

ARCHON

BY ANNE WESTFALL AND JON FREEMAN & PAUL REICHE III



THE LIGHT AND THE DARK



THE LEGACY OF THE Gnostics

The world, the Gnostics said, is ruled by the great and evil Archon, whose empire stretches as far as the firmament.

But even for Archon, life isn't easy. In another universe, there's another Archon.

He wants your empire.

The outcome of the war will determine the one, true Archon. You'll want to make sure it's you.

You'll use every troll, basilisk and dragon you have, and all the other slimy, conniving underlings you can find, to fight the phoenixes and djinnis of the enemy Archon.

STRATEGY: THE BOARD

The first step is easy. Insert the disk. Then start playing the game and enjoying yourself.

After that things get less easy. You get nervous. Everything is changing, and you aren't sure why or how. Sometimes your piece gets killed 10 times easier than others. What do the colors of the squares mean, and when do they change?

You study the board some more. You may want to get out the manual.

You'll learn intimately the powers of each piece. You'll also learn to use your spells with extreme calculation.

One overriding rule applies. Have a keen feel for the tide of time and its effect on the squares.

Another rule you'll need to know better. Stay fierce and stay smart.

MAYHEM: THE BATTLEFIELD

We can't help you so much here. If you're not fast and ferocious, you'll just have to get that way.

Know your strengths, and your enemy's. Know what the weapons can do, and don't expect them to do anything else. Learn how to use the barriers, and be ready for them to shift around.

Keep your eye on the lifespan gauges at the sides.

And remember, no matter how good a fighter you are, if you don't keep the cool head of the strategist, you're going to lose.

We'd hate for you to lose.

A KAMIKAZE, A PHYSICIST AND A WRITER OF FUGUES

Fifteen years ago Jon Freeman took part in a living chess match.

He played King's Pawn.

From the hillside above, spectators watched human chess pieces negotiate the 10-foot squares of the board as two strategists barked moves.

And when opposing pieces met, they did battle. They fought for squares using the swords, clubs and shields they'd been given.

When you're the author of the definitive



Jon Freeman, Paul Reiche III and Anne Westfall.
Behind the light. Behind the dark.

book on board games, you don't forget an experience like that.

Jon didn't.

Years later, when his expertise with the computer-game medium had become formidable and almost legendary, he discovered a way he could use his recollection of the open-air chess match.

THE HATCHERY

Ideas hatched at poultry-ranch rates.

He sat down with fellow Free Fall Associate Paul Reiche, and Archon began to take on coherent shape.

Paul, whose deft imagination is schooled in physics, modern art and science fiction, had a score to settle with chess, and he looked on the game as a way to do that.

"I like chess," he says, "but I find it boring. When I play, I like to spend about 30 seconds on one move, and then move move move move move and be done. I may lose — in fact, I usually do. So I have sort of a dissatisfaction with chess."

A monster-chess scene in *Star Wars* accompanied their thinking like a gull from a new land.

They worked with the same tooth-and-nail conviction Jon had shown when, as King's Pawn, he'd played kamikaze and died wiping out a much-better-armed knight. They gave

Archon that same double-kill possibility and they gave it its ingenious luminosity cycle — a complexity no board game in Jon's book could offer. Only there still wasn't a game.

It took Anne Westfall, who handles program design and execution, to make it a game. About two woman-years of her time and a few hundred brainstorming sessions with Jon and Paul. The two years were compressed into six months, and the brainstorming was done in her spare time.

THE ROOST

The marriage of Anne and Jon does nothing to dilute their collaboration.

It's a strange kind of collaboration.

Anne, for instance, says she created the game. No one argues.

Besides letting loose the thunderclap of code in which the game arrived, she did a lot of things to make it nice. She built its artful transitions and fugue-like interconnections. She made the battlefield segment the complex slugfest it is. She designed the one-person game.

We asked her what she was proudest of.

She said, "It works. You can forget that you're playing a computer game. You're playing a game."

She's right. She's also modest. It took us three weeks to pump those answers out of her.

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Game design, development and documentation JON FREEMAN & PAUL REICHE III. Program design and execution ANNE WESTFALL Art Director RICH SILVERSTEIN. Package design and illustration DAVE McMACKEN Photo by ED ZAK. Linernotes STEVE EMERSON Music TOMMY DUNBAR Producer PAT MARRIOTT.

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THE LIGHT AND THE DARK

There's a board. There are pieces with varying powers, squares to move into and an opponent to conquer. But the squares keep changing. And once you decide where to attack, the board explodes into a battlefield. Your pieces include phoenixes, golems and wizards, and they use all their strange powers when they fight the banshees, goblins and sorceresses they face. They cast spells and missiles, they pummel, pierce and throw out flames, they move each other around, take on each other's shapes and shriek at each other. If you square off on a spot that stays favorable, you'll be hard to kill. If you're smart, fast, dextrous and farsighted, you may win. If you're not, look for another game.



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