

The Seven Shields

The Code

To protect the defenseless
To aid the helpless
To heal the wounded
To uphold justice
To purge the world of all evil

To say the code is just an edict would be a slap in the face for all that we stand for. For countless eons the Shields have stood as the bulwark against the bastions of the world from beyond. Evil, true evil rarely carries a banner that tells the world of their presence.

The seven shields were created sometime during the 3rd age of mortals with the implicit purpose to ward off the evils of this plane and others that would seek to bring harm and devastation to our world. It was not just tyranny and oppression the order stood against but the root of such, the evil that corrupts and overtakes. There are many among the rank and file of evil, all with their own face and plan; but there is one evil that seeped into our world eons ago that has routed into the very heart. The Shadow that crept from the plane of death, while it's evil is far different than what most people think when they hear the word, it is by far the worst. The Shadow brings with it not only the plague of death but also the touch of the beyond and in its wake the living dead. This over time became one of the driving goals of the Shields, for as long as Shadow has its place here there would always be evil.

The Black Gate

Stories tell of a time when our world lived in relative peace, don't take that to mean everything was sunshine and rainbows there were still the wars of men over gold and land, but nothing like what would come upon us at the end of the 3rd age. It is said that when The Black Gate opened a roll of pure plague came forth that destroyed all living things for a mile and unhallowed the land. The gate stood 1000 feet tall and almost four times as wide, the sight was unexplainable by those who first saw the gate, the size alone was ominous but to further unthinkable as to why it was so large. The gate would stand as a battle standard for the plane of death as its lord made their play for our world.

When the black gates opened mankind ran like wild life from a forest fire, though for some reason 7 brave men stood as the first line of defense against the oncoming hordes. For 8 days those 7 brave souls fought without rest without relief, one by one they fell until only 1 remained. He was the least likely man to be there, he was no soldier he was no warrior, he was just a common man who saw the oncoming storm and ran headlong into the fray so that others might have a chance to escape. Unlike the others that had fought by his side who had done so with doubt and fear filled hearts, he fought with love. He knew no fear for he knew his destiny was to die at that bleak doorway, there was no place for fear it would not make him fight harder; but love for his fellow man would carry him to the end. It would be the dawn of the 8th day when

the mans body gave out and he fell to a knee, at that very moment thousands of soldiers and volunteers had reached the crest of the valley that now housed the black gates. What they saw would be the catalyst for the creation of the Seven Shields, an abomination lumbered from the gate, standing taller than 10 men and dragging a wicked barbed bone club. Its bellow shook the valley and the soldiers froze in a wake of fear. The creature moved quickly and swung the massive club down on the kneeling man, many winced as they expected the worst, as the club came down the man raised his shield to meet it. The stories from that day live on something like this,

“A sight like none had seen before, as the bowls of evil spilled forth over the good of man. As the beast strike down it meet not soft weak flesh, no it was met with the might of good. On that day the gods gave hope, as the bone and metal met there was a flash of pure white light that exploded from that moment in time. Like a rushing open wave the light poured in every direction crushing the shadows in its wake, turning the abomination to ash. The last hero collapsed upon the threshold swallowed up by the black gate. In the heros place lay our calling, six fractured shields in a circle around a seventh standing from the ground in defiance of the gates. What had been seen there that day made all present brothers, no words were needed no commands to be shared, they crashed upon the gate a single force.”

Spirit Farewell for Oslen Stark

As recorded by Walker Gaven

I can still remember that November morning, the sun had just come over the rise, and I was sitting on my porch having my morning coffee before hitting the fields. Then it caught my eye, in the distance the wheat field moved and rustled, whatever was in there was small land moving this way. All I could think is the damn hogs were back in the fields again, I went in and grabbed my spear I was going to put a stop to that beast myself this time. As it got closer something was wrong, there was more than one thing in the field, there were at least 10 and they all seemed to be chasing the lead object. I waited at the edge of the porch, whatever the first one was it was close to the edge soon to break out. Then the scream came, not a beast but the voice of a child, a cold chill ran down my spine and I gripped my spear tightly. The wheat field opened its maw and out fell a child no more than 10 covered in blood and screaming, I hesitated for only a second before I ran to the child.

“What is it boy, what happened?”

Before I knew what it was, it had burst from the wheat and knocked me off my feet, I jumped up and spun around ready to strike, but my eyes left me confused and unsure. They were men, or what was left of them, as the skin and meat hung loose from their bones. Their eyes seemed hollow and empty and their jagged teeth and face were covered in blood. Clarity set in I had heard tales of the walking dead since I was a child but had never seen them, they were but ghost stories until now. As they lunged for the child I bolted into action stabbing and slicing my way through them, lucky for me that were not very quick when it came to reaction time. I dropped 2 of them and grabbed the boy and fled into the house.

“Boy where are you from, where did they come from.”

He was weak and terrified, all he could do was tremble and mummer, “black gate”

The undead outside were not going to just go away, I bared the back door and decided

to make my stand, if I was to die this day it would not be cowering. I grabbed a sword my family had passed down for generations, and stood ready for the end. As they burst through the door I wasted little time I took the doorway and made it mine, they clawed and bite their way through as I hacked their bodies to pieces. I was not enough a few random strikes broke my skin and I felt my body becoming weak, I stumbled back and did what I could to fight them off, I had killed many but they seemed to just keep coming. I pushed the child into a corner and guarded him with what I was sure would be my fleeting breath; it was bleak. Then came the light, the foul creatures that loomed over me turned to ash in a single flash of white light, I collapsed as the infection had made fast work of me. I could see men but not faces, I could hear voices but not words.

When I woke I was being tended to by a young man dressed in white, I thought surely I had died and this was the afterlife. That was until I tried to move and my body ached of pain.

“Easy there, your infection is gone but you still took a beating you need to rest.” His voice was calming.

“Where is the boy, the child, is he..” he cut me off before I could finish.

“The boy fairs better than you in body, he will be okay; though had it not been for you he would have perished with the other in his village. To the east of here about two days walk something terrible has happened, and somehow that boy managed to escape and flee capture for that time running for his life. Please rest in a day when you are well I will tell you the rest.”

When I woke the next day, you could not even tell that I had been nearly mauled to death. I went outside to find several large tents, horses and, at least 30 men wearing white. It was like a weird dream, then I saw their banners, the shields; like the undead I had heard tales growing up but never seen them. The man who tended me while I slept caught eye of me and waved me over to one of the tents, inside he introduced me to a man he referred to as The Light.

“So my men tell me you stood against the undead horde to protect a child. You know most people caught in that situation simply run. So I ask you why would you stand and fight?”

“I do not know sir, it just felt like the right thing to do. I would not run from my home or from those that need aid, my father taught me that doing the right thing carries a high cost, but the cost is not important.”

He made motion to dismiss the others in the room, and gestured for me to sit, “You know it is not often that I meet someone outside our cause that would hold the lives of others above their own. As I am sure you have figured out these are dark times and only the beginning. To defend this world we need more men like you, with your resolve and compassion. I know you have your home and land, but I would implore you to consider joining the ranks. Men like you are the reason that others still have homes and families.”

I had never known anything but this home and this land, and the thought of leaving it weighed heavy, if it did not go and fight would I still have this land and home in a year. That thought was all it took for me to decide this was my purpose and cause.

I would spend a few months traveling, it was not always war that I saw; more often it was those who needed aid, some needed medical attention, some needed help to find shelter. The men of the battalion I traveled with never questioned or wavered they were truly the servants of all that is good and just. From time to time we would find those that wanted to join the cause

and protect what they loved. For a while I was confused why if there was some war out there we were not fighting, and instead were sent to tend to the people and then one day it set in. This was training, you can give a man a sword and tell him to cut down a foe, and he will do just that; however, when you give a man a chance to really see and feel that which he fights for you give him far more than a sword. You give him reason to die for the cause. After 4 months my battalion was called to the front. We rode for days, with little to no information about what waited for us, we reached the base camp by about nightfall and in the distant valley we could hear the muffled sounds of battle. We were set up for the night and told in the morning we would head into the valley to relieve some of the already deployed men. They did not prepare us for the site that we would see in the morning.

There are no words to describe the horrors so what laid in that valley, as we broke the ridge that morning it was like seeing a desert mirage the gates were beyond massive. From the distance of the ridge the line of soldiers was but a shiny snake stretched from end to end of that doorway. As we moved into the battle field we stepped over fallen comrade and foe alike, bodies everywhere. When we finally arrived at the gate to take our places, it became visible that it was not one line of soldiers but ten rotating in the rank to keep them fresh. We pushed to the front to give the weary rest, and then I meet the face of true evil. These were nothing like the ones that had attacked my home these were not just men that had been returned these were lost souls hungry for life. And they were not just men, some were monsters four stories tall that would kill many with one slam of its fists. This was not a war this was a nightmare, and one that would not simply just end one day when one force retreated this army would never tire and would never stop. At each end of the gate was an army of man, beast, and magic working to pull the doors closed, a task that felt to take a lifetime. I fought until my hands bleed then rotated to the back to rest for a bit, and in time returned to the front like all the rest. I have never been so tired in all my life, sunshine never touched the valley, the shadow of death the seeped from the gate blotted out the sun and brought only night. I have no idea the exact number of days, weeks, or for that matter months I spent in that hell; minimal sleep and constantly wounded made the mind drone out reality. But in that state my mind stayed clear of the task I had to do, the months of toil as a servant to the people of this world had prepared me for this moment. Every day the doors moved closer, it would only be a matter of time until they slammed shut and locked away that evil place forever. As the final days got closer the truth of the situation grew in my mind, you cannot close a door while there are things standing in the threshold. We could not give ground or they would just keep pushing and the doors would never close, some of us would have to push the line past the gate so the door could be shut. That day came, the man who had first brought me to my cause was there at the front, orders came he called for ten thousand men to make the push, that was less than half the force that remained and we seemed to only be holding them at best, but push them back almost a quarter mile seemed a task that could not be done. The strongest and by that time most lucid were chosen, The Light gave us his strength and we poured into the mouth of the gate, bolstered by renewed vigor we crashed upon the undead like a tidal wave pushing them beyond the threshold. The other side was worse than the war itself, as far as the eyes could see the hordes were everywhere and the darkness was overwhelming. In the final days as the gates slammed behind us the last bit of light was taken from us, and in time we were taken by the hordes. There are times I wonder if had I not gone; would I have found love, raised a family, and had a life, maybe. But had I not gone who knows

how many countless others would have not had that chance without my sacrifice.

Redemption and Sacrifice

Does a man who steals bread to feed his family need to be punished for his crime? Does the Noble who taxes his starving people so that he may buy new tapestries need to be strung up at the gallows? These are just the icing on the cake of moral dilemma you will find yourself in on a daily bases. And there will come a time you will have to make a hard decision as to what is the right thing to do, I warn you as you sit here it is easy to say what is right and wrong but when you are faced with it, it will not be so easy. Now committing a crime for a reason of only self gain is not evil, unless that action also harmed another; but in the case of the Noble he did harm but the law says he has the right to do it. This is where you will have the hardest time, the times when you have to make a decision to do the right thing even though the law says it is wrong. The moral issue becomes a code of honor, once you break the laws of the land you dance in a place of gray and danger of falling into depths we have ascended so far from. So how do you handle such things you ask, well the answer is not easy but it is clear Redemption and Sacrifice. In the case of the person who would do wrong for their game you must be open to the ability give them a road to redemption. Now should you give them that road and they choose to not walk it and to still go off the straight and narrow, well that is where the hand of justice must come in. For those that have been wronged like the starving thief, the only way to help him without becoming the bad guy yourself is to make sacrifices to right the wrong. Yes it is not fair you will make things right in this world by giving of yourself, but what is fair. That is the real question, not all people are born with the same skills or knowledge, and not everyone can be held to the same standards. This world needs the Shield to guide them from corruption and save them from themselves, without us the world would slip into the darkness.

The Undead

This is a topic that I cannot express the levity of, before the time of the Reality War and the Black Gates the corruption of the shadow was so minor that few knew it existed. But since those days the shadow has been an ever growing power in our world. It finds its way into the minds of those most easily corrupted and pushes them to do the will of the lords of Acheron. With the powers of Shadow magic these minions create undead and worse summon the hordes from across the Black Gate into our world. There are those who think this menace can be tolerated and allowed to exist here in our world, but i tell you they are wrong, they fool themselves into thinking the corrupted can be trusted. Give no quarter to those tainted by the shadow, they will not grant you the same.

Song of the Fallen

*It began long ago, when darkness,
through its deceit captured the hearts of the sons and daughters of light.*

We looked for light but we found only darkness.

We searched for bright skies but walked in gloom.

*We fumbled like the blind along the wall,
feeling our way like people without eyes.*

We were destined to fall.

Even in the brightest days, we stumbled as if it were dark.

Among the living we were like the dead.

We looked for justice, but it never came.

We looked for rescue but it was far from us.

So He, Himself stepped in to save us,

with his strong arm and His justice to sustain Him.

He put on righteousness as armor, salvation His helmet.

*He clothed himself with the robe of vengeance and wrapped
himself in a cloak of divine passion.*

*He slipped out of his royal garments,
left eternity to enter time, divinity to wrap himself in humanity.*

The sea of glass, for the ocean of separation.

He left peace, and for the first time felt pain.

*Because the very hands that held the stars were now
sentenced to wear my scars.*

It was love that purchased this traitors heart.

*It's what the prophets spoke about when they envisioned
light living in men once again.*

For this reason, I am Legend,

predestined for greatness, built for the final hour.

*I was born for this, with weapons in hand,
armor in place, I now march to the beat of a different drum.*

*I will break through battle lines that have been drawn
by discouragement and despair.*

What more is left to be said? Time has met its end.

It's now or never. Collision with me, myself and I.

You see, my mission today is clear: to wake the dead.

So let freedom's song rage.

You're not abandoned. You're not alone.

Last day warriors arise from yesterday's ash and raise your fist with us.

We are the army that is charging upon the land.

Defeat is no longer an option. It is victory.

We stand, we rise, we give our lives.