

PLAYTEST · v0.1

Children of New Rome

Tabletop Edition — Quickstart

One night on the frontier.
Rules, four characters, one scenario.

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HOW TO USE THIS PACK

One night, no homework.

This is everything you need to run a single session of *Children of New Rome: Tabletop Edition*. Print it. Read it once. Three hours of prep at most, three to four hours at the table.

It is organised in four parts:

- The Quickstart — rules on five pages.
 - Four pregenerated characters — one per page, designed to be handed out face-down and chosen blind.
 - The Abbot's Debt — a full scenario in four pages.
 - A feedback page — the only thing we ask back.
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WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

After your session, send us three things: *what sang, what broke, and whether you would play it again*. That is the whole survey. The URL is on the last page.

Every playtester whose feedback shapes a change is named in the back of the printed book.

The Roll.

Roll **2d6 + a Trait** against a target the GM names *before* the dice leave the table. Most targets sit between **7** (everyday) and **11** (a feat).

- **10+** — you do it, cleanly.
- **7–9** — you do it, but the world charges you.
- **6 or less** — you don't, and something turns against you.

When your Background word plausibly applies, roll 3d6 and keep the highest two. That is the whole skill system.

The Four Traits.

- **BODY** — strength, stamina, violence, hard miles.
- **WITS** — language, lore, lying, reading a room.
- **HEART** — care, courage, holding a frightened person still.
- **FAITH** — conviction, prayer, the strength to keep going when there is no reason to.

Traits range from 0 to 3 for a starting character. Add the trait to your 2d6 roll. That is it.

The Wound.

No hit points. Every character has three slots:

I. Shaken — winded, cut, frightened. Next roll at -1.

II. Bleeding — a serious wound. Next roll at -2. Needs care by the end of the scene or it becomes Down.

III. Down — dying. Someone must reach you before the next scene ends, or you do not get up.

Armour does not absorb — it *moves* the wound. Mail turns a killing thrust into a Bleeding rib. A peasant in linen takes the same blow as Down.

HEALING

A Healer with a HEART roll can move Down → Bleeding, or Bleeding → Shaken, by the end of the scene. The world, not the patient, pays the cost on a 7-9 — a sound outside, a witness, supplies used up.

Grace, Coin, Time.

Grace is the soft currency of faith. Mystics start with 3. Spend one to call on a power set by the GM's Faith Dial — a true dream, a blessing, a quiet word that turns a heart.

Other archetypes start with **1 Grace** and spend it the same way — but recover it only between scenarios, not between scenes. Faith is rarer for them.

Coin is real. A loaf is a follis. A night's room is a miliaresion. A horse is 12 nomismata. Most player characters are functionally broke.

Time moves in scenes. Travel scenes resolve in a single roll; the GM names the cost of failure (an injury, a missed market, a witness).

SET A TARGET IN ONE BREATH

- **5** — something a child could do, if pressed.
- **7** — the everyday; a trained hand, not a feat.
- **9** — difficult. People talk about it after.
- **11** — a feat. The story remembers.
- **13** — heroes only, and rarely.
- **15+** — saints, and not always them.

THE SOLDIER

Niketas of Amorion

Background: Tagmata veteran

BODY	2
WITS	0
HEART	0
FAITH	1

KIT

- Spatha (sword)
- Mail shirt
- Round shield
- A purse of 4 nomismata he already owes

EDGE

When a fight is already happening, you act before anyone has to decide whether to.

BURDEN

Sergeant Bardas in Tarsus is owed 12 nomismata by tomorrow's market.

You woke in a stranger's stable. The dice were kind, then unkind. You are walking north because south is where the sergeant is.

THE MYSTIC

Father Anthimos

Background: *Disgraced priest of the Theme*

BODY	0
WITS	1
HEART	1
FAITH	2

KIT

- A small Gospel, water-stained
- Oil for the dying
- A bishop's letter (unopened, sealed)
- 1 nomisma

EDGE

You can spend Grace to bless the dying, read a true dream, or make the unquiet dead stand down for one scene.

BURDEN

You were sent to assist the abbot. Both of you know it means 'watch'.

The bishop will not say what is in the letter. You have not opened it. You have thought about opening it every night since Caesarea.

THE MERCHANT'S HAND

Yusuf al-Halabi

Background: Syrian factor's bodyguard

BODY	1
WITS	2
HEART	0
FAITH	0

KIT

- Long knife
- Travelling cloak
- Greek, Arabic, and bad Armenian
- 6 dirhams (Abbasid silver, awkward to spend here)

EDGE

You always know which official takes which bribe, and in which coin.

BURDEN

Your master is six days behind you with a caravan he cannot afford to lose.

Aleppo is a long way off. Your master sent you ahead with a name, an address, and an instruction: 'do not be remembered.'

THE HEALER

Theodora the Midwife

Background: Village wise-woman

BODY	0
WITS	1
HEART	2
FAITH	1

KIT

- Linen strips, needle, gut thread
- Three small jars of useful poisons
- A child's bronze pilgrim token, not hers
- 0 coin

EDGE

On a 7-9 roll to heal, the price is paid by the world, not by your patient.

BURDEN

You were simply in the wrong inn on the wrong night.

The soldiers told you to come with them. They did not say why. You brought your bag because you always bring your bag.

The Abbot's Debt.

One night · 3–5 players

A reliquary — the finger-bone of Saint Theodore, set in silver — has been stolen from the monastery above the frontier town of *Loulon*. The abbot will pay to get it back, quietly. The thematic judge wants it back officially, before the strategos in Tarsus hears. The merchant who bought it has already promised it east, to a buyer in Baghdad who paid in advance.

Three roads lead out of this room. None of them are the one the party will take.

THE SEALED TRUTH (GM ONLY)

The reliquary is a fake. The real finger-bone was sold a decade ago by the abbot himself, to pay a Bulgar ransom for his nephew. He has spent ten years pretending. If the players bring back the false relic, the abbot will weep and pay them. If they discover the truth, they own him.

The Six NPCs.

Honest sheets. Each NPC has what they want, what they lie about, and who they would die for. That is enough to play them.

Abbot Gennadios

WANTS · The relic back, and the lie kept.

LIES · That he has never seen the relic up close in ten years.

WOULD DIE FOR · His nephew, now a grown man with a family in Cilicia.

Judge Demetrios

WANTS · Promotion to Tarsus before the next census.

LIES · That he hasn't already written to the strategos.

WOULD DIE FOR · His own name. Nothing else.

Sergeant Bardas

WANTS · The 12 nomismata Niketas owes him, plus interest.

LIES · That he didn't take the bribe to look the other way at the monastery gate.

WOULD DIE FOR · Nothing. He is tired and he is owed.

Yusuf the Merchant (no relation)

WANTS · The caravan east, on schedule, with the relic on it.

LIES · That the buyer is a private collector.

WOULD DIE FOR · His son, who travels with the caravan.

Anna the Brothel-Keeper

WANTS · Her house left out of it.

LIES · Anything you ask her, by reflex.

WOULD DIE FOR · The girls who work for her.

The Child Petros

WANTS · His father (the smuggler) not to be hanged.

LIES · That he doesn't know where the tunnel comes out.

WOULD DIE FOR · His father. He is nine.

GM note: the players will assume the two Yusufs are connected. They are not. Let them spend a scene proving it either way — the wrong answer is just as useful as the right one.

THE ABBOT'S DEBT

The Three Roads.

I. The Souk after dark. WITS-led. Listening at curtains, trading a name for a name, finding the cloth merchant who saw a soldier carry a small silver box at the third hour past sunset. Leads to Bardas, then to Yusuf.

II. Anna's House. HEART or BODY. Bardas drinks here when he is owed money he cannot collect. Buy his story, blackmail him, beat him, or — hardest — pity him into it.

III. The Smuggler's Tunnel. BODY. Under the town hall, where the caravan-master stashes goods before the eastern departure. The relic is in a cedar box wrapped in red linen. So is a Bulgar war-axe nobody has explained.

AND THE FOURTH ROAD

*They will invent it. They always do. Marry the judge's daughter. Burn the brothel. Convince Yusuf they are the Baghdad buyer's other agents. Whatever they invent, the same six NPCs, the same sealed truth, and the same two clocks still apply — just rotated. **No prep is wasted.***

THE TWO CLOCKS

Strategos's Tax Inspection (4 of 6). Ticks +1 each time the party uses an official channel. At 6, the inspector arrives and the abbot's books are opened — including the entry that doesn't match.

The Raid Season (3 of 6). Ticks +1 each night. At 6, an Arab raid hits a nearby village. Everyone the party cares about is suddenly somewhere else, doing something more important than the relic.

Pulls & Endings.

THREE PULLS (WHEN THE TABLE DRIFTS)

- **The bells.** The call to prayer or the monastery's office hour. A scene cannot hide from sound.
 - **The wounded scout.** A boy rides in from the eastern pass, opened from shoulder to hip. He has news, and he needs Theodora before he can give it.
 - **The face in the crowd.** Someone from a player's past — name it on the spot from their Burden.
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ENDINGS

THE CLEAN ENDING. Relic returned, abbot pays 10 nomismata, judge writes a quiet letter of thanks. The party leaves Loulon at dawn. The abbot dies of a stroke within the year.

THE COMPROMISED ENDING. Relic returned, but the party knows it is false. The abbot is theirs now — for a year, for a favour, for as long as they want to spend the leverage.

THE HARD ENDING. Someone dies who did not have to. A soldier the party could have talked down. The child Petros, in the wrong doorway. Theodora, if the dice were unkind.

THE FOURTH ENDING. Whatever they invented. Trust it. Pay it off honestly with the clocks and the Honest Sheets. The game knows how to land.

By dawn the party will have been lied to by every faction, walked away with coin they didn't earn, and made an enemy they didn't know they had crossed. The table will have learned the tone. That is the whole job of the first night.

Three questions.

You ran one night of the game. Now tell us what you found.

WHAT SANG?

A moment, a mechanic, a piece of prose. Anything that landed.

WHAT BROKE?

A confusion, a stalled scene, a rule that did the wrong thing.

WOULD YOU PLAY IT AGAIN, AND WHAT WOULD YOU WANT NEXT?

Tell us where you'd take a second session.

SEND YOUR FEEDBACK

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Five minutes. Three boxes. Optional name and email if you would like a reply — or to be credited.

ONE PROMISE

Every playtester whose feedback shapes a change is named in the back of the printed book.

REFERENCE CARD

The Roll, the Wound, the Faith

THE ROLL

2d6 + one Trait, vs. a target named before the roll. Meet or beat: you do it, cleanly. Miss by 1–2: you do it, but the world charges you (pathos). Miss by 3+: you don't, and something turns against you.

TRAITS

BODY · WITS · HEART · FAITH, 0–3.

BACKGROUND & EDGE

When your Background or an Edge plausibly covers the attempt, roll with advantage: 3d6, keep the highest two. Advantage never stacks; a second source becomes +1; no roll ever takes more than +3.

THE WOUND

A hit fills the next empty slot. **Shaken:** –1 on the next roll. **Bleeding:** 2d6 with no Trait; care before the scene ends, or Down. **Down:** cannot act; reached before the next scene ends, or dies. An exceptional blow escalates one step. Armour cancels one step; lamellar a second, once per scene. Shield +1, or broken to turn a blow aside entirely.

GRACE

Caps at FAITH (the Mystic alone FAITH +1). One point, one intervention, shaped by the Dial. Refreshed by acts, not rest.

THE DIAL

Grounded · Liminal · Miraculous. Set at session zero; default Liminal. Anyone may ask for Grounded, at any time, without explanation.

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CHILDREN OF NEW ROME

Tabletop Edition

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Made by a small press, with patience.

"Between the lion and the crescent, the small people walk."