A HOUDINI MAGAZINE PUBLICATION · BABYLON DIALECTIC

The Dialectic Dispatch

ISSUE 1 PLAY IT LIVE FREE

- **The full errata, 28 cards**
- **The rules audit**
- **Five Set I cards in depth**
- **Versus, explained**
- **History with sources**
- **Puzzles**





FREE TO PLAY · FREE TO PRINT · FREE TO SHARE

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BACK ISSUES

Why this game exists

I have carried this game around since high school. I took AP American History and then AP World History, and somewhere in those two years history stopped being a list of dates and turned into the best story I had ever read. Every chapter had its heroes and traitors, and every age had its strange weapons. Every war had two sides who were sure they were right.

At the same time I was playing card games with lore deep enough to drown in. Players memorize the family trees of made-up kingdoms and read flavor text for clues. I was obsessed with the lore the new Doom games added.

People like to learn lore. I like to learn lore. And the world we live in has more of it than any game ever written. History is the lore of the real world. So why not build a card game around it?

That question sat in a notebook for years. Heroscape had me obsessed as a kid. Warriors from different worlds shared one battlefield there, and that idea never left me. The first real design document came together in 2023. Babylon Dialectic is that notebook finished. It is the free card game of HOUDINI Magazine. Its armies follow Tecumseh, Alexander, Blackbeard, Washington and the Kingdom of Shu into a war over the pages of history.

This newsletter is where we talk about how the game plays, why it is built the way it is, and where it goes next. Write to us. Tell us what you built, what broke and what you learned.



Erik Houdini
Editor-in-Chief, HOUDINI Magazine

What we promise

Everything is print and play

Every card in the game can be printed and played at a table. That was true on day one and stays true. Card sheets, starter zines, the full rulebook, a quick reference and posters all live in the Zines room, free to download and free to share. Cards print at Yu-Gi-Oh! size, 59 x 86 mm. Magic size is in the Printables room of the Museum.

The game is free

You never need an account, a purchase or a subscription to play. Versus needs no server. Your collection stays in your own browser.

The history is the point

Each card stands for a real person or place, or for a weapon or an event from history. We take the teaching side seriously. Every card has a page in the Card Library with its history. Each history is drawn from public-domain books in the Museum's Library, and every book has a page of its own. Every historical claim in these issues carries a numbered source.

The Museum

The Museum is a work in progress and it will keep growing. Expect more rooms and dossiers, more sources and more primary documents. Back issues of this newsletter live there for good.



The Museum, rebuilt

The Museum is the other half of Babylon Dialectic, and this month we rebuilt it from the floor up. It is still a work in progress. Rooms will keep opening, and the shelves will keep filling, for as long as the game runs.

Every card has a history

Every one of the 253 cards now has its own page in the Card Library. Each page asks two to four questions about the card and answers them from real books. The answers quote the passage and name the book, and the book is free to read online. Each page also says how we know what we know, what the sources still argue about, and what the numbers were.

The Reading Room

The Reading Room holds the 234 books and documents behind those answers. Each book has its own catalogue card with the writer, their dates, the language and the questions it answers. Some are in Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and French, and those carry their English names beside the originals. Every book links to a free copy.

The Timeline

Every dated card sits on the Timeline, oldest first, from the Stele of the Vultures to the twentieth century. Each age has its own page now. Antiquity or the Age of Revolution reads in one sitting.

THE WHOLE GAME, PRINTED

Everything you need to play Babylon Dialectic at a kitchen table is in the Museum, and all of it is free to print:

- Every card in the game at Yu-Gi-Oh! size. Color and black and white both print.
- All five starter decks, the Barracks pack and the Set I catalog.
- The rulebook and a one-sheet quick reference.
- A playmat at true card size, printed over four sheets.
- Token cards, Supply counters and a DP track for each player.
- A deck box, a deck list and a collection checklist.

Print a deck for yourself and one for a friend, and play. Then tell us how it went. We want to hear about the rules you argued over, the combos you found and the decks that broke the game.

FREE, OPEN AND FOR EVERYONE

Babylon Dialectic has no ads, no tracking and nothing to buy. It needs no account and no app store. Every card, rulebook and deck is free to print and free to share.

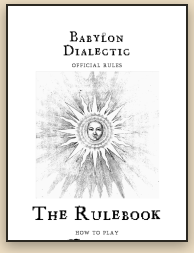
We take the teaching side of this game seriously. History is the point. Every card stands for a real person, place, weapon or event, and every claim in the Museum points to a book you can open and read for yourself. The card's page says so when a source disagrees with the card. A game that teaches history owes its players the evidence.

Print the Whole Game











Every card, every starter deck and the rulebook are free in the Museum. So are a playmat at true card size, token cards and Supply counters.

FREE TO PRINT AND FREE TO SHARE

babylon-dialectic.neocities.org/museum/printables

Welcome, Goat Format players

Welcome to every Yu-Gi-Oh! player. We play too. This game was built for anyone who grew up on a duel disk and still argues about timing. It has traps you set and spring, quick tactics that answer an attack, and rules that reward a player who reads the board.

Goat Format players already know the habit that matters most here: read the card, then read the ruling. Our Card Library keeps both in one place, and page 11 shows how our card text is written so you can read any card in seconds.

GOAT DS

Our free Goat Format companion for the Nintendo DS. It has a life point tracker, a card database and the banlist. It carries every ruling from goatformat.com and a duel simulator. It is made for the Goat Format community by that community, and it is not an official game.

houdini-magazine.itch.io/goat-format

TEMPLE OF RA

Goat Format challenges, the Tokyo Dome 1999 pages and a life points tracker, free in your browser.
templeofra.neocities.org

DISCORD

Come talk Goat, Tokyo Dome and our card game.
discord.gg/nAFzMHHQyn

Where the game stands

- **Card Library.** Every card has its own page. Each page carries the rules text and ratings, the flavor and the history. The Library lists them all and filters by army, type and rarity. Cards you own are outlined, and prev and next links step you through the set.
- **Token fix.** Any attack on a token destroys it, and a token that attacks is destroyed by any counter-damage. A token that attacked and took 2 in return used to survive. It no longer does.
- **Versus.** Online play against a friend is live. Pages 18 to 21 explain how it works.

Build notes

Game version 1.10, build 115. The game is free to play in a browser.

Coming up

We are working on a printable barracks guide and more Museum rooms. A letters page comes next, so send us the rule that confused you most.

The Rules Audit

This game has seen hours of playtesting since launch, at home, in Versus and against the computer. Players sent in rulings questions, odd board states and cards that did not do what they said. All of that fed into a full rules audit. We checked every rule in the rulebook and all 253 cards against what the game actually does, one card at a time.

Most of what we found were small gaps between the printed text and the game. A few were serious. Lit Fuses could destroy a Leader, and Benedict Arnold could overfill a command row. Traps like Rearguard could spring on their owner's own turn. Veteran units grew even when Armor stopped their blow. All of it is fixed. The game should feel cleaner to play and much less confusing.

Card Text You Can Solve

Card text now follows one standard, modeled on Yu-Gi-Oh!'s Problem-Solving Card Text. Every effect is built from the same parts in the same order:

- The condition comes first and ends with a colon. It says when the card works.
- The choice comes next and ends with a semicolon. It names the targets and any cost.
- The result ends the sentence. A duration always comes last, for example "until the end of this turn".

Fixed phrases mean one thing everywhere. "Then" means the second part happens only if the first did. "Also" means it happens either way. A player who can read one card can read them all.

RULINGS WORTH KNOWING

- The hand limit is checked at Closing. You keep every card you draw during your turn and discard down to 4 when it ends.
- You choose whether Soldiers or Supply counters pay a cost. Counters pay first when you leave it to the game.
- Tokens count as Soldiers for every card that names Soldiers. They still take no place on the front line, deal no counter-damage and are destroyed by any attack.
- A set Tactic, Supply or Equipment card can be turned face up on a later turn, never the turn you set it.
- Clara Barton and Field Hospital heal at the start of your turn, as printed.

How to read a card



WORKED EXAMPLE: ABATIS

When a Cavalry your opponent controls attacks: Cancel the attack, then create 1 Legionary token.

The condition is an enemy Cavalry attacking. Abatis has nothing to choose, so the line has no semicolon. The first step cancels the attack. The second step makes the token, and only if the cancel happened.



WORKED EXAMPLE: HATTORI HANZO

Once per turn, during your turn: Target 1 unit your opponent controls that carries Equipment; destroy 1 Equipment on it.

A line that starts with Once per turn is an ability. You use it with its button during your own turn. You pick the target as you use it, and the effect destroys one piece of gear.

Errata

Babylon Dialectic began with two starter decks. Tecumseh's Confederacy fought Washington's Continental Army. The full game later added Alexander's Macedon, Blackbeard's crew and the Kingdom of Shu, and the new decks were built on the same frame. Each one inherited copies of the old basics. Five Quick tactics read "+2 War until the end of this turn." Three read "Armor 2." Three more took 2 War away. Every starter deck carried the same plain Supply. It entered with 3 counters and did nothing else.

Copies like that are harmless against the computer. Versus is different. Players build decks to beat each other there, a metagame starts to form, and identical cards flatten every deck into the same deck. So each of those cards now keeps its basic job and does one thing more. The new effect fits its army. War Cry still gives 2 War, and now it gives Fear. Shield Wall still gives Armor 2, and now every Soldier you control hits back harder.

THE SUPPLY PROBLEM

Supplies were the bigger problem. Every Supply entered with 3 counters, and counters pay for Soldiers. A deck stacked with Supplies could reach more resources than any deck should, far earlier than the game was built for. One player could overextend while the other was still mustering.

Cornfields of the Wabash is now the basic Supply. It enters with 3 counters and does nothing else. Every other Supply enters with 1 or 2 counters and comes with a second effect. Hardtack is

the one exception. It holds 3, and you cannot spend them the turn it is played. Baggage Train draws you a card. Supply Wagons fetches Equipment from your deck. Rum and Powder Stores brings back the Trap of your choice from Valhalla. This is how Supplies will work from now on: a small stock of counters and one more thing they can do.

THE FULL LIST

QUICK TACTICS

BEFORE Target 1 unit you control; it gains 2 War, until the end of this turn.



War Cry
NOW Target 1 unit you control; it gains 2 War and Fear, until the end of this turn.



Companion Wedge
NOW Target 1 unit you control; it gains 2 War and Guard, until the end of this turn.



Fix Bayonets
NOW Target 1 unit you control; it gains 2 War and Volley 1, until the end of this turn.

BEFORE Target 1 unit you control; it gains 2 War, until the end of this turn.



Boarding Axes
NOW Target 1 unit you control; it gains 2 War and Boarding, until the end of this turn.
Cost now 1 DP, was free.



Five Passes
NOW Target 1 unit you control; it gains 2 War and Armor 1, until the end of this turn.

BEFORE Target 1 unit you control; it gains Armor 2, until the end of this turn.



Fallen Timbers
NOW Target 1 unit you control; it gains Armor 2, until the end of this turn. Soldiers you control cannot be destroyed in a fight, until the end of this turn.



Shield Wall
NOW Target 1 unit you control; it gains Armor 2, until the end of this turn. Soldiers you control deal 1 more counter-damage, until the end of this turn.

BEFORE Target 1 unit you control; it gains Armor 2, until the end of this turn.



Breastworks

NOW Target 1 unit you control; it gains Armor 2, until the end of this turn. Each Soldier you control is no longer pinned. Soldiers you control cannot be pinned, until the end of this turn.

BEFORE Target 1 unit your opponent controls; it loses 2 War, until the end of this turn.



Lit Fuses

NOW Target 1 unit your opponent controls other than their Leader; it loses 2 War, until the end of this turn. During the next Closing: If its War is 0, destroy it.



Changban Bridge

NOW Target 1 unit your opponent controls; it loses 2 War.

Cost now 2 DP, was 1 DP.



Kiai

NOW Target 1 unit your opponent controls other than their Leader; it loses 2 War, until the end of this turn. During the next Closing: If its War is 0, you gain 2 DP.

SUPPLIES

BEFORE This card enters with 3 counters.



Baggage Train

NOW This card enters with 1 counter. During your Closing: This card gains 1 counter, up to 4. During your turn: Remove 3 counters from this card; draw 1 card.



Supply Wagons

NOW This card enters with 1 counter. During your Closing: This card gains 1 counter, up to 4. During your turn: Remove 3 counters from this card; add 1 random Equipment from your deck to your hand.



Rum and Powder Stores

NOW This card enters with 1 counter. During your Closing: This card gains 1 counter, up to 3. During your turn: Remove 3 counters from this card; add 1 Trap of your choice from your Valhalla to your hand.



Lend-Lease Convoy

BEFORE This card enters with 4 counters.

NOW This card enters with 2 counters. During your Closing: This card gains 1 counter, up to 4. When your opponent destroys this card: Draw 1 card.



Silk Road Caravan

BEFORE This card enters with 3 counters. Equipment you play costs 1 fewer DP.

NOW This card enters with 1 counter. During your Closing: This card gains 1 counter, up to 3. Equipment you play costs 1 fewer DP, to a minimum of 1.



Field Kitchen

BEFORE This card enters with 3 counters. When this card is played: Remove 1 damage from each Soldier you control.

NOW This card enters with 1 counter. During your Closing: This card gains 1 counter, up to 3. When this card is played: Remove 1 damage from each Soldier you control.



Antikythera Mechanism

BEFORE This card enters with 4 counters. At the start of your turn: Remove 1 counter from this card. When its last counter is removed: Draw 2 cards.

NOW This card enters with 2 counters. At the start of your turn: Remove 1 counter from this card. When its last counter is removed: Draw 2 cards.



Cuneiform Tablet

BEFORE This card enters with 1 counter. When this unit is played: Draw 1 card.

NOW This card enters with 1 counter. When this card is played: Draw 1 card.



Hardtack

BEFORE This card enters with 3 counters.

NOW This card enters with 3 counters. Its counters cannot be removed during the turn it is played.

A GIFT FOR READING



Starter decks lost their extra copies of the plain Supply. We are giving one back. Open this issue's page in the Museum and a copy of Cornfields of the Wabash joins your collection.

OTHER CARDS



Benedict Arnold

BEFORE Traitor: During your third Closing with this card on the field, it moves to your opponent's command row.

NOW Traitor: During your third Closing with this card on the field, it moves to your opponent's command row. If that row is full: Send this unit to Valhalla instead.



Mosin-Nagant

BEFORE The equipped unit gains 1 War and Ranged.

NOW The equipped unit gains 1 War, Ranged and Volley 1.



Fog on Long Island

BEFORE When a unit your opponent controls attacks: Cancel the attack.

NOW When a unit your opponent controls attacks: Cancel the attack. Pin the attacking unit and the unit it attacked.



Grenadoes

BEFORE The equipped unit gains 1 War. When the equipped unit attacks: Deal 1 damage to each other front-line unit your opponent controls.

NOW The equipped unit gains 1 War. When the equipped unit fights: Deal 1 damage to each other front-line unit your opponent controls.



Spartacus

BEFORE While you have fewer DP than your opponent, you can muster 1 more Soldier each turn. Rebels you control gain 1 War.

NOW At the start of your turn, if you have fewer DP than your opponent: You can muster 1 more Soldier this turn. Rebels you control gain 1 War.



Tank Trap

BEFORE Target 1 unit your opponent controls with 4 or more War and 1 other unit your opponent controls; destroy both.

NOW Target 1 unit your opponent controls with 4 or more War and 1 other unit they control other than their Leader; destroy both.



Lincoln's Repeater

BEFORE The equipped unit gains 1 War and Volley 1.

NOW The equipped unit gains 1 War and Volley 1, and its role becomes Champion.



Legionary

BEFORE Token. It does not take a front-line space. Any attack destroys it, and it never goes to Valhalla.

NOW Token. It does not take a front-line space. Any attack destroys it, and it deals no counter-damage. It never goes to Valhalla.

About 25 more cards got clearer wording with no change to how they play. Sergeant Stubby now names the face-down card he destroys, the leftmost one. Decoy names the token it picks. Barbed Wire, Sun Tzu and Nathanael Greene read more plainly. The Volley and Outflank reminders were rewritten to match how those keywords work. Every card in your library already shows its new text.







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Goat Format challenges, the Tokyo Dome 1999 pages and a life points tracker, free in your browser.

GET GOAT DS FREE
houdini-magazine.itch.io
/goat-format

VISIT THE TEMPLE
templeofra.neocities.org

Play a friend, no server

Versus lets two people play a full game over the internet. One person hosts and the other joins. We receive no uploads and store no games. Neither player makes an account.

The technology is WebRTC, short for Web Real-Time Communication. It is built into every major browser and lets two browsers pass data directly. No middleman carries the messages. Video chat sites use it for calls. We use it for card plays.

Before two browsers can talk directly they must learn how to reach each other. Home routers hide computers behind one public address, so each side needs to find out what its address looks like from outside. A **STUN server** does that job. It is a small public service that answers one question: what address do you see for me? We use public STUN servers run by Cloudflare and Google. They never see your game.

Each browser then writes a short description of itself. The description holds its addresses, its options and its security keys. The host's is an **offer** and the guest's is an **answer**. Swap the two and the browsers can open a **data channel**, a private pipe that carries text.

IN ONE SENTENCE

Your browser and your friend's browser shake hands once, then talk directly, and the only things they say are the moves.

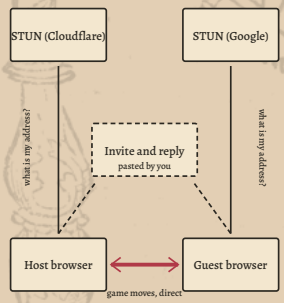
THE HANDSHAKE, STEP BY STEP

1. **Host starts a match.** The game builds an offer and packs it into a short code, compressed to fit in a link.
2. **Host sends the invite.** The invite is a link that ends in *?vs=* and the code. A copy button puts it on your clipboard.
3. **Guest opens the link.** The game reads the offer, builds an answer and shows a reply code.
4. **Guest sends the reply back.** Same method: paste it into chat.
5. **Host pastes the reply.** The data channel opens and both screens start the game.

> The codes are plain text. Anyone holding one could try to connect, so send them only to the person you want to play. After the match starts they are useless.

A connection needs both sides to describe themselves, and each side can only describe itself. A server would normally carry the two descriptions across. You carry them instead, and the cost is one extra paste. Page 20 explains why we accept that.

THE PICTURE



Solid vertical lines are the one-time address lookups. Dashed lines are the invite and reply that you carry by hand. The thick arrow is the data channel that carries the game. After the handshake the middle box disappears.

WHAT ACTUALLY GETS SENT

The board itself never travels over the wire. Both browsers run the same game engine, and the engine is deterministic: given the same starting seed and the same list of moves, it produces the same game every time.

So the two sides only need to agree on three things.

- **The setup.** At the start each side sends a hello message with its army, its deck, its barracks and the host's random seed.
- **The moves.** Every action you take, such as playing a card or declaring an attack, goes across as a small message. Your friend's browser applies it and gets the same result.
- **A checksum.** After each action both browsers compute a short fingerprint of the game state. The game warns you when the fingerprints differ. Two copies that drift apart never play on in silence.

> The host's browser rolls the seed at random, and the engine decides every shuffle from it. Neither player picks a shuffle during the match.

The messages are tiny, a few dozen bytes each, so a match works on a slow connection.

WHY WE BUILT IT THIS WAY

We could have rented a server, written matchmaking and asked you to sign in. We chose not to.

It keeps working

A server is a bill that never stops. Free games that depend on one tend to die when the money does. This one has nothing to switch off. Two people can play for as long as browsers exist.

It stays yours

We have no accounts. We hold no emails and no passwords, and we keep no match history. Nothing can leak because nothing is stored. Your collection lives in your own browser.

It matches the hobby

Card games began at a kitchen table with a friend you knew. Passing a link to that friend is a small version of the same act.

TRADE-OFF

You arrange the match yourselves, and a few strict networks block direct connections. We would rather say that plainly than hide it.

IF IT WILL NOT CONNECT

- Try again on the same Wi-Fi, or switch one side to mobile data.
- Corporate and school networks often block direct links. Play from home.
- If a code does not paste, copy it again and check nothing was cut off at the end.
- If the game reports a desync, both players start a new match.

Jan III Sobieski

LEADER · LEGENDARY · CAVALRY ENGINE



CARD FILE	
SET	Set I
TYPE	Leader
RARITY	Legendary
ERA	Gunpowder
FORTIFICATION	7
DP VALUE	8

Cavalry you control gain 1 War and 1 Fortification. Cavalry you play cost 1 fewer Soldier, to a minimum of 1. His ability, once per turn during your turn, gives Charge to one Cavalry you control that has not attacked this turn. Charge lets a unit attack the turn it is played.

FACING IT

Clear his front line, or hit him past it with Ranged or Outflank units. Destroying him costs his owner 8 DP and switches off the Cavalry bonus.



Play pattern

Sobieski has no War of his own and a Fortification of 7. Like every Leader he starts in play, never attacks and never hits back. His value is the bonus he gives every Cavalry you control, so keep your front line full.

1. His bonus is on from your first turn. Each Cavalry gains 1 War and 1 Fortification, and most cost one Soldier less.
2. Most Cavalry print Charge already, the Hussars included. Save his Charge for Cavalry without it, such as Mongol Horse Archers.
3. Losing him costs you 8 DP. Ranged and Outflank units can reach him past your front line.

DECKBUILDING

Run as many Cavalry as your deck allows. The cut pays on Cavalry that cost 2 or more, such as the Hussars. A cost of 1 stays at 1.

HISTORY

Sobieski beat the Turks at Chocim, the Khotyn of the card, on 10 November 1673 [1]. Polish nobles made their kings [2], and they elected him on 21 May 1674 [1]. He commanded the whole Christian army at Vienna in 1683, nearly seventy-eight thousand men in Schimmer's order of battle [3]. Pope Innocent XI offered money and his blessing, though no sword [1]. The victory soon counted for little at home, and Waliszewski blames jealousy and spite [1].

Winged Hussars

TROOP · CAVALRY · RARE



CARD FILE	
SET	Set I
TYPE	Troop · Cavalry
RARITY	Rare
ERA	Gunpowder
COST	2 Soldiers
WAR	3
FORTIFICATION	3
KEYWORDS	Charge, Fear

A Cavalry Troop with War 3 and Fortification 3 that costs 2 Soldiers. It carries two keywords and no other text. Charge lets it attack the turn it is played. Fear means Soldiers your opponent controls deal it 1 less counter-damage. It becomes War 4 and Fortification 4 under Sobieski and costs 1 Soldier.

FACING IT

Fear works only on Soldiers. Hit the Hussars on your own turn with Troops and Generals, or answer the charge with a trap such as Abatis. A single Hussar with no support is easy to handle.



Play pattern

The Hussars have no rules text, only numbers and two keywords. A plain Soldier has War 1, so with Fear it hits back for nothing. Tokens never hit back at all.

1. Under Sobieski a Hussar costs 1 Soldier and attacks as War 4 the turn it arrives.
2. As Cavalry they are the target of Abatis. Think before you charge into a face-down card.
3. Run several. Sobieski's bonus applies to every Cavalry you control.

DECKBUILDING

A deck can hold three copies. Run all three to make Sobieski's cost cut worth the slot. Without Sobieski they are still a fair attacker.

HISTORY

Waliszewski describes one squadron at Vienna: 150 horsemen, all gentlemen of birth. Each towarzysz, or comrade, carried two swords, pistols and a hollow lance made to break at the first impact. Feathered slips on their shoulders guarded the neck and startled enemy horses [1]. Seven thousand hussars and pancerni charged at five o'clock on 12 September 1683 [1]. Salvandy counts Kirchholm, in the Livonian war, among the battles that taught Europe to admire the Poles and fear the Swedes [4].

Abatis

TRAP · COMMON



CARD FILE	
SET	Set I
TYPE	Trap
RARITY	Common
COST	Free

Abatis springs when a Cavalry your opponent controls attacks. It cancels the attack, then creates one Legionary token. It answers the deck that wants to charge.

FACING IT

Attack with anything but Cavalry and Abatis never springs. A cheap Cavalry sent first may not draw it out, because the defender chooses when to spring it.



Play pattern

A trap can never spring the turn you set it, and a When trap springs only on your opponent's turn. That makes Abatis a prediction. You bet your opponent will send horse at you, and you spend a card slot on that bet.

1. Set it before you need it. A trap costs nothing to set, and Abatis costs nothing to spring.
2. The Legionary token stands on your front line without taking one of its five places. Any attack destroys it, and it never pays a cost.
3. Against Cavalry decks it is among the best cards you can run. Against everything else it sits dead. Count your opponents before you add copies.

DECKBUILDING

One or two copies in a deck that expects Cavalry. Keep it out of decks that see none.

HISTORY

An abatis is a line of trees felled toward the enemy. The ends of the larger branches are sharpened [5]. The French called Ticonderoga Fort Carillon [6]. Montcalm held it behind an abatis in July 1758 [7][8]. Abercromby's engineer judged the works weak enough to carry without artillery. The attackers cut paths through the trees and climbed the parapet, and cannon killed them by scores. Abercromby sounded the retreat when two thousand had fallen [8].

Feigned Retreat

TRAP · UNCOMMON



CARD FILE	
SET	Set I
TYPE	Trap
RARITY	Uncommon
COST	Free

Feigned Retreat springs when a unit your opponent controls attacks a Soldier you control. It returns that Soldier to your barracks, cancels the attack and pins the attacker. A pinned unit cannot attack on its controller's next turn.

FACING IT

Attack something other than a Soldier, or accept the pin and attack with a different unit.



Play pattern

Retreat protects a Soldier and slows the attacker at once. The Soldier goes back to your barracks. You lose tempo and keep the card.

1. Aim it at a unit you fear. The pin lasts through their following turn, which can break a combo's timing.
2. You can muster the returned Soldier again. Any Equipment it carried goes to Valhalla.
3. Tokens now count as Soldiers, so an attack on a token can spring Retreat. The token fades, and the attacker is still pinned.

DECKBUILDING

A flexible one-of. It fits any deck that fields Soldiers.

HISTORY

Hastings was fought on 14 October 1066 [5]. Oman describes Harold's house-carles as a compact column that could beat off almost any attack but had to stand fixed to do it. The Norman horse drew back in apparent disorder, and a great part of Harold's army stormed down after it. The retreat had come on the Duke's orders. The cavalry turned, rode down the pursuers and broke into the gap [9]. Edgar's retelling has William send a thousand horse forward to fall back on purpose [10].

Crossing the Rubicon

TACTIC · RARE



CARD FILE	
SET	Set I
TYPE	Tactic
RARITY	Rare
COST	1 Soldier

Crossing the Rubicon costs 1 Soldier. Units you control gain 1 War until the end of this turn. You cannot play Quick tactics or spring traps until the start of your next turn.

FACING IT

Their set traps and Quick tactics stay shut until their next turn starts, so attack freely on your turn. A player who crosses has nothing left to answer with.



Play pattern

Rubicon is an all-in turn, and the price is printed on the card. For one turn you get stronger and give up your answers. Count your attackers: with five units ready to attack, it adds five War.

1. Play it when the opponent's traps are spent or when one more point of War finishes a unit.
2. Rubicon is a Tactic and goes down in your Command phase before War. Charge lets a unit played the same turn join the attack.
3. Remember the drawback. From the moment it resolves you have no answers, on your turn or theirs.

DECKBUILDING

One copy in a wide, aggressive deck. More than one is a liability.

HISTORY

The Rubicon was a little river between Ravenna and Ariminum. It marked the edge of Caesar's province, and the laws forbade a governor to enter Roman territory while he held his command [11]. Caesar was at Ravenna in January 49 BC with one legion, the Thirteenth [11][12][13]. Its soldiers cried out that they would defend their general [13]. Suetonius says Caesar had doubled the pay of the legions for good [14]. Trollope notes that Caesar's own book never mentions the river [11].

Five to Build Around



1. King and Lancers

Jan III Sobieski and Winged Hussars. Each Hussar costs 1 Soldier under Sobieski and arrives as War 4 and Fortification 4. Its printed Charge lets it attack the turn it lands, and Fear means a plain Soldier hits it back for nothing. Keep Sobieski's own Charge for a Cavalry that lacks it.



2. March, Then Cross

Forced March and Crossing the Rubicon. Both are Tactics and go down in your Command phase before War. Forced March gives a unit played this turn Charge. Rubicon costs 1 Soldier and adds 1 War to every unit you control for the turn. You cannot use Quick tactics or spring traps from then until your next turn, so go only when you can finish the job.



3. Wall and Tortoise

Testudo and Abatis. Testudo is a Quick tactic that costs 1 DP and gives your Infantry and Soldiers Armor 1 until the end of the turn. Set it first, because a card in your hand never answers an attack. Its Armor lasts the rest of their turn when you use it at the first attack. Abatis stops the Cavalry charge and leaves a token, though Armor cannot save a token from an attack.





4. BAIT AND BOUNCE

Feigned Retreat and Abatis. Set both. Retreat answers an attack on a Soldier and Abatis answers any Cavalry attack. A Cavalry that attacks a Soldier meets both, and you choose which to spring. Opponents who read one trap may walk into the other.





5. THE LONG GRIND

Hattori Hanzo and Clara Barton. Hanzo has War 2 and Fortification 3. Hanzo has an ability he can use once per turn during your turn. It destroys one Equipment on an enemy unit. Barton removes 1 damage from each Soldier you control at the start of your turn.

Together they build a defense that wins slowly. Hanzo strips the gear that makes enemy units dangerous. A plain Soldier falls to its first point of damage, so Barton pays off on Soldiers with extra Fortification from Equipment or a Leader. Send the Soldiers Barton just healed at the unit Hanzo just stripped.

It shines against Equipment decks. Miyamoto Musashi lets Troops carry Equipment and gives every unit that carries it 1 War and 1 Fortification. A unit with 2 pieces also has Charge. Hanzo takes that away piece by piece, and in the current build he always takes the piece attached last. Add Disarm, a Tactic that destroys one Equipment, and Spoils of War, a trap that moves one Equipment from an attacker to a Soldier you control. Then your opponent's gear works for you.

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The trick that works twice

Two cards in this issue share one idea. Make the enemy want to come at you, then be ready when he does.

Hastings was fought on 14 October 1066 [5]. Oman describes Harold's house-carles as a compact column with the long Danish axe. It could beat off almost any attack, but it had to stand fixed to do it, and William alternated cavalry charges with arrows [9].

The strength turned into the weakness at the moment it was tested.

The Norman horse drew back in apparent disorder, and a great part of Harold's army stormed down into the valley after it. "This mistake was fatal," Oman writes. The retreat had come on the Duke's orders, and the cavalry turned and broke into the gap [9]. Harold fell at sunset [15].

The result was a transfer of property. The lands of Harold's followers were shared out among William's chiefs, 629 names on the Battle Roll [5]. Domesday Book came about twenty years later, and in the north the old Danish chiefs kept their influence long after [16]. The fight took a day. The settlement took a generation.

The column was strong because it held still. The feint made holding still impossible. The strength turned into the weakness at the moment it was tested.

Numbers walk into trees

The second trick came seven centuries later and an ocean away, and it was a barrier. Montcalm held Ticonderoga, which the French called Fort Carillon [6], behind deep entrenchments with an abatis of felled trees in front [7]. Abercromby came up Lake George with seven thousand regulars and nine thousand provincials [7].

His engineer called the works weak and unfinished, easy to carry with bayonets and no artillery. The attackers cut paths through the branches, climbed the parapet and died by scores under the cannon. Abercromby sounded the retreat when two thousand had fallen [8]. Private Lemuel Lyon heard the army had lost three thousand regulars [8]. Numbers had been the British advantage. The sharpened branches turned numbers into a target [5].

The sharpened branches turned numbers into a target.

A trap card works on the same contradiction. The trap turns the attacker's advantage against him, and that advantage may be War or speed or numbers. Abatis cancels a Cavalry attack and leaves you a token. Feigned Retreat sends your Soldier home and pins the attacker. Both cost nothing to spring.

Reading the table

Ask which of your strengths a trap deck is counting on you to use. At Hastings and at Ticonderoga it was the biggest one.

Who pays for the charge

Waliszewski describes one squadron of hussars at Vienna in 1683. Its 150 horsemen were all gentlemen of birth [1]. Salvandy writes that the Polish nobles held every useful trade to be a mark of servitude. They kept the whole mass of the serfs away from arms, because they had learned to fear them and went on despising them [4].

Seven thousand hussars and pancerni made the great charge on 12 September, and within the hour Sobieski was in the heart of the Turkish camp [1]. Not every rider was noble. Sobieski ennobled every man in his cavalry after the battle, for life only [2]. He paid them in rank. He also had to threaten death to keep his army off the Turkish tents, and men cut the tents open from behind anyway [3].

A card gives you War and Fortification. History adds a third number: who paid.

Caesar's soldiers followed a different payroll. Suetonius says Caesar doubled the pay of the legions for good and sometimes gave each soldier a slave and a portion of land [14]. Only the Thirteenth was with him in January 49 BC, and its men shouted that they would defend their general [11][12][13]. The Senate's side, by Caesar's own account, levied taxes on the towns and took money from the sacred shrines [11].

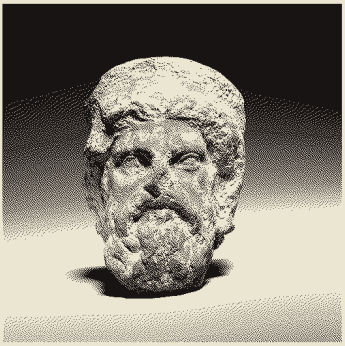
A card gives you War and Fortification. History adds a third number: who paid.

Seven moves from history

1. **Hastings, 1066.** The Norman horse fell back on the Duke's orders and turned on the English who followed [9].
2. **Carillon, 1758.** Abercromby's assault on Montcalm's abatis was thrown back [6][7].
3. **Vienna, 1683.** Seven thousand hussars and pancerni charged the Turkish front [1].
4. **Kirchholm, Livonia.** Salvandy counts it among the battles that taught Europe to admire the Poles [4].
5. **The Rubicon, 49 BC.** Caesar crossed with the Thirteenth Legion [11][12][13].
6. **Media, Antony's retreat.** The legions knelt under a roof of shields, the testudo, against Parthian arrows. Plutarch counts twenty thousand foot and four thousand horse lost, more than half to disease [5][17].
7. **Stamford Bridge to Hastings, 1066.** Harold went north by forced marches, then fought at Hastings seventeen days after the news of William's landing [10][15].

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The Fates

By John Dwight

WEIRD TALES, SEPTEMBER 1928



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Plates

Emblema XXX: Sol indiget luna, ut gallus gallina, Michael Maier, 1618. Armillary sphere on a meridian stand, Peter Apian, 1564. Fig. O: Johannes and Elisabetha Hevelius observing with the great sextant, Johannes Hevelius, 1673. The Four Horsemen, from The Apocalypse, Albrecht Dürer, c. 1498. Luna decrescens, Peter Apian, 1564. Wheel of the zodiac and labours of the months around the elements, Anonymous woodcut from Richard Pynson's 1506 Kalender of Shepherdes, 1506. Sun with a face over the earth's shadow cone, Johannes de Sacrobosco, 1569. The Large Miseries of War: The Battle, Jacques Callot, 1633.

Card art

Stele of the Vultures: Statue of Gudea, named “Gudea, the man who built the temple, may his life be long”, ca. 2090 BCE. Supply Wagons: Valley Forge, 1777. Gen. Washington and Lafayette visiting the suffering part of the army, Philip Haas, c1843. Jan III Sobieski: Anonymous John III Sobieski at the battle of Vienna (detail), Anonymous. Winged Hussars: Battle of Vienna (1683) by Józef Brandt, Józef Brandt, 1863. Abatis: Ditch and abattis (i.e. abatis) in front of Fort Sedgewick (i.e. Sedgwick), Andrew J Russell, 1865 April, printed between 1880 and 1889. Feigned Retreat: Bayeux - The Queen Mathilda Tapestry. The horsemen mount and set out for Hastings, between 1920 and 1932. Crossing the Rubicon: Julius Caesar, Colin Nouailher, probably ca. 1541.

PUZZLES

P	B	A	R	R	A	C	K	S	R	F	D
L	V	B	V	I	E	N	N	A	U	D	A
U	E	T	D	M	V	S	A	H	B	C	P
T	E	S	T	U	D	O	G	U	I	V	I
N	E	I	M	V	M	B	R	S	C	D	N
D	R	A	B	A	T	I	S	S	O	P	N
R	R	K	C	E	D	E	L	A	N	I	E
R	F	S	A	G	S	S	M	R	E	T	D
A	S	K	C	I	S	K	M	F	M	H	T
C	H	A	R	G	E	I	T	S	L	H	V
G	H	N	H	G	S	R	M	A	A	I	R
I	G	V	L	E	G	I	O	N	M	P	M

WORD SEARCH

HUSSAR
CHARGE
ABATIS
RUBICON
TESTUDO
LEGION
SOBIESKI
BARRACKS
PINNED
VIENNA

Words run across, down and diagonally down-right.

CRYPTOGRAM

Each letter stands for another. Solve the sentence.

E RETEYUC KSGH VGHW RWEUAN RES EHHERL HWN HKUS GH EUUGTNI

WHO AM I?

1. I feign flight and turn on whoever follows.
2. I am a barrier of felled trees with the points outward.
3. I am the stream a general must not cross with an army.
4. I am the roof of shields, named for a tortoise.

Answers. Cryptogram: A cavalry unit with charge can attack the turn it arrives. Who am I: Feigned Retreat is 1 and Abatis is 2. Crossing the Rubicon is 3 and Testudo is 4. Word search: HUSSAR row 3, column 9, down; CHARGE row 10, column 1, across; ABATIS row 6, column 3, across; RUBICON row 1, column 10, down; TESTUDO row 4, column 1, across; LEGION row 12, column 4, across; SOBIESKI row 3, column 7, down; BARRACKS row 1, column 2, across; PINNED row 3, column 12, down; VIENNA row 2, column 4, across.

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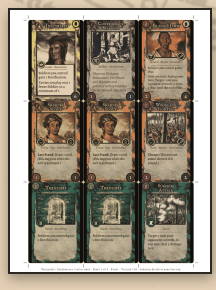
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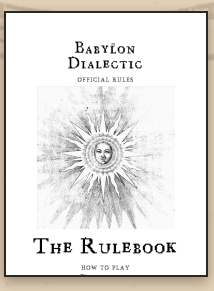
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