

# 20SIDED – OPTIONAL ALLEGIANCE RULES

**Note:** **OPTIONAL ALLEGIANCE RULES** presents an alternate system for using Allegiances in Stormbringer. Although these rules have been developed to stand alone, a copy of the Stormbringer 5th edition (or Elric!) rulebook is required to use this document.

The Allegiance system, the mechanics where characters build up points of commitment to the three forces of Law, Chaos and the Balance are a key element in Stormbringer 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Designed to represent individuals leaning between the three forces that guide all things in the Young Kingdoms, these mechanics should reflect a character's outlook on life and their understanding of the eternal conflict between the very nature of these powers.

Unfortunately as currently represented in Stormbringer 5<sup>th</sup> edition, this system fails to invest a player's interest in the mechanics; becoming little more than another calculation that they must maintain on the character sheet. Yes, while characters who have experienced enough of the Young Kingdoms will be allowed the opportunity to side with one or other of these powers, they do not act as a motivator or incentive as seen in other system's game mechanics (i.e. Call of Cthulhu's Sanity and Cthulhu Mythos systems, Pendragon's Traits and Passions, or Vampire's Blood Pool mechanics, etc.)

The purpose of this document is to return some impetus to the Allegiance system and make the battle of the powers extend directly to the characters themselves. It is hoped that with the introduction of these mechanics, a character will strive to renew their allegiances and search for the ultimate rewards of balance.

It should be noted that while this system could easily be used (as written) with the existing Stormbringer rules, they have been adapted to match better the 20sided rule set.

## THE FORCES OF LAW, CHAOS AND THE BALANCE

*'Know you not that two forces govern the world-fighting an eternal battle?' Elric replied. "Law and Chaos. The upholders of chaos state that in such a world as they rule, all things are possible. Opponents of chaos-those who ally themselves with the forces of law-say that without law nothing material is possible.'*

*'Some stand apart, believing that a balance between the two is the proper state of things, but we cannot. We have become embroiled in a dispute between the two...'*

### **Weird of the White Wolf II, 3**

The Young Kingdoms is a world under siege. From beyond, the forces of Chaos crash against a wall of Law that - until Elric awakens Arioeh, the Lord of the Seven Darks - remains solid against all attacks. Yet while most of Chaos' most malign forces remain beyond the ken of most within the Young Kingdoms, there are those who still seek its influence.

Likewise there are those who praise the Lords of Law, looking to 'unchange' as the only true path to enlightenment and peace, who are willing to hold on to these beliefs even as the Young Kingdom's are consumed by the very powers chaos they so fear.

Between these two extremes lays The Balance, a force with looks to life, love and harmony to pilot a world

from one stage of existence to the next. It is, as Elric states, the proper state of things, a guiding power that embraces equal parts of Law and Chaos.

As the characters explore their world, they will find themselves drawn into the silent war between Law and Chaos, and will realise that they must rely on their own experience and judgement to see the ‘appropriate’ decisions are made. They are about to become instruments of Fate, and through this agents of The Balance. They will likely discover that there is not always a ‘right’ or a ‘wrong’ answer to the challenges they face, and in the end one’s allegiances will often determine what course of action they will finally embark on.

## CHARACTER ALLEGIANCES

All who live in the Young Kingdoms are influenced by the three forces. Two, Law and Chaos, are opposed, with either one or the other dominating an individual’s personality and alignment, while The Balance acts a pivot to these, governing one’s sense of self and position in life.

The Balance is the fulcrum between Law and Chaos, manifesting itself as self discipline, as well as a devotion to fate and the true future. To a Stormbringer character, the Balance reveals itself as enhanced aptitudes and the ability to guide Fate itself. In addition, a character’s Balance score acts as the total upon which the other allegiances rests, and as it increases so does their ability to comprehend the strengths and weakness of these the opposing forces.

Resting on either end of this fulcrum is Law and Chaos. These two aspects are balanced, and as one goes up (through various actions), the other goes down. The totals upon which these maintain equilibrium is a character’s Balance total (i.e. if a character’s Balance total is 20, then the Law and Chaos totals must equal 20, etc.) As the characters are a microcosm of the struggle between Law and Chaos, during play these two numbers will rise and fall as the hero assists the machinations of either one power or the other.

While these totals do not force a player to act in any specific way, they can be used as a guide as to their character’s attitude to life. In addition, having a leaning towards one or the other can assist the character either with magic (in the case of Chaos) or inner strength (in the case of Law), while total devotion to either can greatly increase their abilities while impairing them to the plight of the world.

## A LIFE OF CHAOS

Characters who have a leaning towards Chaos (i.e. have a greater Chaos total than Law) have the ability to call upon additional Magic Points once per day. This ability represents their understanding of Chaos as they have served it, and the temptation to harness the forces of destruction and unending creativity to their own ends (see Gaining Allegiances below).

- If so desired (there is never any compunction to use these additional points) they can temporary gain Magic Points equal to the difference between their Law and Chaos totals.
- These temporary points are added to the character’s current Magic Point total and must be used before any of the character’s innate Magic Points.
- These points last for 10 minutes and any ‘unused points’ disappear immediately at end of this period.

However as a result:

- The character loses points equal to twice the amount of additional Magic Points gained from their current Balance Pool (see below).
- Gain 1 point of Chaos Allegiance.

#### AGENTS OF CHAOS

Any character who gains enough points in their Chaos Allegiance to tip the scales 90/10 in its favour will receive the opportunity to become an Agent of one of the Chaos Lords. No one is ever forced to become an agent, as the transformation must be a voluntarily process. Becoming agent of Chaos will:

- Stop the progression of Balance - the character's Balance Allegiance total can never increase from its current level, although it may decrease (making the new, lower total the maximum in the Balance).
- Lessen the hold of Law - the character's current Law Allegiance total is halved and can never increase from this new level, although it may decrease (making the new, lower total the maximum in that Force).
- Strengthen the connection to Chaos – the character gains permanent POW equal to 1/5<sup>th</sup> of their current Chaos Allegiance. Of all the Allegiances, only Chaos may now increase. Note that the character will gain additional points as their Law Allegiance increases.
- Become a Champion of Chaos (with the advantages and risks of Undeath current described in the Stormbringer rulebook - minus the additional Magic Points).

#### A LIFE OF LAW

While Chaos is a tempting force, similar compunctions can be found in the peace and order of Law. Characters who have a leaning towards Law (i.e. have a greater Law total than Chaos) have the ability to call upon additional Hit Points. This ability represents their own internal state of grace and determination to ensure that the world remains unchanged (see Gaining Allegiances below).

- If so desired (there is never any compunction to use these additional points) they can temporary gain Hit Points equal to the difference between their Law and Chaos totals.
- These temporary points are added to the character's current Hit Point total and must be used before any of the character's natural Hit Points are lost.
- These points last for 1 battle and any 'unused' points disappear immediately at end of this period.

However as a result:

- The character loses points equal to twice the amount of additional Hit Points gained from their current Balance Pool (see below).
- Gain 1 point of Law Allegiance.

#### AGENTS OF LAW

Any character who gains enough points in their Law Allegiance to tip the scales 90/10 in its favour, will receive the opportunity to become an Agent of one of the Law Lords. No one is ever forced to become an agent, as the transformation must be a voluntarily process. Becoming agent of Law will:

- Stop the progression of Balance - the character's Balance Allegiance total can never increase from its current level, although it may decrease (making the new, lower total the maximum in that Force).

- Lessen the hold of Chaos - the character's current Chaos Allegiance total is halved and can never increase from this new level, although it may decrease (making the new, lower total the maximum in that Force).
- Strengthen the connection to Law – the character immediately gains characteristic points equal to 1/10<sup>th</sup> of their current Law Allegiance to be allocated as the player sees fit. Of all the Allegiances, only Law may now increase. Note that the character will gain additional points as their Law Allegiance increases.
- Become a Champion of Law (with the additional benefits noted in the Stormbringer rulebook - minus the additional Skill points).

## THE CALL OF COSMIC BALANCE

The hardest of the three Allegiances to appease, the Cosmic Balance rarely has the need for agents. For those who follow this force, one of adaptation and natural progress, the rewards can be greater than any agency - Tanelorn, a city of peace and ultimate serenity.

Unfortunately, the life of balance is much harder than one of Chaos or Law; factions who fight daily for the attentions of man. Conversely, the spirit of the Balance is with all living things, and it calls no favourites, offering its benefits to all who will accept it.

As a result, in addition to the skill points the character has assigned during creation, or gained through experience, their Balance Allegiance total acts as a pool of skill points to be temporarily allocated to skills when required during a game session. These additional points represent the training and power of the character as well as a mark of Fate and the Cosmic Balance. To use these points:

- At the beginning of each game session, all characters generate a Balance Pool equal to their current Balance total. This Balance Pool is equates to 'free' skill points that can be allocated when making skill rolls.
- When required, a player can allocate points from this Balance pool to a required skill. The allocation of these points need not be determined prior to play, and can be done either before or *after* a roll is made.
- Points can only be allocated to skills (including skills that a character has *no* skill in), and no other rolls or task attempts (i.e. Characteristic roles, Major Wound or Fumble rolls, etc.)
- Points used in manner detailed are lost until the beginning of the next game session. (i.e. a character assigning 5 points from their Balance Pool to their Climb Roll would increase their Climb skill by 5 for that single roll. Furthermore, whether they succeed or not, they Balance Pool is reduced by 5).

## THE SEEKERS OF TANELORN

For those who embark on the path of balance the city of Tanelorn is their ultimate goal. With such a aspiration come the chance of peace and survival of the Young Kingdoms final destruction. Unlike the other Allegiances, in which agency can become progressively harder as the other forces increase, a character can always look to attain Tanelorn.

As such, once a character's Balance total reaches 50, they will have the location of this great city revealed to them – although how this is to be done is left to the game master to determine. As with the other powers the

character is not forced to accept the offer, but if they do they become a Seeker of Tanelorn.

Seekers of Tanelorn are those individuals who wish nothing more than freedom from the current troubles of the world and with it leave behind the concerns of Law and Chaos. When becoming a Seeker, a character:

- Immediately losses all their points in their Law and Chaos Allegiances.
- Gain the ability to reroll any skill failed skill roll, including combat skills (i.e. roll a second time and take the best result of the two).

The journey to Tanelorn is often long and fraught with danger and it likely that the hero will need to overcome one last great challenge before reaching their final destination.

## USING ALLEGIANCES IN PLAY

*'Fate is never thwarted. What has happened has happened because Fate willed it thus--if, indeed, there is such a thing as Fate and if men's actions are not merely a response to other men's actions.'*

### **Elric of Melniboné I, 3**

As has been seen, the rewards of allegiance can be great, with those who dedicate their lives to one or other of the three cosmic forces gaining much power and ability. But not all adventurers achieve their goals of agency, and the Young Kingdoms is a world full of danger and death. Furthermore, while there is much opportunity to fulfil one's obligations to the power they wish to follow, there is equal opportunity to thwart its achievements.

## CHARACTER CREATION

When a character begins their career as an adventurer or explorer they are balanced on the scales of life, with no single allegiance governing their devotion. As a result they will start with 10 points in both Law and Chaos, and 20 points in the Balance.

## GAINING ALLEGIANCES

As a character embarks on their adventures throughout the Young Kingdoms, they will encounter the forces of the three powers at every step. Indeed, whether they like or not, they are agents of Fate already, and each and every quest, journey or action they undertake will affect the state of Powers, if not within the world then, at the very least, within their own minds and spirits.

**Note** - it is important to make mention that the mechanics as written make the progress of either Law or Chaos increasing more difficult as the character gains more points in the Balance. It is envisioned that most characters, in their roles as Fate's hands, will look to achieve Tanelorn. That said, player's who dedicate their lives to either Law or Chaos will find that this is readily achievable, as long as they are willing to make the difficult decisions.

## THE SCALES OF BALANCE

As has been highlighted, a character's Balance Allegiance is the number upon which the other allegiance totals hang.

- It is important to remember that the total of the character's Law and Chaos Allegiances must always

equal their Balance Allegiance total. This means if a character gains points in the Balance, both their Law and Chaos Allegiances will increase to maintain this equation. Half points are appropriate, although these should be rounded down if a Power is called upon.

- The Law and Chaos Allegiance must always balance against the character's Balance total. If points are gain in one of these two power, then the other must be decreased by the same amount.

## FINAL NOTES

As with all 20sided adaptations of the Stormbringer system, the Optional Allegiance rules presented in document are a work in progress; as required further drafts will be developed. If you have any question, queries or comments on this document, please feel free to contact us at [stormbringerrpg@gmail.com](mailto:stormbringerrpg@gmail.com).