



Rite Publishing Presents

The Rituals of Choice Adventure Path

The DM's Primer

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Dedication: *To Monte Cook for letting us play in his sandbox.*

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The DM's Primer to The Rituals of Choice Adventure Path.

When the magic of creation receded like flood waters after a storm, they left behind pools of power or what those in the *Lands of the Diamond Throne* call power cysts. Beings of vast potential often seek these places out and drain them of their energy. Once, near the beginning of time, there were three mortals, the Hanavere Trinity, who discovered a power cyst so potent that they used its mystic energies to ascend to godhood.

Now all the gods are dead, or have fade from the world. Most people no longer worship gods, and instead embrace the history of their ancestors. People fear the return of gods who once enslaved them. The faen, however, worship an ever increasing pantheon of new gods which they are discovering by the moment and to most outsiders it seems as if they are making them up as they go. Even the dragon god *Erixalimar* has not been seen in a thousand years. But now a new goddess has arrived, and she is known as *Virdella Tesham*.

Virdella Tesham

"I will tear this silly little universe to shreds to find what I seek."

Although no one knows for sure, the being known as *Virdella Tesham* claims to be a demigoddess from a distant plane. She comes seeking what is known as the *Hadath*.

The *Hadath*, apparently, is a specific and sentient energy sequence hidden within the very fabric of the universe. With it, *Virdella* could command the power to conquer the multiverse. This energy sequence can only be accessed, however, by dismantling this plane of existence. *Virdella* is extremely powerful, but she does not have the strength herself to dismantle the entire plane and not damage the *Hadath*. For a time she waited, researching and studying this new plane. That time is now done. She is ready to act. She is going to create an evolved power cyst greater than the cyst that allowed the *Hanavere Trinity* to ascend to godhood.

The path to her goal lies open: A number of forgotten ceremonies must be rediscovered and carried out by mortals acting under their own free will. *Virdella* has put her plan into motion, and will stay in the shadows and use mortal minions subtly and secretly, until she has enough power to move openly and eliminate her only real opponent, the dragon god *Erixalimar*. Moreover, even if all else fails, she has a contingency plan: the creation of heroes.

The Ceremony of Heroism, the ungiven oath of helping the helpless, the supremely noble act of risking all with no expectation of success or reward. In the world of *Arcana Evolved* this has a power all its own that exceeds the minor powers of rituals and oaths. In the world of the *Lands of the Diamond Throne* heroism can change the outcome of the greatest of events (Hero Points). *Virdella* will use the power and grace that heroes earn to guarantee the outcome of her plan.

To this matter *Virdella* will be producing the Heroes of this adventure, forcing them into moral conflicts, presenting opportunities for them to act gallantly, and seeing that the heroes are rewarded for their trouble, so as to encourage this idealism that she needs to gain the *Hadath*.

This saga goes though 5 major arcs consisting of 5 adventures each. The first arc is the harbinger of a great event. *Virdella* begins her manipulations for the *Rituals of Choice* to be preformed, slowly putting more and more power into her evolved powercyst, while her would-be heroes are following the directions of a champion of the *Hadath*. This all eventually culminates in the PCs having to choose whether or not to assist the son of *Erixalimar* in sacrificing himself to stop an Ice Age from claiming the world. If they do assist him, then they save the land but weaken the dragon god, *Virdella's* most potent foe.

In the second arc *Virdella* continues her elusive approach to ultimate power, allowing the sky to fall upon a hero's doomed hometown (a comet). It all culminates when her second most dangerous threat, a creature known as *the Kallethan*, uses the heroes to oppose her, just as *Virdella* begins a special ceremony whereby she must gain a *Truename*.

In the third arc a boundary has been crossed and events set in motion that cannot be stopped. More ceremonies come to pass that could grant *Virdella* even more power depending on the choices

of the heroes, one of which could cause the death of the heroes' most valuable ally. Eventually all the lands are thrust into war as Virdella manipulates the dragons and giants into battle.

In the fog of war of the fourth arc, Virdella continues to grow her evolved power cyst by feeding off of the forces awakened during the conflict, from mystical wildfires to continent shattering storms, finally ending with Virdella threatening one of the fundamental runes of creation.

In the final arc the preceding chain of events comes to a final and dramatic head. Virdella gains access to the power of the world's collective memory, the power of a banished god and the power of imprisoned deities thought long dead. She then travels forward in time, with the heroes following, to see what could happen when she makes her attempt. Now forewarned after witnessing the future twenty-five years after the Dismantling, she returns to the present for the finale.

Each adventure within these arcs will expound upon the themes and tropes that are Arcana Evolved: Oaths and Ceremonies, Character Choice being greater than Destiny, Contrast and Opposition, Complex Races and Classes, Evolution, Giving Power Back to DMs, and Tailor Made Characters.

