

Age of Empires III CYOA

Part 1: Blood

“Come on! They won't leave us alone for much longer!” Those words ring in your ears as you force yourself off the muddy, cratered ground. You get the sense right away that this is a war zone, but something about the air tastes cleaner than you're used to, even in this mess. As your vision returns, you take the hand of the stranger standing over you, fumbling away from the scene.

It takes a few minutes before you've fully regained your footing, and you can barely think through the massive headache, but at least you can see who you're looking at now. Of course, that just brings more questions – such as who they are, where you are, and why this person seems to know you. You can probably tell a few things from your initial conversation, though.

Choose one of the five persons outlined below to travel with. While none of the five will join you as a Companion, each will provide you with a great deal of aid during your stay here. In addition, each has a Faction Alignment, which will determine possible Loyalty Bonuses in future Parts.

Morgan Black

It's not an easy business, being at war. The Scotsman sitting in front of you knows that more than anything, judging by the scars on him. He hands you what looks like a small flask of whiskey and introduces himself.

“Since ye seem ta be fergettin', the name is Morgan Black, of the Knights of Saint John. Those Turkish bombs must have hit you hard, newbie.” He gestures to the flask of whiskey in your hand next. “'ave a sip, ye'll need it. This'll be a long one.”

Morgan Black, patriarch of the Black Family and loyal Knight of the Order of St. John (or Order of Malta, Order Hospitaller, or other such names), has decided to take you under his wing. As a practitioner of the Oberhau maneuver, he can swing his blade in a great circle to strike all enemies nearby. He also remembers something of forging blades, being the son of a village smith.

- + *Experienced warrior, some smithing experienced*
- + *Loyal, heroic, will save your life if needed*
- +/- *Scotsman, possibly from Galloway*
- - *Entirely too trusting*
- - *A zealot and a crusader – hope you're Catholic.*
- *Alignment: Black Family*

Alain Magnan

The first thing you notice when you actually come to is that you're on horseback. Before you is seated a gray-haired man who otherwise still looks the prime of his life. He turns to you and nearly sneezes before taking on a warm smile.

“You've still got the smell of powder on you, friend. Never did like the stuff.”

That's when his horse leads you past some saluting men with stylized bones on their tabards. These don't look like Knights of Saint John, but you get the feeling you should trust this man for now.

Alain Magnan, commander of the Knights of St. John on Malta has deigned to preserve your life, as he sees you as an asset to the future of the Order. Which Order, he never says. He obviously has quite a bit of influence, and can ride a horse with the best of them.

- + *Can go places faster due to being on a horse*
- + *Wealthy, charismatic, and spry for his age*
- +/- *unknown nationality*
- - *Obsessed with the Fountain of Youth*
- - *May or may not be evil?*
- *Alignment: ~~Circle of Ossus~~*

Sahin the Falcon

As you seat yourself on a nearby rock on the shoreline, you note the headdress your would-be rescuer wears. The Turk looks weary, having fought many battles in his day. As he sharpens his scimitar and cleans out his musket, he asks you a few questions. You aren't quite sure what he's saying, but it appears you were assisting him in his assault on Malta. Said assault seems to have failed, and considering the Sultan's grudge with the Spanish, you feel that this is going to be a wild ride west. That is which way the galleys will be going, after all.

Sahin the Falcon, an Ottoman general famous for his successes against the Knights of St. John in the past, is a wily man, able to read his enemies and play against their weaknesses while guarding against their strengths. He's also a hero to his men, always leading from the front.

- + *Tactical genius*
- + *Respectful and polite in all dealings*
- +/- *Turkish*
- - *Will drop everything the moment he hears the Circle of Ossus is involved in something so as to go and defeat them*
- - *Is occasionally terribly misfortunate, and you will share this with him*
- *Alignment: Neutral*

Francisco Juan Delgado de Leon

Looking down at the mud beneath you, you realize that it was, at one point, beach sand. This sand, in fact, extends a ways down the coast, past your line of sight. Above you stands a tanned man in gleaming steel armor, holding a halberd in his left hand and pressing it against the ground. He seems rather annoyed with you, and you can't quite tell why until you see the sunken ship and damaged houses to your left. It turns out you were supposed to guard those – whoops. Luckily for you, the Spaniard merely sighs and drags you along to his flagship. He has big plans for this treasure fleet, and maybe you could get a cut of it if you earn his favor.

Francisco Juan Delgado de Leon is as archetypal as a conquistador can be. He seeks the gold of the Aztecs, glory from the Spanish Crown, and power in the New World. He's more than smart enough to take it, but perhaps his cutthroat attitude might become a liability.

- + *Has a treasure fleet with a LOT of gold*
- + *Amazing banter and tactical competency – his taunts are as scathing as his ambushes*
- +/- *Spanish*
- - *Unquenchably greedy*
- - *Ruthless and amoral*

- *Alignment: Neutral*

Elizabeth Ramsey

*Even with your sight back, you still feel very exhausted, very confused, and very, **very** drunk. A rather beautiful woman stands over you, prodding you with a pistol to see if you're alive, and the thought returns to your mind that you **work for her**, of all things. If you couldn't already tell by the smell of rum on your own breath, the black flag on her ship confirms it – you're a pirate, and dragging you up onto the Paris Burning is your captain. Apparently, a raid on Havana just went south, and the lot of you are about to retreat and regroup when the Spanish aren't as vigilant.*

“Well? Don't make me drag you through the water, too, get on board already! We've got work to do.”

This should be interesting, you think to yourself – or maybe that's the drink talking.

Elizabeth Ramsey, estranged daughter of an English nobleman and notorious pirate admiral, appears to have drafted you into her crew. Her twin pistols make her a force to be reckoned with, but it's her determination and demeanor that brought her to the position of power she holds now.

- + *Attractive, intelligent, and clever – a dangerous combination*
- + *Lives a life of freedom*
- +/- *English*
- - *Wanted for piracy; price on her head, good luck finding safe harbor*
- - *On the ship, the pirate's code is enforced at gunpoint. They steal from navies, not one another, and boy can the captain be a buzzkill sometimes. Perhaps even literally, though nobody yet living could or would confirm it.*
- *Alignment: Black Family*

Whichever one of these people you side with now will be taking you on a grand adventure – and all of

their paths will cross, you can be certain of that. There is a legend, you see – something to be found in the New World. All five of these factions will either seek it or draw very near to it, for its power is magnificent indeed.

Imagine if you could be young forever!

Assemble the Troops

Arriving on a small port across Cuba from Havana, you reflect on your journey over the Atlantic.

You've earned quite a bit of respect from your rescuer by now, and you've even learned your sea legs.

This port happens to be a gathering-place of sorts for all kinds of mercenary folk. You also have with you a small selection of troops granted by your commander. Good thing, too, or this town would rip you to shreds. There's all kinds of scum skulking about the place, and some of them even accost you as you enter one of the larger bars in the port. Too bad they're no match for trained soldiers. That little display of might convinces the mercenaries seated at the tables there to put a little more value on your coin – after all, you look like you're ready for war.

In addition to the reinforcements you obtain below, you have 50 Troop Slots with which to purchase mercenaries. Each unit can be bought multiple times, save for the unique reinforcements, which only appear once. Each price in Troop Slots is actually how much Population one of the following troop types takes up in-game.

The point of purchasing mercenaries here is so that you will have troops to command when the time to fight for the Spanish treasure fleet arrives. These mercenaries will not carry on with you into Part 2, though you may find their descendants among the populace. You will likely, however, see them again in Part 3 and/or Part 5, should any survive. It's strange, that.

Morgan Black – 10 Hoop Throwers, highly-armored Knights of Saint John who throw flaming hoops to demolish and demoralize their enemies.

Alain Magnan – 10 Boneguard Musketeers, elite soldiers of a secret society with powerful muskets and heavy armor.

Elisabeth Ramsey – 10 Buccaneers, agile veteran pirates wielding cutlasses and multiple pistols.

Sahin the Falcon – 10 Janissaries, Turkish musketeers with scimitars at their side and with improved morale and heartiness.

Francisco Juan Delgado de Leon – 10 Rodeleros, fast-moving heavy infantry who wield swords and bucklers.

Mercenaries

Outlaw Dacoits [2 Troop Slots] – This unit of 10 Indian bandits wield swords and pistols and are good against cavalry.

Wokou Pirates [4 Troop Slots] – This unit of 30 Japanese, Korean, and Manchu pirates are exceptional skirmishers and are good at disrupting enemy villagers.

Wokou Horsemen [5 Troop Slots] – This unit of 30 pirate horsemen from Japan and Korea are hearty mounted archers with good staying power.

Arsonists [2 Troop Slots] – This unit of ten torch-throwers are good at tearing down enemy buildings (with fire) and terrifying to behold.

Jägers [2 Troop Slots] – These 10 mercenary German skirmishers are adept at fighting heavy infantry, and can also dissuade light cavalry.

Black Riders [3 Troop Slots] – These 10 German gunpowder cavalymen use a special formation called caracole to fire and reload quickly against enemies.

Landsknechts [2 Troop Slots] – These 10 flamboyant German swordsmen wield two-handed swords and are monsters in infantry or anti-cavalry combat.

Hackapells [3 Troop Slots] – These 10 Finnish horsemen have little staying power, but utterly excel at hit-and-run attacks.

Highlanders [2 Troop Slots] – These 10 Scottish musketeers are effective against cavalry and heavy infantry, and are highly persistent, standing their ground even against overwhelming odds.

Stradiots [3 Troop Slots] – These 10 Albanian horsemen are good all-purpose cavalry that are experienced in guerilla warfare.

Lil' Bombards [8 Troop Slots] – These 3 heavy cannons, straight from the greatest foundries in Europe, are a sight to behold. Second only to the great Turkish cannon that felled the walls of Constantinople, and mobile, if slow, these guns will lay waste to almost anything in their path. Just be sure to guard them well.

Fusiliers [2 Troop Slots] – These 10 Swedish gunners can act both as musketeers and as skirmishers, granting them effectiveness against both infantry and cavalry.

Elmeti [4 Troop Slots] – These 15 Italian horsemen are heavily armored and lay waste to enemy infantry – even those with spears.

Swiss Pikemen [2 Troop Slots] – These 10 heavily-armored pikemen from Switzerland are a bulwark against cavalry of all kinds and are well-prepared for infantry assaults and sieges as well – but their relatively slow movements and preceding reputation make them tempting targets for artillery.

Mamelukes [4 Troop Slots] – These 15 Egyptian cavalymen have the best staying power out of any mercenary cavalry from all the known world, and can slog through enemy infantry with some skill.

Barbary Corsairs [2 Troop Slots] – These 10 Berber pirates are swift, agile, and skilled at breaking up enemy heavy infantry.

Manchus [2 Troop Slots] – These 10 Manchu horsemen are skilled cavalry archers adept at appearing, firing a volley, and riding away before retaliation can come.

Ronin [4 Troop Slots] – These 30 masterless samurai are skilled with the blade and have seemingly bottomless wellsprings of morale in combat, preferring suicide to capture by the enemy.

Convicts [1 Troop Slot] – While they have no military training, these 10 criminals have managed to break out of a prison in Australia and steal a ship to get here. This probably does not say good things about their intentions for the money.

Surgeons [1 Troop Slot] – A team of 10 physicians has arrived to keep your forces fit for fighting. They cannot, however, fight for themselves at all.

Spies [1 Troop Slot] – These 10 espionage experts have seeded themselves among your enemy's forces to bring them down from within. They're no match for a soldier in combat, but they're practically invisible.

Carib Trackers [1 Troop Slot] – You didn't so much find these mercenaries at the docks as you did run into them while restocking supplies on a nearby island. Luckily, these ten are swift and can trail an enemy for miles.

Engineers [2 Troop Slots] – This group of ten architects, mechanists, and gunsmiths have arrived to construct fortifications and keep your troops supplied and armed.

You can obtain more Troop Slots (a maximum of an extra ten), but to do so, you will have to sacrifice quite a bit of your safety on your next foray into the New World.

Illness [+2 Troop Slots] – Your mercenary army seems to have come down with a cocktail of scurvy, syphilis, and the flu. Fighting will naturally be a bit more difficult.

Starvation [+2 Troop Slots] – An army marches on its stomach, and yours will be growling like wolves. You'll have to survive on moldy, worm-infested hard tack and boiled seawater until you arrive, and even then the only foods you'll find in the wild will be stringy, dirty, and tasteless.

Ambushes [+3 Troop Slots] – You are very much disliked and distrusted by the natives of Florida – and the moment you land on shore, they will attack from all directions, including when you least expect it and *especially* when they couldn't have possibly hid themselves from you.

Mutiny [+3 Troop Slots] – Your troops' morale is at an all-time low for some reason, and they won't hesitate to go turncoat when the other side offers better pay. It's a shame, really.

Don't Kick The Pitbull [+5 Troop Slots] – A man wearing a tuxedo and riding a unicorn will appear among your enemies' forces. Try to keep yourself and your troops away from him, *trust me*.

Ya Gotta Make Do With What Ya Got [+5 Troop Slots] – Your enemies appear to have wheeled in a bombard that launches capybaras at you. You might want to destroy that bombard before you go for the goal, or it will make short work of your troops, and possibly you.

O Canada 2005 [+10 Troop Slots] – When you arrive in Florida, you hear a strangely nostalgic tune. Putting it out of your mind as you proceed towards the treasure fleet, you make landfall and continue up the coast. It isn't until you hear a bear's growl and see a charred tree that you make the connection. The Lazer Bear has come for your blood.

Shootout in Florida

As the ship you're on sails towards the coast of New Spain, you wipe the saltwater from your brow and lament your ill fortune. That hurricane on the way here did a number on your ship, and the repairs have not been fun. There is some good news – it is said that the map to a secret of eternal life lies somewhere on this peninsula, among the ancient annals of the native people. This is also where the Spanish treasure fleet happens to be landing to pick up its gold haul. There seems to be quite a cut of the gold in the balance – the equivalent of 100,000,000 units in a green paper currency from a world you once knew.

Of course, you'll have to fight for it first.

*If you have sided with **Morgan Black** or **Elizabeth Ramsey** you just so happen to be on the same side with the other in this battle, which pits you against **Francisco Juan Delgado de Leon**. Those following **Alain Magnan** will seed themselves among the forces of **Morgan Black**, but have their own agenda. Notably, **Delgado** has by far the largest number of troops and resources – more than the other factions combined - in addition to any mercenary aid he might receive. **Sahin the Falcon** has no part in this battle, and instead will be searching out **Alain Magnan** so as to rid the world of him. If you sided with **Sahin**, your role will likely involve fighting the battle so as to cover for the lack of his leadership your forces face.*

*For those siding against **Delgado**, the objectives are simple -*

- 1. Free any prisoners or natives held by the Spanish.*
- 2. Capture the treasure ships.*
- 3. Destroy the Spanish forts.*

*For those siding with **Delgado**, the objectives are even simpler -*

- 1. Maintain control of the treasure ships.*
- 2. Protect **Delgado**.*

After the Battle

In the aftermath of the battle, you find a map on the body of a dead soldier. This map points to a small cape on the western coast of Florida, wherein lies the Lake of the Moon. It dawns on you – this is what you've been looking for all along! A way to live forever – but you know the other factions will want it, too.

There is one way to ensure your victory – get there first and destroy it before the others can get to it. If all of the involved parties survived, this will be a great and worthy competition. If they did not, however, you will instead face opposition from the local tribes, in greater numbers than your foes from this skirmish.

The Lake of the Moon

At long last, you have arrived – the Fountain of Youth. A wonderful sight to behold, is it not? You curse your fortune as your foes stride forth from the swamps to claim it. Awaiting you, at the very center, is the towering edifice that holds the key to life eternal. Now to make sure all of these ne'er-do-wells around you don't live to see tomorrow – never mind forever.

*This last battle will see much of your wealth from the treasure fleet spent, but you will retain **1,000 Dubloons**.*

Alain Magnan

At long last, your true plan has come to fruition. You were inducted into the Circle of Ossus early on, and now you have the chance to claim immortality for your order! The massive fixed guns you have surrounding the lake, as well as the fortresses you have placed here, are a force to be reckoned with. Unfortunately, you fight alone, and your fixed encampments are stationary targets.

Elizabeth Ramsey, Morgan Black, or Sahin the Falcon

As your massive fleet sails toward the Lake of the Moon, you marvel at what this undertaking represents. The pirate fleet of Elizabeth Ramsey, the ships of the Knights of St. John, and the navy of the Ottoman Empire have united to prevent an evil secret society from becoming utterly immortal. Surely, when you are done destroying the Fountain, never will so much be owed to such an unlikely alliance!

Francisco Juan Delgado de Leon

That scuffle to the south was a waste of time, and the ships were damaged in the scuffle. How in the world are you supposed to get it all back to Spain now? You do have bigger problems, though – Delgado wants a sip from the Fountain and he doesn't want anyone else to drink of its sweet waters. Given that he's the one paying you, it falls to you to destroy the Fountain of Youth and crush thousands of men's dreams of life everlasting.

There is, of course, a single common goal – destroy the Fountain of Youth before your enemies can obtain it. Any of the mercenaries that survived the battle for the treasure fleet will follow you here as well, but be warned – this battle will be hard-fought.

Once the Fountain is destroyed, you will find yourself among the rubble, rummaging through the water. In addition to a small leather-covered steel canteen, filled with a diluted form of the Fountain's life-giving waters that merely extend your lifespan to five centuries instead of making you forever young, you will find a small trinket from the 1d8 table below.

1 – A Chinese coin, dated to 1421.

2 – A pendant in the shape of a hammer.

3 – A tiny scrap of a copper scroll.

4 – An old pot with a strange and foreign pattern on it.

5 – A golden medallion with a symbol of the sun and moon on it.

6 – A pair of loaded dice, as well as a guitar marked “T & M, M.A.P.G.”.

7 – A spyglass, presumably from Portugal.

8 – A small wooden cup with a scroll next to it that reads “replace the object of the quest with this, lest any drink from the true cup – Gwalchmei.”

To be continued in

Age of Empires III:

Part 2 – Discovery.