



Rivals for CATAN

Part 11 - Age of Darkness - “The Era of Barbarians” Theme Set

November 10, 2011

In the context of its fictitious history, Catan is situated in the area of today’s Azores and, in terms of size, encompasses all islands of the group. As described in Rebecca Gable’s novel “The Settlers of Catan,” in 850 B.C.E. Catan was first settled by a seafaring Nordic people.

In real history, the Azores were discovered and taken in possession by Portuguese seafarers in 1427 and 1432.

Therefore, it stands to reason that – in fictitious history – Catan is (re)discovered by Portuguese seafarers at the beginning of the 15th century, and that some decades later conquistadores from all countries of the Old World set out for Catan like barbarian conquerors, to steal from the island what they regard as its only valuable good: gold.

*„**Barbarian Attack!**“ The shrill cry came from the village square and jolted the inhabitants of a small coastal settlement awake. **Siward the Scout** stood at the center of the square. Spots of hectic red burned on his cheeks as he told people that three ships had landed on the shore and soldiers with strangely shaped iron hats were pouring out of them.*

“Don’t panic, folks!” said the village leader to calm the distraught settlers who, only scantily dressed, came running to the village square. “The barbarians won’t



waste their time with our small village. They are only interested in the city with its rich merchants and craftsmen.”

The village leader is right about that. The barbarians are dangerous only for principalities that have at least one city. And even this is only the case if the prince does not have enough units to fend the invaders off with.

To resist the barbarians when a “Barbarian Attack” event occurs, a prince (player) must have placed at least as many units as he has victory points from cities, metropolises, and city expansions. In this context, all units count, whether they are ships, heroes, or characters without hero status. If the prince has fewer units, he loses 2 resources. If he has more units and at least one city, he receives any 2 resources of his choice.



There is a total of three Barbarian Attack events. According to the normal rules, those events would be quite innocuous, and no prince would feel compelled to take major precautions against the Barbarian Attack. However, since the attack of the barbarians is the theme, the rules for preparing the event card stack were slightly modified for this Theme Game:

Momentarily set aside the 3 Barbarian Attack event cards and the Yule card. Then shuffle the other event cards of the Basic Set together with the Retreat of the Barbarians event card and place 3 cards face down. Place the Yule card on top. Shuffle the other 6 event cards together with the 3 Barbarian Attack cards and place them face down on the remaining stack – that is, on top of the Yule card.

If a Barbarian Attack is drawn during the game, place the card under the 4 topmost cards of the event card stack instead of returning it to the bottom of the event card stack as usual.

That way, the barbarians arrive quite frequently and force the prince to brace himself for the attacks. Let's see how our prince prepares for the Barbarian Attack.

*The prince stood, with his legs apart, on the tower of his **Border Fortress**, giving the **Barbarian Stronghold** a sullen look. The Stronghold stood out like an ugly boil, marring the beauty of his land. The barbarians seemed to be getting ready for an attack on his principality.*



“Osmund,” the prince shouted. “Are we prepared?”

“We were, my prince. Unfortunately, **Marie the Shieldmaiden** made eyes at our Candamir, so that he defected to the princess of the opposing principality.”

“That disloyal scoundrel! May Odin’s ravens come after him! What do we do now?”

“We’re facing a difficult situation, my prince. All our problems would be solved in one fell swoop if we succeed in winning over **Arnd the Strategist**.”

“Then hire him, Osmund. Or is there anything that prevents you from doing so?”

“Arnd demands a new sword in exchange for his service. Regrettably, we don’t have the ore to forge one.”

“What?” roared the prince. “Shall a shabby ore decide the fate of my principality? Either you come up with a solution right now, or I sell you as a slave to the robbers!”

Osmund hesitated for a moment. “I might have an idea, my prince. But it requires a little gold.”

“I only have one nugget of gold. How do you want to get ore for it so fast? You’re not going to roll the dice in the **White Raven Tavern**, are you?”

But that’s exactly what Osmund did. And he was lucky. Not only did he win a big lump of ore for Arnd’s sword, he also won back the prince’s gold. During a celebration



– true Catanians are always up for celebrations, even in the face of an impending Barbarian Attack – the prince was thus able to win over **Wolfgang the Street Performer**. Even if the Street Performer was better at playing a lute than at wielding a sword, he still reinforced the lines of defense. And so the prince only needed one more unit to stop the barbarian hordes and even defeat them.



And how does the princess in the neighboring principality fare at the same time?

“I hate celebrations!” the princess ranted and nervously brushed a stray lock of hair out of her face. “Now we also lost the Street Performer to the prince. **Castellan**, do something!”



The short-sighted Castellan peered intently out of the window of the **Castle**'s tower room. “You worry too much. There are no barbarians as far as the eye can see.”

“But they’re coming, Castellan! Siward, the prince’s scout, allegedly has sighted them. And for what other reason does the prince reinforce the lines of his units in such a frenzied manner?”



The Castellan sighed. “But just recently we have built a **Caravel**, by means of which – due to a **Relocation** - we strengthened the power of our fleet, and we have placed another unit in our **Border Fortress**. Considering that our resource supplies are depleted, we can’t do more at the moment, my lady.”



The princess rolled her eyes. “I can’t stand your monotonous ‘we can’t do more’ and ‘depleted resource supplies’ any longer, Castellan. Is your vocabulary really that limited? Get out of my sight and send me **Baroc the Barbarian**.”

Hunched over, but on the inside happy to escape the princess's bad temper, the Castellan left the room. Soon after, a stately warrior in iron armor entered the tower room.

"At your service, my princess!"

The princess liked the resourceful barbarian; she had been able to persuade him – with gold and a seductive smile – to change sides.

"My dear Baroc," the princess benevolently greeted the warrior, "you know about my problem. I trust that your resourcefulness will replenish my resource supplies."

"Well, princess, first of all, it was a mistake to build the **Arsenal**. For your enemies, the weapons stored there are a coveted bounty, which is why they will increasingly try to invade your city. You should have invested your resources in the **Secret Brotherhood**. The secret brothers have connections to the barbarians and can assuage the consequences of a potential defeat."

The princess's nicely curved lips tightened into a thin line. She just couldn't take any criticism.

"But it is not my intention to lecture you. At least you have a **Bailiwick**. Use it, and new possibilities will open up to you."

So the princess called the bailiff. He advised her to arrange a **Contest of the Heroes**.

"Great idea!" the princess rejoiced. "Didn't Candamir recently change sides, thanks to my dear Marie? Then



he should prove himself now and compete against one of the prince's heroes."

Of course, Candamir won the contest and thus provided the princess with the resources she needed to reinforce her Border Fortress with another unit.

Now let's take another look at the realm of the prince:

"For what purpose am I supporting you?" raged the prince. "So that you bring me shame all the time? If you don't immediately replace the wool I lost to the princess during the contest, I will ..."

"... sell you as a slave to the robbers," Osmund cut in, unperturbed by the prince's words. And I already know whom to rob then, Osmund grimly thought.

"My prince, why don't you suggest an **Alliance Against the Barbarians** to the princess. That will make your subjects optimistic, and they won't complain if you raise a special tax."

That way, the prince got another unit for his Border Fortress just in time, because shortly afterwards the barbarians attacked the two principalities. As expected, repelling the invaders wasn't difficult for the Catanian units. And the princess still took it up a notch. She ordered **Siegfried, Vanquisher of the Barbarians** to pursue the defeated invaders, which he did so successfully that the **Retreat of the Barbarians** was not a very orderly retreat. It actually looked as if the barbarians were running away from the devil himself.

If a player successfully survives the Barbarian Attack, he may rotate his **Triumph Card** to the next higher



level instead of taking two resources. The Triumph card is a marker card a player automatically places as soon as he has built his first city. It is conveniently placed on an empty space above or below any region. It can be removed from there at any time and placed at a different location if the space is needed for a region expansion.

In my last blog post, I promised to introduce the new Tournament rules at this point. [They are now available for download at catan.com.](http://www.catan.com)

I am currently working on the concept for the second expansion, “Age of Gold” (working title). The editorial team will probably need until spring of next year to discuss, test, and finalize the concept and all the corresponding cards. At that point, I will get back to you right here in this blog space and introduce “The Era of Explorers” set (working title). Until then, I wish all readers of this blog post lots of fun with the new cards of the “Age of Darkness” expansion.

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