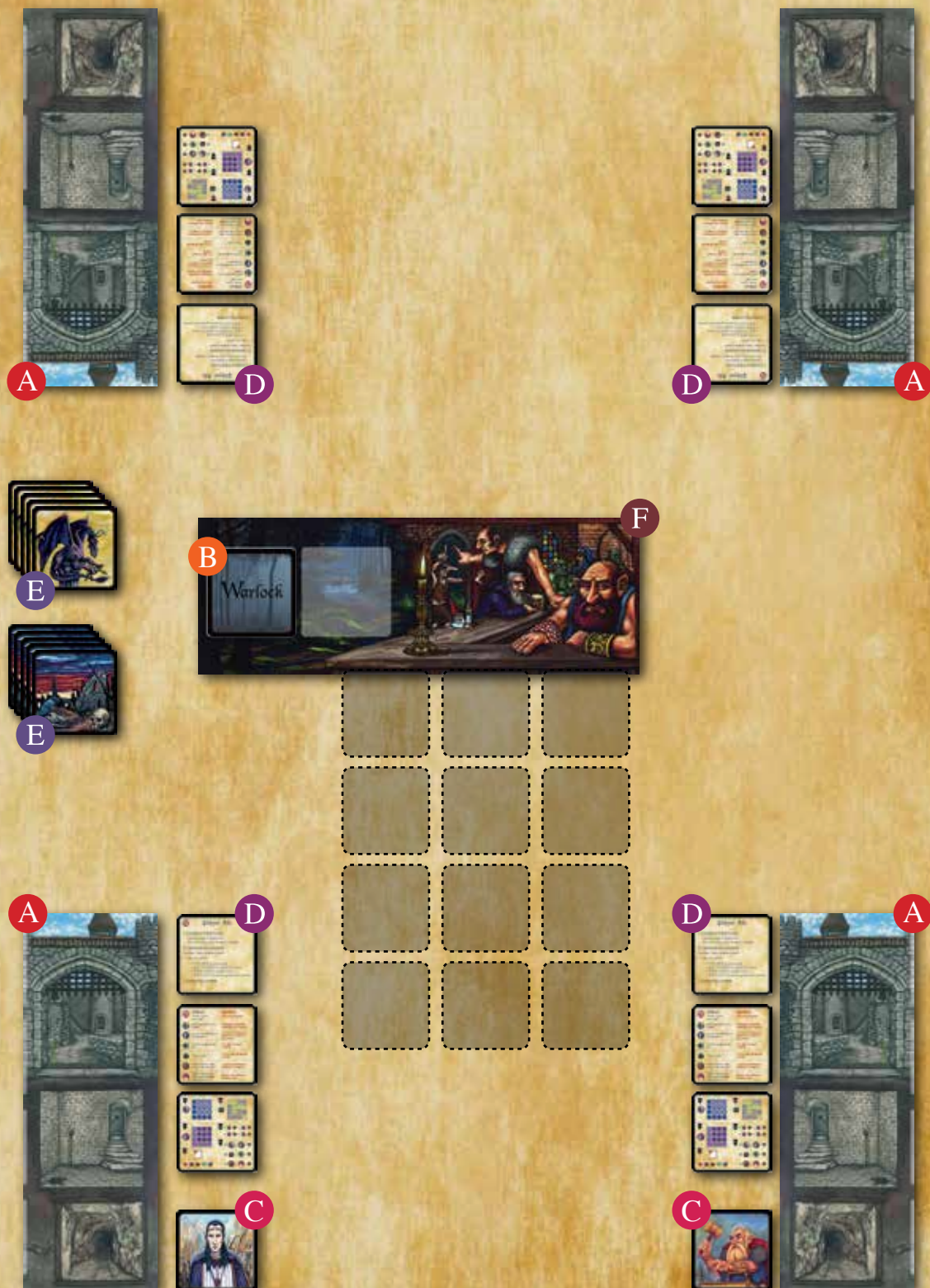Put these within easy reach (= supply). **E**

Hubba's bar (central board).
Put the central board in the middle of the table. **F**

Example: 4 player set-up.

Adjust the boards (game boards and central board) so that everything fits nicely on the table!

A

D

D

A

E

B

F

E

A

D

D

A

C

C

2. Sequence of play

Building an empire is a tough challenge. Many creatures dwell in the forests of Norkobia, so let them help you by having them do the dirty work. Imprison them and lead them to reach your ultimate goal! To ease their feeble minds, you will occasionally release one creature back into Hubba's bar, where he can take a breather. A second creature shall be sent to the mines in search of gold or you can imprison him in your dungeon till you have need of this futile creature.
(As for the other creatures, you can mess around with them a little. Just for fun and mostly because you can. You're a villian, remember? Imprison them, torture them or just send them to the mines).

All players have 3 days to build their empire. A day consistsof 3 rounds and an auction at the end of the day. A round consists of 4 phases which take a fixed order of play:

2.1 Dealing cards
The starting player, who possesses Elrohir, deals 5 cards to each player. Those cards will form your hand. Cards from previous rounds may be kept. If the draw pile is empty, shuffle the discard pile and form a new draw pile.

> *Note:* In a 5 player game, it is possible that both piles get exhausted. If this happens, all players must (starting with the starting player) discard one card until there are sufficient cards (=25) to deal. These cards can come from your mine, your dungeon or from your hand. If both piles get exhausted during another moment (e.g. by an action) no more cards can be drawn.

2.2 Discarding cards
In turn order, each player chooses 2 cards from his hand and places them in front of him face down. When all players have chosen, each player reveals their first card and places it at Hubba's bar.
Then, each player places his second card in his mine or in his dungeon.

> *Example:* Scott receives 5 cards. He places an orc in Hubba's bar and a wizard in his dungeon. He keeps the other three cards in his hand. The other players place their first discarded card underneath Scott's orc in the bar.
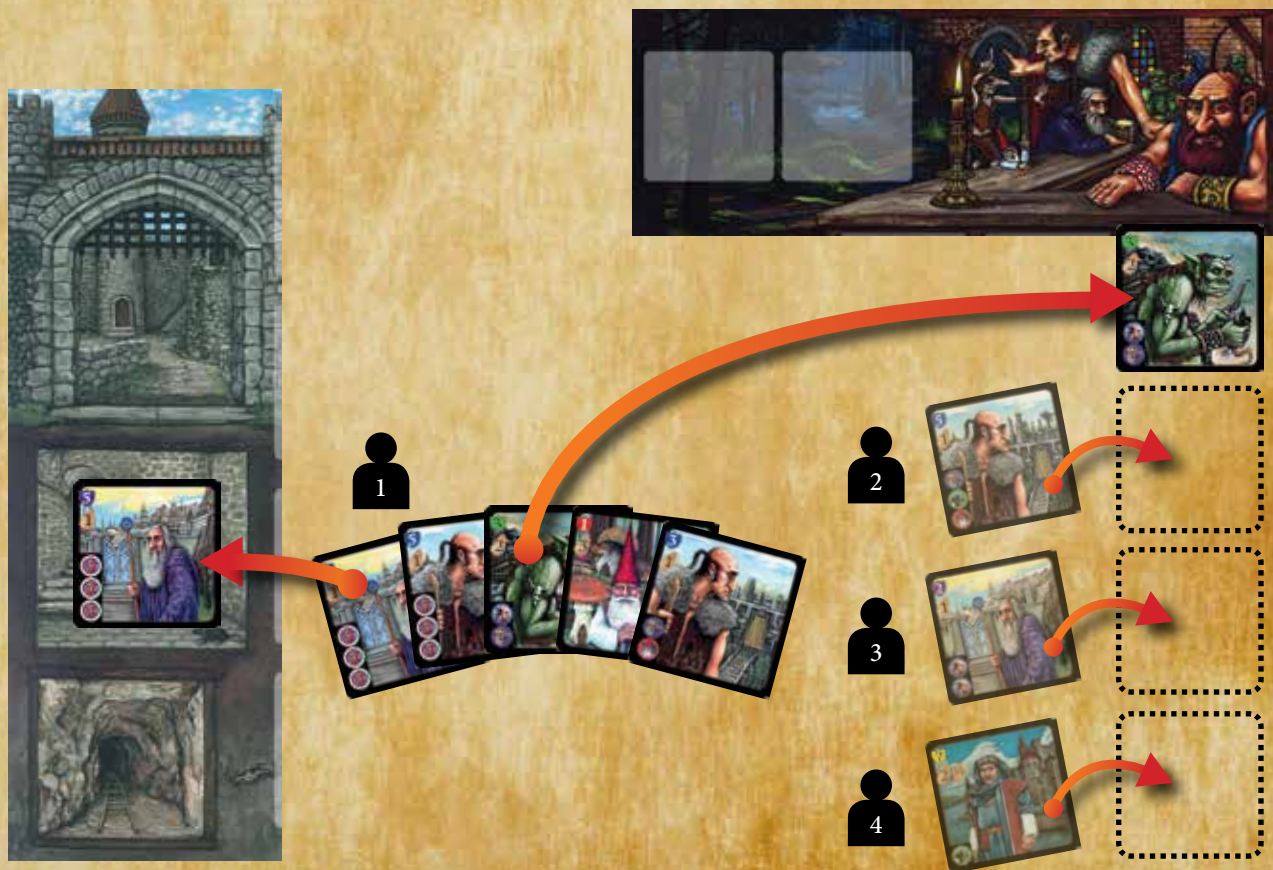
2.3 Players actions

Starting with the starting player (the one who possesses Elrohir) and then following clockwise, each player takes ONE of the following actions:

- **Play a card from your hand OR**
- **Draw a card**

This continues until all players have taken 3 actions.

A. Play a card from your hand

If you play a card from your hand, you give the creature a task. Which task precisely depends on the place you will put your card. There are four possible destinations:

- **THE MINE:** if you place a face down card in the mine, the creature digs for gold. The amount of gold is printed on the card, you will notice that not every race is equally skilled in gold digging.
  (Note: there is no limit to the amount of cards that can be placed in the mine.)
- **THE DUNGEON:** if you place a card in the dungeon, you can use it in future turns to pay for cities' building cost. **Make sure all icons are visible!** (Note: there is no limit to the amount of cards that can be placed in the dungeon.)
- **YOUR EMPIRE:** place a card in your empire to build a city. You have to pay its building costs, which are mentioned on each card. Put back cards from your dungeon on the discard pile to pay the building costs. **This action isn't possible if you don't have the needed cards in your dungeon!**
  Building cities is subject to some building rules (see BUILDING RULES).
- **THE CASTLE:** place a card face up in your castle and use the creature's power immediately (see POWER and SKILLS).

Example: the wizard produces 1 gold **B** in the mine. When placed in the dungeon, you can use the wizard **D** in future turns to expand your empire. Place the card in your empire and build a city worth 3 points **A**, therefore you have to discard a giant and a human **C** from your dungeon. If you place the card in your castle, you can use the wizard's power **D**.
The goblin city can be built by discarding a card of your choice ('jester'-icon in the building costs **E**) from your dungeon.

B. Draw a card

If you don't want to play a card, you can draw the top card of the draw or discard pile.

2.4 Starting player

At the end of each round, Elrohir is passed on to the player sitting to the left of the current starting player. This player becomes the new starting player for the next round. Place all cards from the players' castles on the discard pile. If Hubba's bar isn't full, continue with the next round.
If Hubba's bar is full, the day ends with an auction (This occurs after 3 rounds).

3. The auction: recruiting creatures in Hubba's bar

Staring at your subordinates is tiresome and extremely dull. You'd rather spend your precious time at Hubba's bar. Not for drinks (as if), but to profit from some poor old stumps who spend too much time at the bar. You'd better take some gold with you however, since Hubba is the only one who's not impressed by your bullying. Some creatures tend to get braver after a few pints (if you catch my drift). Some immediately start the building of your empire, others need some more time… and prefer to cool down in the dungeons or the mine. Let's say you are so kind as to give them some room to sleep it off… (oh, aren't you are ever so kind).

Unfortunately, it just so happens that Hubba's bar always attracts other recruiters like yourself… whoever has the deepest pockets, gets first pick.

At the end of each day (=after 3 rounds) an auction occurs in Hubba's bar. There are three times as much cards as there are players in the bar (e.g. with 4 players there are 12 cards).

This is how it works:
- All players place aside their cards from their hand and take the cards out of their mine.
- The player who possesses Tonar starts the bidding by placing a number of cards on the table or passes. The total of all gold on the cards represents the value of the bid.
- In player order, each player may place any number of cards on the table or pass. Players must place a higher or lower bid. It is forbidden to place a bid similar to one already on the table. Everyone gets one bid. If a player passes, he forfeits his bid.
- Every card you didn't use in the auction is placed back into your mine. These can be used for future auctions.
- The player with the highest bid chooses first. He picks 2 cards from Hubba's bar. The first card gets placed in his empire, without paying the building costs. The second card is placed face up on the discard pile. The other players do the same, starting with the player with the second highest bid, and so on. Players who didn't bid, get nothing (foul curmudgeon)!
- Next up, starting with the player with the highest bid, each player takes another card and chooses wether to place this card in his mine or his dungeon. The same rule applies here, whoever didn't bid, gets nothing!

Example: Scott offers 6 gold, Sarah 4 and Kate 4,5 (see human skill on p.8). Kate could have offered 6 if Scott didn't already. Scott gets to pick first, followed by Kate and then by Sarah. Scott chooses two cards from the bar and places one in his empire (he builds a city without paying its building costs). He discards the other one. Kate and Sarah follow his example. Then, Scott chooses one of the 3 remaining cards from the bar and places it in his dungeon. Kate and Sarah follow his example. All players discard the cards they used to form their. Sarah receives Tonar.

Scott	Sarah	Kate

After each auction, a new day starts:
- Give Tonar (the auctioneer) to the player with the lowest bid. Players who didn't bid also qualify. In case of a tie, the player sitting closest to the right hand side of Elrohir becomes the new auctioneer.
- Place all cards used for the auction and leftover cards in the bar on the discard pile.
- All players take back the cards they had put aside in hands. A new day starts by dealing new cards (see 2.1 Dealing cards).

4. Building rules

Even though you're more evil then the most evil sinner or angrier then the angriest villain (you may pick whichever suits you best), you're not stupid. You're almost as clever as you are evil. You manage to let different races coexist and work together and that's wonderful, because not all races can stand each other as good as others do. A somewhat clever villain takes this into account when building his empire. He gives creatures their own favourite spot.

- An empire offers offers room for a maximum of 16 cities. These cities (=cards) are displayed in a grid of 4 by 4 cards next to your player board.
- The first city must be placed on 1 of the 4 fields at the edge of your player board. Every next city must be built horizontally or vertically adjacent to a previously built city (or dragon or ruined city).
- Cities can't be moved around in an empire, unless the player is using the special skill of the giants (see SKILLS).
- An empire can contain a maximum of 3 dragons.
- If there are no more available building fields in an empire, a player may build a city where a dragon or ruined city is placed. The dragon or ruined city is discarded back into the discard pile.
- An empire with 16 cities (including dragons and ruined cities) cannot be attacked anymore by other players (by their orcs and wizards).

Example: place the cities in a grid of 4 by 4 cards next to your player board. These cities form your empire. The cities in grey form the **edge** of your empire. These are the 4 cities adjacent to your player board along with the bottom 4 cities. The other cities are in the **centre**.

5. Powers and skills

The fact that you have to be evil and clever here should be about clear by now. Combine these two traits to take full advantage of all the creatures. It's what we call being cunning. The fun thing is that each race has its own specialties. Use these to improve your empire or to spread chaos in the empire of other villains. Understanding and optimising the capabilities of each race is your key to success! Use your imagination and fear no one… uhm… except dragons that is, for they really show no mercy.

The **POWER** of a creature is activated if you place that particular card from your hand into your castle.
**SKILLS** are used after or with certain actions.

GIANTS

POWER: take a dragon out of the supply and place it in your empire. Dragons protect cities which are horizontally and vertically adjacent to the dragon against attacks from other players. Dragons take up the place of one complete city.

> **Example:** Scott places a giant into his castle and places a dragon into his empire. The dragon protects the cities of the gnome and the giant.

SKILL: after building a giant city you may switch two cards in your own empire. Including dragons and ruined cities.

> **Example:** Kate builds a giant city. Right after this she switches her wizard city with her giant city. The giant city is now at the edge of your empire, the wizard city is in the centre.
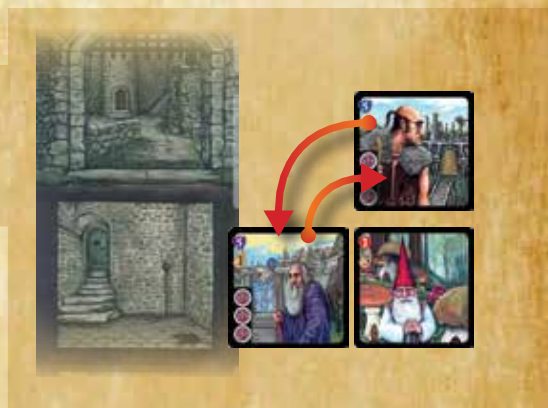
HUMANS

POWER: take three cards from the draw pile and/or discard pile.

> **Example:** Scott takes one card from the draw pile and two from the discard pile.

SKILL: humans provide 0.5 or 2 gold if they go working in the mine. This can come in handy to avoid having an equal bid in the auciton phase.

GOBLINS

POWER: take a card from Hubba's bar and place it into your empire. You have to pay the building costs. **You may use the goblin card you just played to pay the building costs.**
Put a card from the draw pile in the bar.

> *Example:* Sarah places a goblin card in her castle. She takes the giant city out of Hubba's bar and places it in her empire. She doesn't have to pay extra building costs.

SKILL: each goblin card also depicts an extra creature. If the goblin is in your dungeon, you can use one or both creatures to pay for building costs when building a city.

> *Example:* if the following goblin card is in your dungeon, you can build this particular wizard city.

GNOMES

POWER: place a card from your hand (of max. 2 victory points) into your empire. You don't have to pay building costs. You can use this action to build human cities!

> *Example:* Scott places a gnome in his castle and places a human city from his hand in his empire. He doesn't have to pay any building costs.

SKILL: gnome cities can be built without paying any building costs.

ORCS

POWER: take a ruined city out of the supply. Replace a city of another player with the ruined city. You cannot use this power on cities protected by a dragon or located in a completed empire (16 cards).

Example: Kate places an orc in her castle and ruins a city of Scott afterwards. Scott's gnome cities are protected by the dragon.

Kate   Scott

SKILL: the orc cities have a higher point value than other races.

WIZARDS

POWER: swap one of your cities with that of another player. The cities are placed on the fields where the swapped cities were. Dragons and ruined cities can't be swapped. It's also forbidden to use this power on cities protected by a dragon or located in a completed empire (16 cards).

Example: Sarah places a wizard in her castle ❶ and exchanges her wizard city with the giant city from Scott. ❷ Afterwards she exchanges her gnome city with the giant city from above ❸ (Skill of the giants).

Sarah   Scott
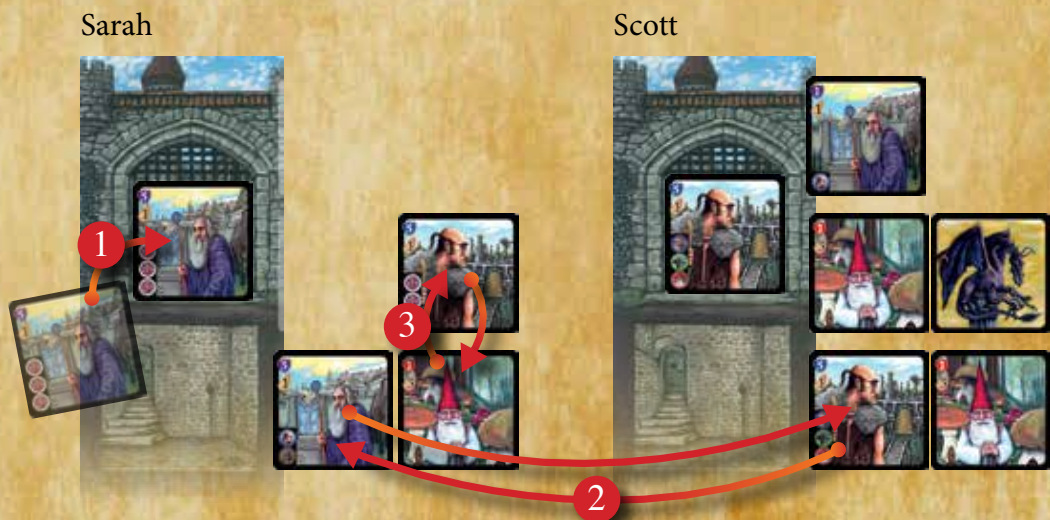
SKILL: if building costs have to be paid when building a city, you may always use (a maximum of) 1 wizard instead of another creature.

6. End of the game

Lord Maldorf is the only one who can lift the curse. Although you would much rather remodel his face with a blunt and heavy object, you wait obediently until his final judgement. You truly believe that you will prevail with your empire. Just a few more moments and you can enjoy your regained freedom.

The game can end in two ways:

1. After day three with a visit to Hubba's bar.
2. After a gaming round in which a player builds his 16th city (including dragons and ruined cities). You finish the round and each player finishes his or her actions. The game then ends with a final visit to the bar. At this point, there will be 1 or 2 rows of cards in Hubba's bar. The players respectively choose 1 or 2 cards in bidding order. 1 card is placed into the empire of the player, the other (if any) is discarded.

Take pen and paper to write down the scores:

Preparation of final scoring:

- Giant cities that aren't at the edge of your empire are removed.
- Wizard cities that aren't in the centre of your empire are removed.

For more explanation about edge and centre: see example BUILDING RULES.

final scoring

Every player receives the following victory points:

- the victory points shown on the cities in your empire.
- victory points for every serie of human cities that are horizontally or vertically adjacent to each other according to the following sequence: 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 9, 9, …

Extra points are awarded to:

- the player (or players) with the most giant cities gets 6 victory points. Similarly, the player(s) with the most wizard cities get(s) 6 victory points , the player(s) with the most human and orc cities get(s) 4 victory points and the player(s) with the most gnome cities and goblin cities get(s) 2 victory points.
- the players receive 8, 4, 2 or 1 victory point for an empire with respectively 6, 5, 4 or 3 different types of cities. Ruined cities and dragons do not count.

> The winner is the player with the most victory points. Lord Maldorf relieves him/her of his curse.
> In case of a tie, there are multiple winners and they are all relieved from the curse.

Most cities	Giants	Wizards	Humans	Orcs	Gnomes	Goblins
Victory points	6	6	4	4	2	2

# of different types of cities	3	4	5	6
Victory points	1	2	4	8

Example: Scott has the most giant cities of all players and ties with Sarah for the most orc cities.

- The wizard city at the bottom is not in the centre and is removed.

- The total victory point value of his cities is 29.

- The human cities give 1+2+3 victory points for the adjacent cities and 1 victory point for the lone city.

- Scott receives 6 victory points because he has the most giant cities and 4 victory points because he has the most orc cities (together with Sarah).

- Scott also scores 8 victory points because his empire counts 6 different types of cities.

- 29 + 7 + 10 + 8 = **54!**

Let's get sentimental

5 years have gone into the development of this game. It originated from the following question: "can I reduce the luck factor in cardgames by adding more functions to the cards?" A first prototype, "the earthly paradise" (2008) appeared to be too complicated. By finetuning this game again and again after many playtesting sessions, Warlock saw the light of day. This was a time-consuming but fascinating experience. I hope that the discovery of Warlock will be equally fascinating to you.