

Introduction to the Exploring New Lands Campaign

Imagine a world with unknown lands. The Empires of ancient Gridaldi (Greek), Persia, Egyptian and more recently Aquilian (Rome) have come before and fallen. The most recent empire was the largest; the Aquilian Empire. It fell when an army of humanoids sacked the city. Before that it was a world spanning empire covering most of the civilized world. It traced its roots to the Gridaldi (Greek) Peoples and before that the Etruscans.

The world is now recovering from a Dark Age it has been 512 years since the sack of Aquila (Rome), and most of its citizens were rooted out and replaced by various races of humanoids (Orcs, goblins, gnolls and the like). Time is reckoned from the sack of Aquila. The tide has changed and the more populous human race has taken over the area, but the wilds are still filled with humanoids, ruins from the previous empires. There have been several attempts to widen the existing human empire, but most of them failed.

The Inhuman War was fought with demonic forces siding with the Orcs, the demons, the mindflayers, and even off-planet allies. Heroes rose to the challenge, started by the brave forces of Avalanche, who defeated the Inhumans 50 years ago. Helping to establish the new *Empire of Reason*.

The party members are native to the city of Seagate and its locality. There has been a lot of work done in the neighborhood. Gongaga is now a major elven city. A city has sprung up around the trade routes founded by Avalanche, and several other cities exist, but Seagate is still the major city. As a result king Seabite has initiated the new Empire of Reason, reforging the old Aquilian Empire with Seagate as its capital.

The general mission of the party is one of exploration. Players should keep in mind that they are representing the Empire of Reason and so must be suitable for that task. Monster races, while allowed in the game, may not be the best choice for potential ambassadors. The group will serve on a ship under the one-eyed elf Obama. He lost his eye to a demon attack while fighting for Aarborea. The party itself will serve as crew and as one dignitary on board the ship. The dignitary holds the party leadership post currently, but that is subject to change.

There are two missions laid before the party. The first mission will be to investigate a ray of blue light in the far north. It has been seen by ships, but no one knows what it is. Second a ship was traveling east of Sorid, the crew moved further out to sea to avoid pirates and were blown even further off course than they intended by a storm. The lookout sighted a large land mass. The crew didn't have the manpower or provisions to investigate further so they turned back. The king would like to have this area explored and if it has any friendly natives they are to be contacted. The dignitary with the group will have permission to make minor treaties, but all of them will be subject to ratification by the king. The king especially doesn't want to be engaged into another war. Trade exchanges would be welcome though.

It is not my policy to lead the party by the nose, I like them to have control over their own destiny. However, for this campaign the party will be subject to the orders of the captain and will travel to where he decides to go. The captain will not command the

shore parties, nor will he be expected to enter into any diplomatic agreements unless the dignitary is lost. The rest of the party will be there to defend, the dignitary's group, handle the shore party duties (which can range from gathering clean water, hunting for food to general exploration) and they will be expected to work as crew on the ship. There will be no dead weight on this captain's ship. Even the dignitary will be expected to make maps and help with the navigation, so build your characters accordingly. It is probably a good idea to take a skill point or two in Balance and Profession (Sailor). Read the section on Profession (Sailor) to look for any jobs you might be able to fulfill.

Allowed Alignments

Lawful Good, Chaotic Good, Good, Neutral Good, and Lawful Neutral

Good Characters will usually work together and promote the common welfare. Chaotic Characters could care less about the laws, rules and order, but they will follow the party leaders direction because they can profit from doing so and the rules are not too strict. Neutral Characters could also care less about the laws, but they are not as apposed to them as Chaotic Characters are. Lawful characters want the organization that laws provide and will more likely to follow the rules and the party.

I have problems with the following alignments for specific reasons:

Chaotic Neutral Characters are so greedy and self centered that they can not be trusted, most of them are also insane, with no foundation for a moral character that is acceptable in society. They are true mavericks and so can't be trusted.

True Neutral Characters must balance evil with good and so they will work against the general goals of the campaign half the time.

Neutral Evil Characters will backstab the party and will work against the general goals of the campaign.

Lawful Evil Characters would turn the party over to the evil humanoids for a bounty, never mind working against the goals of the party.

Chaotic Evil Characters will backstab the party and work against the general goals of the campaign. they will refuse to work with *anyone* and not fit into the campaign.

That is why myself and many DMs want to confine the party to good alignments. More often than not players want to chose these unapproved alignments so they can "screw" with the party, a self centered, selfish goal. The whole idea of heroic fiction is the morality play of good vs. evil. And the game itself is a saga of that epic struggle. With the heroes working together to defeat the bad guys.

In the real world things are all in shades of gray. Even Hitler was nice to his friends and was honestly trying to improve the lot of German Aryans. He took his nation out of an economic crisis and depression and made them into a world power. The problem with Hitler was in his methods and many of his warped goals. For example the "Final Solution" was first applied against Jews, but it would eventually have been applied to any non-Aryan race. He is a classic example of the saying "absolute power corrupts absolutely."

The best working definition of "Good" is a philosophy where the person is willing to sacrifice for the welfare of others. Some of the historical paragons of "good" like Christ, Joan of Arc and Martin Luther were all willing to give their very lives to help others. Good characters by definition will want to cooperate with the party and the campaign.

The best working definition of "Evil" is a philosophy where the person is willing to sacrifice the welfare of others to improve their own condition. Most dictators fall into this category, especially ones like Kim Jong-il, or Saddam Hussein who lived a lavish lifestyle while ruthlessly suppressing the freedom of their people and forcing most of their citizens to live in poverty, some even in abject slavery. They want things their own way and have little tolerance for those that do not see it their way; not an ideal attitude for an adventuring party.

The Neutral philosophy's sit somewhere in the middle. Usually, they are more complex than the black and white issues of absolute good and absolute evil. However, it is often possible to get them to cooperate with the campaign. They may be a bit selfish and greedy, but they are willing to work together.

That is the problem with evil aligned characters is getting them to work with the campaign.

In 2nd and 1st edition of D&D Alignments were straight jackets with the loss of a level as a consequence of changing alignments. Few people really played their alignments though; most party members had the alignment of Chaotic Greedy. Good and Evil are more than just a point of view they are a way of bringing about that viewpoint. Most of the DM story lines are outlined with the ideal of good triumphing over evil. This is also the theme present in most fiction, myths and stories of a society. These stories become a fundamental part of that societies nature.

There is a place for the other alignments though. There are Anti-Heroes and cases where those who could be called "good" and "evil" worked together. Stalin was a cruel despot, but he worked with Great Britain, the United States and the Allies to defeat the evil that was the Axis. None of the Allies were perfect, but their common goal of defeating the Axis Alliance could be considered a "good" one. If Hitler had won, his "Final Solution" would have been applied to most of the world; resulting in the extermination of the majority of the world's population.

If you want to play a non-approved alignment you must work with your DM to do so and for the game to succeed you must create a character that will follow a few rules:

1. The party has to know that you have their back. Almost every thief has been guilty of under reporting the amount of treasure they find and pocketing the profits for their own use. However, if the party is in trouble almost all of those characters are willing to do anything to help. If the party can't trust its members it will start a war within the party and cause the party to fall apart.

2. The party must be willing to follow the DMs Story Line. DMs are responsible for creating a reason for why all that happens in their lives does happen. The life of an adventurer is not a string of accidents, but a road to an eventual goal; usually one that saves the world or fulfills a similarly impressive goal. The DM may put up a lot of

stories, they may disguise the story line, there will be random encounters, and the party may stray from the primary story line from time to time; but you cannot have one group want to go here and adventure and another group that wants to go in an entirely different direction to do something else and still expect the DM to run both parties. This is why every DM hates it when the party separates, they can't do two things at once; they can't run two groups at the same time.

3. The party must get along, they don't have to like each other, but they have to agree to work together. If the party members can't get along together then they will not have a legitimate reason to adventure together. There are reasons why an evil creature and a good creature could adventure together; mainly to defeat a foe that they have in common or to prevent the destruction of what they hold dear. Their ways of going about it will differ; as to their alignments and they will argue over that, but if they can't agree to work together then there is no reason for them to do so and the game will fall apart. If the party won't stay together, working on a common goal then there is no reason for the party to exist. The goals may change, and the motives may vary and everyone may not be working on the same goal at the same time, but they can't be working against each other or against the story.

The easiest way to insure that these rules are not broken is to force the party to have similar or compatible alignments. If the players can come up with good reasons for the party to be together without sharing the same alignments then they can work that out with the DM in their background story. Those party members must also insure that when the DM's plot unfolds that they will be able to keep with the party and the storyline. Otherwise they will not be allowed to play an unapproved alignment. I do not expect everyone will always work together, but I want the group to aspire toward that goal.

It is not a situation of US "the party" vs. THEM "the DM." It is a situation of ALL OF US trying to resolve the problems posed by the DM. You must create a character who is willing to follow that goal.