

# Dead Simple - Supplement 9, Oh My God!

## Introduction

So you want to be a god?

One of the most fun things about running a roleplaying game are the Gods. They define everything, they can be glorious, they can be mysterious. They can act directly, or through agents and avatars. They can even act through those miserable little beings called heroes.

The can be served by a huge temple structure with priests in every settlement, or by secret cults lurking in the shadows. Their servants can be agents of the state or hunted fugitives.

There are many ways to run gods and their minions, so here are a few to get you going.

## A Pantheon - one big happy family?

If you think teenagers are challenging for their parents try being the parent of teenagers with the power of gods!

You only have to look at the ancient Greek and Norse pantheons to see where I'm going with this. Each has over a dozen Gods, all related in some way, who act more like a cross between the Osbornes and the Kardashians than divine beings. Since they are generally not allowed to actually kill each other in front of their parents they meddle in the affairs of mortals and send their pawns to meddle with their siblings' pawns. Plots, treachery, wars and disasters, then it's home in time for ambrosia with the oldies.

Such gods love to be adored, and demand temples and worshippers. They want to live vicariously through the actions of the heroes they select and promote. In fact they are a lot like teenage boys on the X-Box/Play station with their mates.

Some sneak down to the mortal realm to meddle the affairs of heroes in some sort of disguise. Others prefer to send avatars or heralds to do their dirty work.

In any case you tend to end up with a world full of men on quests, monsters cropping up where no self-respecting monster should be, and not a few demi-gods due to divine 'interventions'. This is the classic D&D approach to roleplaying religion. Lots of opportunities to kick down doors, kill monsters and take their stuff!

## Multicultural - my god's bigger than your god!

Where cultures collide then you generally have mayhem. This is particularly true in great empires where dozens of nations are ruled by a single Emperor. In order to keep 'his' people in line he lets them each keep their own gods.

Now if you think a pantheon is trouble, imagine a city where the agents of several pantheons are getting busy trying to prove that their god(s) are better than everyone else's, and curry favour with their imperial overlord. The early Roman Empire was a good example of this.

This is the Hyborean (Conan) approach to roleplaying religion. Lots of opportunities to kick down temple doors, kill other gods' worshippers and take their stuff!

## Monotheism - a thousand shades of grey...

Of course the antidote to multicultural pantheism is to throw them all out and then impose a state-backed religion. Welcome to the late Rome Empire.

The idea is that if you have a unified religion that relies upon the ruler's patronage then you can control the people. Oh so wrong...

Monotheistic religions have a habit of creating internal pantheons in order to represent all the different types of worshippers. Some call these

devas or angels, others deify dead martyrs and call them saints. These get elevated to the status of minor gods, and we're back to pantheism.

The other fun thing with monotheistic religions is schism. This is where the supporters of the one god split on some point of interpretation of the holy word. This generally leads to riots, extensive and involuntary martyrdom and eventually full-scale civil war.

This is the medieval European approach to roleplaying religion. Lots of opportunities to kick down doors, kill heretics and take their stuff!

## Playing a god

Gods are rarely interested in the minutiae and can find it hard to understand why their minions are occasionally unwilling to make those little sacrifices on their behalf.

In a game like Dead Simple gods are best played as both whimsical and forgetful, benevolent one minute and vengeful the next. Go watch an eight year old play with their toys for a few minutes and you'll get the idea.

They love their favourites, but can lose interest quickly if they are not constantly amused.

There is one rule you must keep to or all is lost. No mortal can hope to take on a god, toe to toe, and win. Dead Simple gods are GODS, not like D&D where they had armour classes and hit points. The moment you let a player character beat a god the game is essentially over and the players are now playing gods themselves.

Despite their great power Gods do have their limitations. These could be imposed by a greater parent god, the nature of the universe or even the combined expectations of their worshippers. Many are gods of small niches in human affairs. You can have gods of war and gods of blacksmithing, sun gods and horse gods.

To give you an example here is a pantheon I use in my games of Dead Simple.

## Argh

The God of War.

This deity revels in strife and open conflict. Most Fighters have a charm, amulet or tattoo to this God upon their person.

Temples to Argh appear throughout the City States and his festivals are a dangerous time to wander about unarmed. His temples are large affairs that often look like small castles. Many feature a fighting ground at their centre.

Many Goblins follow Argh.

Priests of Argh get +1 to their Fighting skill.

## Babdh

The Goddess of treachery and betrayal.

Widely attributed with teaching humankind how to be cunning and sly, Babdh is the patron of all Thieves.

Shrines to Babdh are hidden where only the faithful (or unlucky) may find them. They are often in the backrooms or cellars of taverns.

Babdh is Argh's sister/wife/concubine and as such hates him bitterly.

Priests of Babdh get +1 to their Stealth Skill.

## Snogra

The Goddess of hatred and spite.

Snogra was born of the bile of the great worm, Crom Cruach, and with her came all the malice in the world. She loves to spread dismay and despair, and feeds the maniacal dreams of bullies and tyrants.

Her few temples in civilised lands tend to be in the backstreets of the less salubrious parts of town.

Most evil hags and witches are followers of Snogra.

Priests of Snogra get +1 to their Perception skill.

## Bobh

The God of craft.

Despite all their faults humans are an industrious and inventive race. This ability comes from Bobh, who is actually a fallen, lesser dwarven deity - though no Bobhian will ever admit it.

Most crafts-guilds have a well-appointed shrine in their guild house.

Bobh is the son of Danu and Khodh.

Priests of Bobh get +1 to their Craft skill.

## The Lady

The Goddess of Fate.

No one knows where The Lady came from, even her priests. But came she did, and saved the human race. For from her comes the humans incredible luck.

All human gamblers call upon her, though she frequently doesn't listen and is quite fickle in her affections.

There are often shrines to the Lady in gambling houses, and a few more formal temples in larger cities.

Priests of The Lady are naturally lucky and may re-roll one die roll per day, but must accept the new result.

## Crom Cruach

The great worm is in fact a Troll deity widely respected by Adventurers.

All Gods acknowledge the great worm as their ancestor, so worship is widespread. Many evil serpents and dragons trace their ancestry to Crom Cruach, and the barbarians of the Wild Lands often worship it.

The Trolls have several large temple complexes in their lands dedicated to this foul deity.

Priests of Crom Cruach may cast the Shrive spell once per day per point of SPT.

## Danu

The Earth Mother.

A commonly worshipped Goddess amongst farmers and others who revere nature and the land. Many elves also follow Danu.

There are numerous sacred groves and glades dedicated to Danu, especially in the elven forests.

She is the wife of Khodh and mother of Bobh.

Priests of Danu may ignore the first wound they suffer in a day, as long as their feet are on the ground.

## Khodh

The father of the Dwarves and Lord under the Mountains.

He is the husband of Danu and father of Bobh. He and his wife share considerable enmity and this frequently arises in the relations between Dwarves and Elves.

The dwarves have constructed fine temples to Khodh in all their holds.

Priests of Khodh get +1 to their Toughness.