Charging of the Light-Bearer
a Game of Onerous Solutions by Dylan Nix

Introduction

Elders gather in their sanctum seeking to choose a new Light-Bearer, the figurehead of the order, from amongst themselves. It is a thankless position, as the Light-Bearer must flush out the darkness amongst the people. It is a dangerous position, as the people often balk and become angry at the presence of the Light. It is a permanent position, as the new Light-Bearer is only chosen after the death of the previous one.

Set-up

Each elder chooses a name and a domain (Laughter, Secrets, Rivers, Winter, etc.); the domain may not be Light, of course — that is the domain of the Light-Bearer. These are written on index cards for reference during the rounds. Finally, all participants arrange themselves in a circle, starting with the eldest, in descending age order around to the left.

Rules for Play

Play begins with the chosen elder (starting with the eldest) initiating a hum. Each round is preceded by a communal humming at various pitches. If one cannot or wishes not to hum, they may provide drum beats or interpretive movement. The chosen elder indicates the beginning and end of the humming with a raising and lowering motion, respectively, which the group follows with a raising or lowering of their volume.

Then the chosen elder decides whether the round will be a Proposal round or a Rejection round. Proposal rounds are those in which each elder provides a reason why the elder to their right would be the perfect Light-Bearer. Rejection rounds are those in which each elder provides a reason why they themselves would not be a good fit for Light-Bearer. Use what you know about each elder and yourself to provide justification.

Each elder can only take one minute at most explaining themselves, and they may not repeat nor contradict reasoning given. Play passes to the left regardless of the kind of round. At the end of the round, each elder votes simultaneously for which of the group should be Light-Bearer. The elder with the fewest votes is not to bear the Light this time and removes themselves from the circle. Ties for lowest amount of votes are settled in a similar fashion, except that votes are limited to the tied elders. Play continues in this manner, with the designation of chosen elder rotating to the left each round, until two elders remain.

Endgame

When only two elders remain, Fate must decide amongst the pair who will bear the Light to the people. Each makes a short prayer (one minute at the most) to the Fates (controlled by any players no longer in the running for Light-Bearer). Each player closes their eyes, and the Fates indicate by touch or other sign the one destined for the Torch. The Elder with the most indications laid upon them will be the Light-Bearer and so carries the heavy burden with them until their death. If the Fates cannot decide, use the rules for two players to break the tie.

Rules for Two Players

When there are only two elders in attendance, they must let their abilities decide who shall bear the light. They begin by humming communally as in the rounds above. Looking to their domain, each in turn utters a sentence invoking their power, countering the effects of the other. If one is speechless, without device on how to undo the designs of the other, they must become Light-Bearer.

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Play Advice

Charging of the Light-Bearer is a game that rests largely on the interactions and intersections of the group's creativity while pitting the members of the group against one another. There is some variety in play with the Proposal and Rejection rounds, but the grist for the mill is in the domains and character facts established through play. There is also great value in the limiting of speech, both in terms of time and in terms of content (i.e., just about the elder next to you or your own elder).

The rules themselves briefly touch on this topic, but I repeat it here: when in doubt, look to what has been established in character creation and previous rounds, if there have been any. The most obvious answer is probably the right one, as it may not be so obvious to others. This is not a new thought, but it turns out to be helpful in this situation.

The rules for only two players are, admittedly, seemingly disjunctive from the rest of the game text, but I believe it rests on the same principles: creative collaboration in the midst of player-versus-player action. Lengthy tête-à-têtes between the two powers provide tense play and satisfying conclusions. Don't feel like you have to make it last forever, however. Only go so far as your creativity will stretch, and then perhaps strike up another session with different domains.

Feedback is invaluable to me. If something is amiss, constrictive to play, or even if everything went well, please let me know by sending me an email at: yepnix@gmail.com.

Acknowledgements