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HELL 4 LEATHER

"... you ain't you. You can't be you. We put you through the window. There ain't no coming back. This is the really real world, there ain't no coming back. We killed you dead, there ain't no coming back! There ain't no coming back! There ain't no coming back!"

- T-Bird, The Crow

You were the meanest badass SOB around. Everything was tight - you rode with the Devil's Dozen - toughest chapter going. No fucker messed with you.

Except...

Your 'buddies' screwed you. Life is cheap. What's a little murder between pals?

But all that Satanism paid off, who'da thunk it? Bad news for the puppies, good news for you. You cut a deal with the Devil. You got one night - Devil's night - to exact vengeance. You're gunna show those bastards what a REAL Angel of Hell can do.

When the rooster crows, your chance for revenge is over - you've gotta go Hell For Leather!

The Game

Hell 4 Leather is a role-playing game for 3 - 6 players. To play you require a deck of tarot cards, one with a modern flavour and plenty of imagery, even for the minor cards is best. The Archeon Tarot looks pretty good.

Separate the 22 Major Arcana from the rest of the deck.

Further separate the Majors into the following groups:

From Hell: Fool, Death, Devil (3)

Boons: Strength, Chariot, Temperance, Wheel of Fortune, Justice, The Lovers (6)

For Time: Hanged Man, Tower, Star, Moon, Sun, Judgement (6)

In Leathers: Emperor, Empress, High Priestess, Hierophant, Magician, Hermit (6)

The End: The World

"I fell way down it seemed
Into a bottomless pit
A sign saying Hotel Hades
Was the only thing a'lit
Beezelbub was hanging
But he wouldn't cut no slack
He told me the Big Cat has spoken
I'm afraid you're going back."

- Barry Adamson, Jazz Devil

Starting play

Setup

Option 1: Brainstorm setting and character's together

Option 2: Wing it

"Shake it like a ladder to the sun
Makes me feel like a madman on the run
Find me never never far gone
So get your leather, leather
leather on on on on"

- Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Zero

Looking at Leathers - Character suggestions

The Emperor - Leader of the chapter, boss man. Tyrant?

The Empress - Leader's consort, alpha female. Succubus?

The Hierophant - Spiritual head of the Chapter. Power behind the throne?

The High Priestess - Sacred female. Spiritual mother/innocent?

The Magician - Carries knowledge of the occult. Visionary?

The Hermit - Outcast, loner. Renegade?

Biker Names: *Whiskey, Moose, Preacher, Spider, Wild Bill, Crazy Ken, Weasel, Jag, Pirate Jim, Skinner, Diamondtooth, Banshee, Big Jon, Stoneface, Monkey, Junkyard, Killer, Hecate, Wizard, Skull, Maggot, Vulture, Two Dogs, Patch, Bowjangles, Velvet, Gangrene, Nasty Norm, Rosie, Hawk, Rat, Red, Dynamite, Turbo, Tiny, Tankslapper, Butch, Lady Jane, Lars, Toddla, Udo, Magnus, Ludmella, Greaseball, Monkey, Rags, Niko, King, Bullet, Django.*

Prologue

Deal out the Hell cards to three players (first player to grab the Hell cards chooses who to deal to). One of these players will become the story's protagonist – avenger, Rider, cosmic Fool. [Yeah the player dealt The Fool]. From hereon in, I will refer to the protagonist's controller as The Fool and the others as players.

The Fool begins play by narrating a suitably badass introduction for his character, showing the Rider in his best (or worst) light. The Fool continues showboating until another player drops the death card and describes the rider's untimely demise.

The final player with a Hell card flips the Devil and narrates the Rider's journey to Hell, and role-plays the Devil. The Devil casually mentions how his chapter-mates were behind the Rider's death (if it wasn't already obvious) and offers up the chance for vengeance.

The Fool collects all three Hell cards.

Game Proper

The story now plays out over 6 chapters, each symbolised by a different Tarot card.

*"You will be PUNISHED for your crimes!
The FIRES of HELL will purify you -
BURN the SIN from your flesh and leave
only ASH where you once stood!"*
- Ghost Rider, Marvel Comics

Scene 1: The funeral – The hanged man

Deal everyone except The Fool a card from In Leathers. In Leathers represent members of the Devil's Dozen, who may have betrayed the Rider. Deal out all the Boon cards to the players.

Scene structure

The Fool begins the scene, describing his own funeral. Each player (and The Fool) chooses when to flip over his Leathers card and introduce his character to the scene. All must enter the scene at some point. Players retain narrative control of their characters throughout the game (meaning what they think, say and do), everything else is up for grabs.

Minor Conflicts

Whenever a conflict comes up between two players ("I totally humiliate you at pool-" "no way pal...") an uninvolved player flips a minor card and draws upon the imagery to narrate the result. Easy. Otherwise enjoy the role-playing kids!

Marked for Death

When a scene is beginning to run out of steam,

The Fool flips Death over and targets one of the Leathers, that character is now stalked by Death. The Fool describes a potential threat to the life of the target, which may or may not be the Rider himself. Stack the Death card and the target's card face down. Each player now has the option of adding a boon card to the stack. Boons represent a way for the character to avoid the clutches of death – temporarily at least.

Shuffle the stack and deal out the cards face down. The Fool tries to receive the images from each of the cards. When satisfied with the image he is receiving, the Fool flips his chosen card over. The Fool describes the outcome of the scene drawing from the imagery – unless a Boon was chosen.

The following constraints apply –

- If Death was flipped the target dies. This ends the scene. The Leather's card is discarded.
- If the Leather's card was flipped, something changes for her which saves her from death.
- If a Boon was flipped, the target player decides how that Boon saved her character from Death.

If The Fool wants (and Death was not flipped), he can play a Boon of his own, describing how it helps, flip over another card and narrate again.

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Similarly, if a player *really* wants the marked character to die, he can play a Boon of his own and describe how it helps to let The Fool pick another card. The Boon is then discarded.

Fade to Black - Ending a Scene

The Fool retains his signifier (The Fool) and the Death card throughout the game.

After each scene The Fool collects any Boons he flipped during the scene. All Boons played by The Fool are discarded.

Each player decides whether she will play the same Leather again next scene or return the card to the stack and be dealt another random Leather for the next scene.

Devil's Due

Big Evil acts as a unique Boon card during the game. When played by The Fool, instead of discarding The Devil, Satan passes to the player with the fewest Boons (The Fool chooses who in the case of ties). This means Old Scratch will always be in play

Let The Bodies Hit The Floor

It may come to pass that there are not as many Leathers left alive as there are players. Good work Fool, good work indeed! Should this situation arise then shuffle minor arcana cards into the In Leathers stack to make up the shortfall. A player drawing a minor arcana

doesn't play one of the Leathers in the current scene, but can use his card to bring a minor character or element into the story.

Scene 2: The reckoning – (Lightning Strikes) The Tower

A former stronghold of the Devil's Dozen suffers destruction.

Scene suggestions:

- Torched Bar
- Explosion at the penthouse
- Garage overrun by militia
- Warehouse levelled by a cyclone

Deal each player without one a card from In Leathers.

The Fool begins describing the scene, unless there was a death in the previous scene in which case the player of the deceased sets the current scene.

When setting the scene don't worry too much about the scene descriptor – it's the character's that make the game. If in doubt go with something simple that logically follows from the previous scene.

Again, the participants choose when to flip their cards over and introduce their characters to the scene. Follow the normal procedure for minor conflicts and marking for death.

Scene 3: A New Path - The Star

A change of priorities for the Rider. Following your own star. Vengeance takes a back seat (at least until the rest of the gang show up).

Scene suggestions:

- Unfinished business
- A promise needs keeping
- Loved ones in danger
- A hidden secret

As Scene 2.

Scene 4: Dark deeds – The Moon

In the dead of night sin tastes the sweetest.

Scene suggestions:

- Drug fuelled orgy
- Grisly sacrifice
- Screaming bloody murder
- Shadow cloaked thievery

As Scenes 2 & 3.

Scene 5: Waiting for the dawn – The sun

Time is nearly up as the first rays of sunshine arrive...

Scene suggestions:

- The mother of all hangovers
- Besieged on all sides
- Desperate repentance
- Imperilled innocence

As scenes 2 - 4.

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Scene 6: Judgement

The Rider has one final chance as the rooster crows.

All surviving Leathers are present in this scene.

As the previous scenes, except-

Death's final mark. The Fool adds as many Leathers as he wants to the death stack. He makes a death draw. This is resolved as usual, except - flipping Death does not end the scene, instead Death returns to the stack and The Fool picks again!

Judgement.

All participants vote on the fates of any surviving Leathers – damned or saved?

Epilogue – The World

Deal out all surviving Leathers, The Fool and The Devil. In turn, each narrate how things turn out; a player dealt one of the Leathers has authority over the fate of that character (with the doomed/saved stipulation). The person dealt The Fool has authority over how things (excluding The Leathers) turn out on earth. Finally, the player dealt The Devil decides the ultimate fate of The Rider and those he sent to hell.

The End!!!



Inspiration

The Crow
Ghost Rider
Hamlet
6 Bullets for Vengeance

Thanks to:

Andy Kenrick for exciting me with his *6 Bullets for Vengeance* RPG in development.

Big shout out to my fellow namer Sebastian Hickey whose enthusiasm for the project was a real boost. And of course Mr NDP for running the whole shebang!

Any thoughts comments or feedback?
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Cheers!
Joe