

Gemfire FAQ/Strategy Guide

by TIDQ

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Gemfire FAQ v2.1

by TIDQ (Email at the bottom)

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Contents

For ease, every part of the FAQ can be accessed by hitting Ctrl+F and searching for the section number or section title.

1.0 Preface

1.1 Game Overview

1.2 The Story

2.0 Choosing a Family

2.1 Scenario 1

2.2 Scenario 2

2.3 Scenario 3

2.4 Scenario 4

2.5 Choosing an Advisor

3.0 Statistics

3.1 Disposable State Statistics

3.2 Permanent State Statistics

3.3 Personal Statistics

4.0 State Commands

4.1 Military Commands

4.2 Domestic Commands

4.3 Diplomatic Commands

4.4 Player Commands

4.5 Other Commands

5.0 Battle

5.1 Battle Basics

5.2 Standard Units

5.3 Battle Commands

5.4 Frontal, Flanking, and Rear Assault

5.5 Captured Leaders

6.0 5th Units

6.1 Explanation of Ranges

6.2 The Gems

6.3 Hired 5th Units

7.0 Events

- 7.1 Good and Bad Events
- 7.2 Death
- 8.0 Additional Things to Know
 - 8.1 General Tips
 - 8.2 The ROM Glitch
 - 8.3 Beat the Game with a Non-Default Ruler
- 9.0 Miscellany
 - 9.1 Legal Stuff
 - 9.2 Email Me
 - 9.3 Version History
 - 9.4 Special Thanks

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1.0 Preface

1.1 Game Overview

Gemfire is a strategy game released for the SNES, NES, and Genesis back in 1992. The NES version was originally known as Royal Blood in Japan, and the 16-bit versions were called Super Royal Blood. Although it's a mostly forgotten game from a time that strategy console games weren't popular at least here in America, it's really quite a good game. The player chooses one of several royal families jockeying for control of the land of Ishmeria, a vast island divided into 30 specific political territories. Conflict and strategy are up to the player to balance and master on two different levels, nation-building and turn-based battles. The ultimate goal is for the player to use his (or her) might and diplomacy to rule the entire country and reunite the pieces of Gemfire.

The signature feature of Gemfire is the acquisition of magical gems from every family that the player defeats. Each gem holds a unique supernatural guardian that can aid soldiers in battle, and so the quantity and quality of gems that the player possesses can make the difference between success and failure.

Overall though, the game isn't terribly difficult.

1.2 The Story

It is an age of knights and chivalry. It is also an age of magic and beasts. The large island kingdom of Ishmeria is ruled with an iron fist by the evil King Eselred. The king remained the unchallenged ruler as long as he held the source of his power, a crown with seven magical Gems affixed to it, named Gemfire. Each Gem contained a magical guardian, six wizards and a dragon.

In an act of defiance, the king's daughter Princess Robyn removed the Gems from Eselred's crown. The Gems scattered themselves throughout the land and sought out worthy rulers. Robyn's plot was found out by the king, however, and she was thrown into the dungeon for what might be the rest of her days.

Six Gems found six different rulers. Now, these six families seek to overthrow King Eselred, as well as each other, with the power of the Gems by their side. The strongest Gem, the Dragon, still belongs to Eselred though. Thus begins a seven-sided war to bring peace back to the land. Only one family can control all of Ishmeria and reunite Gemfire!

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2.0 Choosing a Family

Although there is no difficulty setting in Gemfire, the ability to get ahead is most heavily determined by which family is chosen to start the game. There are four different scenarios, spread across a progressive timeline. In each scenario, the player gets to choose one of four different families, giving sixteen different ways to play the game. The ending of the game is exactly the same, no matter which ruler or scenario the player chooses. Every family can be played in at least one of the scenarios, with the exception of the villainous Lankshire family.

2.1 Scenario 1: Erin & Ander

"Six noble families have undertaken the task to overthrow King Eselred and secure Gemfire. Erin of Blanche and Ander of Lyle and the main contenders, yet only one family is destined to unite the crown!"

In this scenario, the Lankshire family controls most of the map from the very start. Even though this is the first scenario, it might not be the most friendly to beginner players. The player will have to deal with the Eselred's powerful Dragon Gem in countless battles to get ahead.

- Blanche

Ruler: Erin

Gem(s): Zendor

Territories: 3

Vassals: 4

In all four scenarios, Erin (of Blanche) and Ander (of Lyle) will be the easiest paths to victory. Erin has a defensive advantage in terms of one of his territories being completely untouched by the enemy to start. It's then easy to distribute soldiers and riches away from the landlocked territory and towards the frontline. The player also starts adjacent to an unclaimed territory which can expand Erin's empire right off the bat. Zendor is the third best Gem in the game and can easily keep any other 5th Unit in check.

- Lyle

Ruler: Ander

Gem(s): Pluvius

Territories: 3

Vassals: 3

Although Ander starts out with the same amount of territory and one less vassal than Erin, he is generally the strongest choice to start out the game with in most scenarios. Unlike Erin, Ander starts out bordering three unclaimed territories. It's possible to take all three of them on the first turn, although Ander's forces will be spread thin if he gets too greedy. Even more of an advantage to Ander is that he borders the lone territory of the Chrysalis family. This gives Ander the opportunity to knock off one of his opponents and secure a second Gem very close to the beginning of the game. Pluvius is the second best Gem in the game, only eclipsed by the Dragon.

- Coryll

Ruler: Lars

Gem(s): Empyron

Territories: 2

Vassals: 2

The Coryll family will provide more of a challenge than Erin or Ander. They do have a defensive advantage of having a landlocked territory, much like the Blanche family. They also have a Gem, Empyron, who is pretty good. Like

Ander, Lars starts out near a weak opponent in Erik of the Flax family. However, Lars starts out just as weak as Erik, and there's a good chance that the Lankshire family will get to Erik's Gem before the player does, if he's not careful. Lars also has slightly weaker personal stats than Erin and Ander. Lars does have advantages, but not nearly as strong as Erin and Ander.

- Chrysalis

Ruler: Garth

Gems(s): Chylla

Territories: 1

Vassals: 2

Chrysalis is the pushover family in the first two scenarios, but in the first scenario, the player has the option to play as their prince, Garth. There are a couple of advantages. He does have a Gem, and his home territory only has one access point from the outside, making it safe to expand outward. The problem is that he still only has one territory, his personal stats are weak, and his Gem, Chylla, is probably the worst in the game in some respects. One of Garth's vassals, Sarthe, bears a scary resemblance to Pauly Shore. Hmm. For a challenge, this family will have an uphill battle.

2.2 Scenario 2: Flax's Shame

"Prince Erik of Flax is cornered in the Southwest after defeating the Coryll Family. Now Flax feels threatened by the presence of Terian, the Prince who deserted the King."

In the second scenario, the Lankshire Family has around the same amount of land controlled as in the first scenario. However, there is no unclaimed territory in the beginning, and both Erin and Ander start off with a solid four territories a piece instead of three. Unlike the other three scenarios, there is no horrible choice of family to start with.

- Blanche

Ruler: Erin

Gem(s): Zendor

Territories: 4

Vassals: 7

The second scenario gives Erin another territory and many more vassals to spread around. He doesn't have any barricaded territories, but he does have some easy options for attacking outward, like territories 3 and 11. The opportunity to be the first person to knock off the Tate family is also there, but Erin will be fighting the Lankshire, Lyle, and Molbrew families for that honor.

- Lyle

Ruler: Ander

Gem(s): Pluvius

Territories: 4

Vassals: 6

Ander is still the strongest choice in this scenario, just edging out Erin. Once again, Ander has the chance to take Garth's Gem very early in the game. He also has fairly good access to the Molbrew and highly vulnerable Tate families.

- Flax

Ruler: Erik

Gem(s): Scylla

Territories: 3

Vassals: 2

This is the only scenario the player can use Erik of the Flax family. What's rather strange is that although the scenario introduction claims that Erik overthrew the Coryll family, he doesn't obtain their Gem. Instead, the Empron Gem somehow ended up on the other side of the map with the Tate family. The ever-smiling Erik is not a bad choice to dominate Ishmeria, although he's well below Erin and Ander. He does have a Gem in Scylla, which is neither a bad Gem nor a great Gem. Geographically, he's in a great position to expand from, with one landlocked territory. On the downside, the only place he has to expand into is Lankshire territory. A mixed bag.

- Molbrew

Ruler: Leander

Gem(s): Skulryk

Territories: 3

Vassals: 2

Statistically, the Molbrew family is the weakest choice to start the second scenario with, although they're not terrible. They do have a respectable three territories and a Gem. Leander himself has subpar stats. Their Gem, Skulryk, has the least strength of all the Gems, but he does have great move rate and range, so I really think he's at least better than Chylla. Geographically, it appears like they're surrounded, but they're not that bad. If Leander takes territory 15, they'll have one landlocked area and a lot of options to expand. A bit of a challenge, but not the hardest scenario.

2.3 Scenario 3: Terian's War

"Terian overthrew the Molbrew Family and is positioned in the West. His rivals Erin and Ander each possess two gems of the crown, but magic is not the only way to capture Gemfire..."

The annoying-to-battle Lankshire family starts out this scenario vastly weakened from the previous two scenarios, only controlling eight territories, while Erin and Ander have increased their empires to six regions a piece. Erin and Ander also start out this scenario with two Gems each, making them good choices for beginners.

- Blanche

Ruler: Erin

Gem(s): Zendor, Skulryk

Territories: 6

Vassals: 7

By this point, Erin has six territories and two Gems. He has a geographically secure empire that could easily expand westward with a bit of development. Starting with Erin at this point in the game takes out a lot of the challenge for experienced gamers, but it might be right up the alley for a novice.

- Lyle

Ruler: Ander

Gem(s): Pluvius, Chylla

Territories: 6

Vassals: 7

By the third scenario, the advantage to choosing Ander over Erin has lessened greatly, to the point where they're just about even. Pluvius is still slightly stronger than Zendor, but that's about it. Ander, like Erin, has two Gems from the get-go as well as six territories. Chances are in good favor that Ander can take over the Tate family before Erin though.

- Tate

Ruler: Terian
Gem(s): Empyron
Territories: 2
Vassals: 4

The rogue prince Terian stays a constant force throughout the last three scenarios, and the player has the chance to control him in the third one. Although he only starts with two territories, Terian's starting empire also borders the only two unclaimed territories on the map. If he's willing to take the risk, he can double his empire's size on the first turn, although on some play-throughs, other empires will move first. Terian, like Lars, starts with the Gem Empyron, which is a pretty good one.

- Tordin

Ruler: Gweyn
Gem(s): None
Territories: 2
Vassals: 2

Ah, the Tordin Family. Gweyn is my personal favorite ruler to play as. The Tordins are one of the two hardest families to use in the game. The Tordin family is also the only family ruled by a woman. I guess the middle ages were more progressive in other parallel universes. Start with two territories surrounded by the Flax and Lankshire families. You get no Gems, and Gweyn has a poor military rating. A firm grasp of the game's mechanics is fully necessary for success with this family.

2.4 Scenario 4: Gemfire

"The Lankshire Family bribed Pender to desert his own brother, Erin. They hope to ally with Eadric, long lost son of Eselred, and gain his land in the South. One ruler must stop the warring and reunite Gemfire!"

The Lankshires have crumbled into a smaller empire than Ander's and Erin's individual empires. They still control the Dragon Gem though, so knocking them over still won't be terribly easy. Eselred will also inevitably expand into the unclaimed territory directly south of him, getting back to a decent size fairly quickly. Overall, territory is most evenly distributed among the families in the fourth and final scenario.

- Blanche

Ruler: Erin
Gem(s): Zendor, Skulryk
Territories: 7
Vassals: 8

For the fastest (and easiest) possible play-through of the game, look no further than Prince Erin in the fourth and final scenario. He starts with seven territories, the most of any family in any scenario, and two Gems, including the mighty Zendor. Erin also has the opportunity to expand into an eighth unclaimed territory, getting a big headstart. Erin also has easy pickings with the Divas territory to the South.

- Lyle

Ruler: Ander
Gem(s): Pluvius, Chylla
Territories: 6
Vassals: 7

Although Erin finally eclipses Ander in strength in the final scenario, Ander is still ridiculously overpowered at the start of this scenario. Two Gems,

six territories, and the opportunity to expand into a seventh territory. Terian's Gem would be a good first target for this scenario.

- Tudoria

Ruler: Eadric

Gem(s): Scylla

Territories: 3

Vassals: 4

The enigmatic Prince Eadric has emerged in Ishmeria to stop his father, Eselred, from abusing Gemfire for his selfish purposes. Eadric has near-perfect Charm and Domestic stats, although his military strength is merely average. Overall, he is a strong leader and commands a decent empire. The southwest corner of the map is one of the best starting points to expand from, and he already has a Gem to help him out. Eadric has serious work to catch up to Ander and Erin at this point though, as they will probably be harder to bring down than Eselred.

- Divas

Leader: Loryn

Gem(s): None

Territories: 2

Vassals: 3

For unexplained reasons, one of the King's lords, Loryn, has gained political control of his own and seeks to unite Gemfire. Along with Gweyn, Loryn's scenario is one of the two hardest paths to winning the game. He starts with two territories and no Gems. He does have the chance to expand into a third, unclaimed territory, but that may not be a great idea. Spreading Loryn's forces is tricky, as he has the worst geographic starting point. He leaves himself exposed on all sides, making expansion difficult to start. In fact, this is even a little harder than Gweyn's scenario, so good luck.

2.5 Choosing an Advisor

After choosing a family and before jumping into the action, the player will get to choose an advisor. The advisor chosen does not affect gameplay in anyway.

They are

- Eldrow the Wise
- Zorax the Mighty
- Jade the Enlightened
- Jasper the Riddler

They only serve to give optional advice. Although, given the rather poor intelligence of the Computer AI, I don't put much stock in the advice of these experts. To hear the words of the advisor, simply hit one of the shoulder buttons at any time on the world map. They mostly spill blurbs like "Attack this territory" or "Invest in crops."

One might think that the advisors dispense advice with biases, like Zorax being more inclined to invade other territories. However, this is completely false. The only difference between the advisors seems to be the wording of their sayings.

I tend to avoid listening to the advisors entirely, as they're idiots, and in the case of Jasper, incredibly annoying.

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3.0 Statistics

The game is full of extremely nondescript statistics, so knowing what each one does and why they're important is useful.

Every territory has stats unique to just itself. That's why keeping an eye on and developing each territory is important. Three of these stats are like disposable currency, rapidly fluctuating. The other three are more permanent and change more slowly over time.

Every vassal, lord, and ruler in the game also has their own set of personal stats.

3.1 Disposable State Statistics

- Gold

Every territory has its own treasury. Gold is one of the two main currency in Gemfire. It's necessary to hire troops, develop Cultivation or Protection, buy additional food, pay deployment costs for offensive battles, hire and maintain 5th Units, pay ransoms, and use the Search command. The maximum amount of Gold a single territory can have is 999.

Gold can be acquired through annual taxes, selling food, plundering an enemy territory, collecting a ransom, the leprechaun event, and receiving it through a transport from another territory.

- Food

Food is the other major currency in Gemfire. It's needed to feed troops in battle, raise the loyalty of subjects through giving, sell into gold, and pay ransoms. The maximum amount of food a single territory can have is 999.

Food can be acquired through annual farm collection, buying it with gold, plundering it from an enemy territory, collecting a ransom, the food event, and receiving it through a transport from another territory.

- Troops

Troops are the measure of a territory's military strength. The number of men housed are the number that will defend the area should it come under attack, not including 5th Units. In the event of attacking another area, troops will be gathered from just one territory's pool, although not all of them have to be used. Like gold and food, the maximum number that can stay at a single territory is 999.

Troops can be acquired through the Recruit command, Moving Troops from a neighboring territory, or the rare troops event.

3.2 Permanent State Statistics

- Loyalty

Loyalty is the measure of a territory's love for its ruler. It is represented by a horizontal red flag to the right of the Gold. Loyalty determines how much monetary taxes will be collected every September. In addition, Loyalty also affects the amount of food that is taxed, along with Cultivation. With zero Loyalty, food will not come in September. Every time a territory is taken over by force, the Loyalty of that territory reverts back to zero. Loyalty also lowers very gradually over a long time.

Loyalty is primarily increased by the Give Food command, although it is also raised by a good event.

- Cultivation

Not so surprisingly, Cultivation determines how much food will be collected every September. Cultivation is not the only thing that affects food though, as both high Cultivation and Loyalty are necessary. The better the farmland, the more food is grown, and the more food can be taxed. Cultivation lowers some in the event of warfare, as well as some bad events. It is represented by a picture of grain to the right of Food.

Cultivation is raised by the Develop-Cultivation command.

- Protection

The Protection stat primarily safeguards the territory against bad events. Less bad events occur with high protection, and bad events that do occur have a less negative effect. There may be more significance to Protection, but I haven't found it yet. Protection lowers some in the event of warfare, as well as some instances of Sabotage, and some bad events. It is represented by a picture of a castle tower, to the right of Troops.

Protection is raised by the Develop-Protection command.

3.3 Personal Statistics

- Charm

The icon that looks like a Heart is that character's Charm rating. The primary use of Charm is to increase the effectiveness of Give Food, which raises a land's Loyalty. Charm may have bearing on other actions, but it is not known for certain.

Charm of a character can be increased only through good events on the territory where he or she rules or a Search item.

- Domestic

The little icon of a piece of paper is that character's Domestic rating. The higher a character's Domestic rating, the more he or she is able to defend against Sabotage and Plunder. A high Domestic rating also increases the effectiveness of Develop greatly, which is its most important use.

Domestic strength of a character can be increased only through good events on the territory where he or she rules or a Search item.

- Military

The sword and shield icon represents a character's Military strength. It has a direct influence on the effectiveness of units in battle. High Military strength means soldiers will kill more and be killed less. An even matchup can turn into a lop-sided squashing if one side has an inferior Military strength.

Military strength, like Charm and Domestic, can only be affected by events or a Search item.

- Fame

Fame is a stat that is completely exclusive to each family's ruler, and it generally represents the overall might of the entire family. It's represented by a badge on the ruler's view screen. Fame, aside from being

a measure of how cool the ruler is, affects some diplomatic actions, like Ally, Defection, and Surrender. That is, high Fame makes them all slightly more likely to succeed.

Fame increases as the player's empire increases. Winning battles and acquiring new territory are the fastest ways to increase Fame. Getting new vassals and a few other things affect it as well. Losing battles and territory will lower Fame by the same degree.

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4.0 State Commands

These are the main commands on the map screen. All gameplay outside of battle uses these commands.

4.1 Military Commands

The military command menu is represented by the picture of two swords crossing in front of a shield. These are all the commands related to battle units.

- Attack

The Attack command is, as one might guess, the command to attack a bordering territory. Before going into battle, the attacker must decide how many troops to take, how much food to take, and which 5th Unit to bring into battle. Recommendations for battle are covered in the Battle section (5.1), and 5th Units are covered in the 5th Units section (6.1).

There is a deployment cost for troops that shouldn't make a noticeable dent on the pocketbook, but it can be determined by this simple formula:

$$\text{Deployment Cost} = 1/8 * (\text{Number of troops}) + 10$$

In other words, for every 8 soldiers deployed, there's a charge of 1 gold piece, plus a base cost of 10. As such, it costs 22 gold for 100 troops, 35 gold for 200 troops, 47 for 300 troops, and so on.

The formula for food needed in a battle is also linear:

$$\text{Food needed per day} = 1/10 * (\text{Number of troops} + \text{5th Unit Strength}) + 1$$

5th Unit Strength is only added into the formula if it's a HIRED 5th Unit. The Gem guardians are exempt from the equation, because they can apparently live without food, but other 5th Units do indeed need to be fed, just like the rest of the soldiers.

Not including 5th Units, an army of 100 will require 11 food per day, an army of 200 will require 21 food per day, an army of 300 will need 31 food, etc.

A successful attack acquires the target territory to the player. If there was a ruler or vassal in charge of the attack, they will move from their previous territory and instead be stationed in the new territory. The territory the attack was led from will then be controlled remotely. The Home territory can be moved in this way.

- Recruit

A pretty straightforward command, this allows the player to recruit new soldiers for that particular territory. Every soldier costs 2 gold pieces. A maximum of 999 soldiers can be in each territory at a point in time.

- Move Troops

This command lets the player move troops from one territory into a bordering territory, so long as the target territory isn't occupied by another family. It's primarily used to redistribute gold, food, troops, and hired 5th Units to different regions under the player's control. It is also, however, the command used to claim an unoccupied territory.

Like Transport, it allows the player to move food and gold to different parts of his or her empire, but it's limited in that it can only transport to a bordering territory.

- Hire Monster

This command allows the player to both hire and fire 5th Units, not including Gem guardians. During the time that Gem guardians are unavailable for several turns, backup 5th Units can be the difference between winning and losing.

Unlike Gems, hired 5th Units can only be used by the territory at which they're currently stationed. They can be moved to a different territory with the Move Troops command.

Hired 5th Units require both a hiring cost and an upkeep cost, which are the same amount. For example, the Bugbear costs 30 gold pieces. They cost 30 gold pieces for their initial hiring and then an additional 30 gold pieces every three months. If there isn't enough money to pay the upkeep of a hired 5th Unit, they will desert the player.

More details on the different kinds of 5th Units are covered in the 5th Units section (6.1).

4.2 Domestic Commands

Domestic commands are those that promote the welfare of the player's land. They are represented by a picture of a House on the main menu.

- Develop

The Develop command allows the player to invest 10 gold pieces and a turn to raise his or her Cultivation or Protection stat. Cultivation affects the amount of food produced in a territory. Protection lessens the blow of natural disasters. Develop has to be done repeatedly to get a good return, but it's well worth it and pretty much required to win.

Either stat will raise from 2 to 5 points per Development, depending solely on the Domestic stat of that land's lord.

In addition to being naturally rewarding, consistent use of the Develop command is the sign of moral rulers in Ishmeria. Development will cause good events to happen randomly at the yearly quarter. For more on random events,

see the Events section (8.1).

- Trade

The Trade command allows the player to turn his gold into food and his food into gold at will. It's a great way to balance commodities, but even better is its ability to make that territory's lord rich. The exchange rate fluctuates from month to month, which is the key to wealth. Check often.

The language of the exchange rate is simple to decipher:

"The prices are low." 1 gold = 2 food

"The prices are average." 1 gold = 1 food

"The prices are high." 2 gold = 1 food

Buy low and sell high. It's not out of the question to quadruple one's net worth in a few months. Not surprising that Trade is the most easily abused command and a major reason why the game is considered on the easy side by some.

Also, Trade is one of the few commands that does not end the player's turn.

- Give Food

Giving food is the primary way to raise the Loyalty of a territory. The amount of Loyalty gained from giving food is dependant on Charm stat of that territory's lord.

Unlike Develop, the player can invest a lot or a little into raising loyalty per turn, giving 20, 50, 80, or 100 food shares. A lord with high Charm can easily bring triple the Loyalty that a land with no lord would bring per giving of food.

- Transport

With this command, the player can send or receive gold and food from one territory and put it in another, no matter how near or far. Even territories under a family's rule that are physically separated from the rest of their country can send and receive transports. An important command for redistributing wealth to where it's needed, particularly newly acquired territories with low domestic statistics.

4.3 Diplomatic Commands

Diplomatic commands are actions which involve foreign nations aside from direct attack. They're represented by a bright red flag in the main menu. All four Diplomatic commands have a chance of success or failure, so save the game before attempting one of them.

- Ally

The Ally command lets the player enter a non-aggression pact with another family. Other than the two families not being able to attack each other, there is no economic or military benefit in entering an alliance.

The chance of success is dependent on the overall strength of both family's, likely determined by relative Fame of each leader. As a rule of thumb, if there's another family with twice as much territory as the player, they won't Ally. If the target family is weaker than the player's, they will probably accept the terms. If both families are about even in strength, it could go either way. Be forewarned that the computer is prone to breaking alliances whenever they feel like it.

The Ally command can only be used from the Home province. The Lankshire family does not enter alliances.

- Negotiate

Negotiate actually encompasses two different commands, Defection and Surrender.

Defection is a very neat command. It lets the player try to persuade another ruler's vassal to switch sides and join the player's ranks. If that vassal is the lord of an enemy territory, the player will gain control of that territory, riches, soldiers, and all, without even having to lift a weapon.

Vassals that don't control territories can also be recruited. To find them, click on the opposing family's Home territory to bring up a list of names.

The success rate of Defection is not entirely known for certain. I have my suspicions on which stats affect it, but I won't speculate. It has mostly to do with the stats of the person being asked to defect rather than the negotiator, as the same people seem to be easier to recruit in every game. However, the ruler's Fame also must bear some weight, as the more powerful the player is, the more people are willing to defect to his or her cause. Heirs, however, are the hardest people in the game to recruit through Defection usually, although it is possible.

It is also possible to recruit vassals by defeating them in battle. See the Battle section for more details (5.5).

Surrender is a command that will be used very, very little in any game. As the name implies, using this command will try to force another family into surrendering to the player. A successful surrender means that an entire family's vassals, territories, soldiers, and wealth will become property of the player. It's quite the powerful command. As one might expect though, it almost never works. In order for a family to surrender, they need to be vastly overpowered. As in, the player could be the most dominant family in Ishmeria, and it still might not work. By the time the player is powerful enough to get Surrender to work, he or she's essentially already won the game anyway. Surrender is more of a time-saver towards the very end of the game than actually useful in getting ahead.

The difference in power that determines the success of Surrender is almost certainly determined by Fame.

- Sabotage

This command gives the player the opportunity to damage a neighboring territory. If Sabotage is successful, it will destroy either 1/5 of the enemy troops, 1/5 of the enemy's Loyalty, or 1/5 of the enemy's Protection stat.

The rate of success for Sabotage relies primarily on a low Domestic rating for the lord of the area being sabotaged, although other factors might have a small bearing on it.

The computer AI doesn't seem to use Sabotage very often, and neither do I. It does have uses in certain situations though.

- Plunder

Plunder is a fantastic command for the player who has rich neighbors. For every successful Plunder of a neighboring territory, 1/5 of both the enemy's gold AND food will become property of the player. It's a double-whammy of hurting them and helping the player. If it works once, it will work continuously, so keep robbing them. Success rate for Plunder is the nearly the same as Sabotage, although it may be ever so slightly harder to Plunder, as I've had some cases (although not often) where Sabotage was possible yet Plunder was not.

4.4 Player Commands

What I have dubbed "Player Commands" don't actually have an official name in the game. They're represented on the main menu by a picture of an armored helmet. Also, with the exception of Search, most of the Player commands don't end the player's turn.

- View

View is the all-purpose information command in the game. It allows the player to see statistics for his own people, his opponents' people, and stats on different territories.

Initially, the game will ask to view a specific territory. Do so by using the pop-up pointer on the map, and the gold, food, soldiers, loyalty, cultivation, protection, and ruler of any territory are instantly visible. Clicking on a territory also gives information about the entire family associated with that particular land through the next set of commands.

One

The View-One command lets the player take a look at a specific vassal in any family. Most units have three statistics: Charm, Domestic, and Military strength, which become visible with View. Rulers have two other features visible: The Fame stat and a simple graph, showing which parts of Gemfire the ruler has thus far collected. More on the personal stats can be found in the Statistics section (7.1).

Many

The View-Many command displays the three major stats for all vassals in a family. There's no new information to be found here that can't be seen in the View-One command, but it does display many of them at once in a handy list.

Land

The View-Land command crunches information into a list, much like the View-Many command. However, View-Land displays territories in a list rather than people. With it, all of a families territories are organized by gold, food, loyalty, cultivation, troops, but oddly enough, the Protection stat is omitted.

5th Unit

View-5th Unit only works for territories that the player owns. Also, it only views the available 5th Units for the territory that's been selected. There's no way to view all 5th Units in the player's empire at once.

- Change Lord

At the Home province, the player can use this command to change the lord of any of his or her territories aside from Home. There are three settings that each territory can be changed to.

You

Changing a territory's lord to "You" means that the ruler of the family will control the territory remotely from the Home province. In game mechanics, this means that the territory gets HALF of the bonuses of having the actual lord. Unless the head of the family has absolutely absurdly high stats compared to everyone else, a territory will always be more productive with a real lord.

A territory controlled by You will have a portrait and name of the family's ruler in place of where the lord would go. So, the only way to see a visual difference between a remotely controlled territory and the actual Home province where the ruler of the family IS an acting lord, is the little icon below the name of the province. For Home, it is a red shield. For a remotely controlled territory, it's a flag.

Lord

The difference between a lord and a vassal is that a lord controls land. So essentially the Lord command takes the Lord of one territory in the player's empire and moves him or her to a different territory. Lords cannot control two territories at once, so the territory that the lord was moved from will then become under the control of "You," until instructed otherwise.

If the destination territory for the transferring lord already has a lord, the initial lord will be ousted and put back into the vassal pool.

The Home territory can be shifted by the Lord command. First select the territory that will become the new Home province. Then, when it asks which lord to move, choose the current Home territory. The game will prompt "Okay to move Yourself?" Then select Yea. Oddly enough, changing the Home territory ends the player's turn, even though the Change Lord command does not end the turn in all other cases.

Vassal

Selecting this command brings up a list of the player's vassals that do not have assigned territories. The vassal will then become the new lord of the target province and will then be removed from the vassal list.

Like with the "Lord" command, if the territory already had a lord in place, he will be put onto the vassal list in place of the one that was called up to rule.

- Entrust

Entrust is the lazy man's command, although a recommended one near the end of the game. A territory that becomes Entrusted will give up its turn every month. Instead, the computer will decide what to do in that territory, if anything. If the player changes his mind, he can simply Cancel the Entrust at any time.

Generally, the computer is an idiot. Entrusting a territory is not a good idea if that territory is on the border of enemy territory, or especially if it's early in the game. Very late in the game, when there's no point in developing so many states every turn, having to take 20 turns per month is excessive. The game will go by much more swiftly if territories are Entrusted late in the game. So it is a good command to have, but only if the player is willing to give up the usefulness of the territory.

- Search

Search is the only Player command that ends the player's turn. That's why it's highly recommended that the player saves his game before using Search, then loads the game afterwards to get the turn back.

The Search command does the one thing that View cannot, see 5th Units of foreign lands. The usefulness of that information is questionable, but it's merely a mask for the true usefulness of Search.

Searching enemy territories can sometimes randomly turn up special items. These items will drastically increase character stats, much faster than any other method in the game. Those items are:

Silver Sword	- Raises Military Strength +25
Sword of Fire	- Raises Military Strength +30
Sword of Victory	- Raises Military Strength +40
Scroll of the Planets	- Raises Domestic +25
Scroll of Knowledge	- Raises Domestic +30
Scroll of the Sages	- Raises Domestic +40
Moonstone	- Raises Charm +30
Dragon Jewel	- Raises Charm +40

{Special thanks to everyone who emailed me about the Searchable items. Unfortunately, there are too many to list, and I don't remember who first told me about it.}

Other Commands 4.5

There are only a few, more self-explanatory commands out of the main four categories, but they need to be mentioned.

- End Turn

Press the Cancel button on the map screen to bring up the opportunity to prematurely end the player's turn. 3/4 of the normal commands in the game end the player's turn anyway, so there's a good chance that this command will

never be needed. Cultivation and Protection take so long to develop that I usually spend idle turns investing in that rather than simply ending the turn. If the player really doesn't care about developing a territory anymore, he or she can simply Entrust it and forget about it, rather than ending turns every month. The option is there if it's needed though.

- Get Advice

Pressing the shoulder button will bring up advice from the player's advisor. As I already stated earlier, the advisors are pretty useless, but perhaps for beginner players, they can serve as a crutch of sorts.

- Save Game

Self-explanatory. Hit Start to bring up the Save Game option. The game has two in-game save slots. Saving in-game is necessary to fix glitched ROMs. See the ROM Glitch section for details (8.2).

- Load Game

Available either before starting the game or by hitting Start to bring up the pause menu. Load an in-game save.

- Speed

Change the message speed by going to the pause menu and selecting Speed. The game is very light on messages, and even after playing through the game countless times, I've never felt impatient enough to change the message speed. The option is there for those who want it though.

- Sound

Turn the in-game sound on or off by going to the pause menu and selecting Sound. Console gamers will probably leave it on, but ROM players can use the Sound feature as a way around the ROM Glitch. See the ROM Glitch section for more details (8.2).

- Quit

Nobody likes a quitter. Use this to quit the game. The game will ask if the computer can take over for the player, at which point the game will become a demo game. In a two-player game, having one player quit turns the game into a single-player game. Using the Quit feature isn't necessary to simply turn off the game. Turning off the game at any point won't harm the data.

===== 5.0 Battle -----

Simply building stats and intimidating opponents isn't any fun without battles. I'd hesitate to call Battle the meat of the game though, because there is just too much other stuff. It is one of the most essential elements though.

5.1 Battle Basics

Battle is initiated when one territory uses the Attack command to invade another territory. The person being invaded will have the option to Fight, Retreat, or Surrender. Surrender isn't an option unless the person being

attacked has no men or food and doesn't have somewhere to retreat. I've never seen Surrender work in these circumstances. Retreating will cause the territory's lord to run to a neighboring province with his or her soldiers. There is a chance the lord can be captured by the enemy during this process. Even if there's a healthy 5th Unit available, one side cannot enter combat without actual troops available. If both sides are able and willing to fight, the battle commences.

All battle takes place on a 10 x 8 grid battlefield. Every battlefield looks different, and the geography of the obstacles depends on what part of the country the battle is taking place in. The attackers, colored reddish orange, start along the left edge of the map. The defenders, colored blue, start along the right edge of the map. Both sides have a flag on the battlefield representing their side's base, although the defenders have a wall partially surrounding theirs, or at least a grouping of fences.

Each side has their total number of troops divided into four equal units, plus both sides get to pick a 5th Unit of their choosing (6.0). These five units make up the battle forces, for a total of ten possible units on the battlefield to keep track of.

There are four ways to achieve victory in battle:

1. Wipe out all of the opposing team's units.
2. Capture the opposing team's flag.
3. Let the opposing team run out of food.
4. Force the enemy to retreat.

As stated in the Attack command section, the formula for food needed is

$$\text{Food needed per day} = 1/10 * (\text{Number of troops} + 5\text{th Unit Strength}) + 1$$

Wherein Gem guardians are exempt from the formula since they don't need food, but hired 5th Units DO need food. The food rations remaining on each side are represented by the number below each side's commander's name. The number in the parentheses is how many days' worth of food that number is.

A "day" is four full turns. Day progression can be seen by the graphic on the top middle of the screen. In order, they are sunrise, noon, sunset, and night. Each new day begins at sunrise.

Both sides can only use the bodies of their units and built Fences along with natural obstacles of the terrain to block the path for the enemy to capture their flag. Fences can be broken though, and units can be killed to clear that path.

The computer will retreat if it feels it is less than one turn away from being wiped out. The computer will not retreat if it feels its flag is in danger. Retreating becomes impossible if there are no neighboring territories to retreat into.

In general, the computer AI will stay back and guard its flag if the player has the clear advantage of numbers. If both sides are about equal in force, or the computer has the numerical advantage, they will take a more aggressive approach and advance towards the player's flag. Also, if the computer feels it can outlast the player's food supply, they also may hang back and defend their flag.

Both sides in battle will have their number of troops divided into four equal units, one group of horsemen, two groups of knights, and one group of archers. Any remainder of troops that doesn't divide evenly gets tacked onto the total horsemen.

- Horsemen

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Short

Horsemen can move three squares per turn. Their attack range is standard for melee units. They can attack any hostile unit as long as it's standing on a square right next to them.

- Knights (Type 1)

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Short

Knights can't move as far as horsemen, and they have the same range. One advantage they have is that they can build fences.

- Knights (Type 2)

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Short

These knights are exactly the same as the other group of knights in every way. The only difference is their graphic, so that the player can tell units apart from each other.

- Archers

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Long

Archers are the oddball of the four main units. While knights and horsemen have the same attack power, and attack the same way, archers don't. Archers are slightly weaker in attack power than knights and horsemen. However, they attack only panels that are two squares away from them, not close up, and not diagonally. Their big advantage besides their range is that they do not take damage by attacking, like all short range units do. Their long range attack can also reach over other units and obstacles. For a more clear diagram of their attack range, see the Explanation of Ranges section (6.1).

5.3 Battle Commands

The battle commands aren't that complicated, but they bear mentioning.

- Move

The first thing a selected unit will be asked to do is Move. It's not possible to do another unit action and then move. Most units can move two squares per turn, but some can move three. Take care in how a character gets from point A to point B, since it could affect which direction the unit is facing when they're done moving. Units cannot change the direction they face after they're done moving.

- Attack

After the unit has moved (or has chosen to not move), it can attack any unit in his range. Attacking will change the direction that unit is facing. The effects of attack vary, depending on the unit and the way the unit it's attacking is facing. More details on that are in section 5.4.

- Fence

Fences keep the enemy at bay, at least temporarily. They cannot be traversed by any unit except for Gargoyles and Wyverns, since they're extra cool and can fly. Fences are instrumental in keeping an aggressive enemy away from the flag. However, only knights can make fences. Making a Fence can fail and waste a turn if the unit isn't strong.

- Break

This command breaks a fence. Any unit in the game can try to break a fence. If the unit isn't strong, Break can fail and waste a turn.

- Wait

If the unit cannot or does not want to take a specific action, they have to choose Wait after moving.

The following commands are not unit-specific and can be accessed by hitting the cancel button when a unit is not selected.

- End Turn

This command ends the turn and turns gameplay over to the opposite team. The player does not have to move all of his or her units before ending the turn. The Player can keep track of which units have been used in a turn, because units that have already moved will be grayed out.

- Auto mode

If there were ever a command to never use, ever, it's Auto mode. Entrusting unused territories is one thing, but the computer is absolutely abysmal at battles. If nothing else, putting the computer in charge will draw out the battle too long, and may cost more troops than need to be sacrificed.

- Animation

Turn the attack animation on and off with this. The only things that could be considered spectacle in the entire game are the attack animations. Why anyone would want to turn them off, I don't know. The choice is here.

- Retreat

If all is lost, retreat. There won't be much loss to cut though. It probably would be more beneficial to retreat before the battle than during it.

5.4 Frontal, Flanking, and Rear Assault

There is strategy in battle, and that comes in the form of how one unit attacks another. No matter which side gets attacked, a short range unit will incur damage to itself at the same time it's attacking. Long range units (like archers) do not. Gem guardians incur a flat percentage of strength loss, regardless of which side they're attacking.

If one unit attacks another from its front, that is called a Frontal assault. It is the least advantageous to do a Frontal assault, as it will do the least amount of damage to the victim unit, and it will also do more backlash damage to the attacking unit.

If one unit attacks another from its side, that is called a Flanking assault. Flanking attacks do more damage than a Frontal assault, and they will receive less backlash damage as well.

If one unit attacks another in its back, that is called a Rear Assault. These attacks do the most damage to the enemy unit while allowing short range attackers to receive the least amount of backlash.

One should always aim for Flanking and Rear assaults. Frontal assaults usually aren't even worth doing unless the victim unit is severely overpowered. In some extreme instances, where one side's commander has a higher Military rating than another, an attacking unit can actually hurt itself more with backlash than it hurts the other enemy in a Frontal assault.

This is all very straightforward, but some 5th Units (mainly the Gems) can attack other units at an angle. There's a very specific method that the game uses to determine what kind of assault is scored by angular attacks.

If the unit is attacking in an L-shape, the long side of the L will be the side getting attacked.

```
ooV
ooo
oXo
```

Let's say this is a 3x3 cutout of the map. If unit X is attacking V, which is facing south, it will be a Frontal assault, because X is still most turned to V's front.

That's all fine, but what about perfect 45 degree angles?

```
ooV
ooo
Xoo
```

Now, unit X is equally facing both unit V's side and front, assuming V is still facing south. If unit X attacks on this perfect diagonal line, it will always attack along the HORIZONTAL. So in this instance, unit X will get a Flanking assault on unit V.

5.5 Captured Leaders

After a battle is over, the loser's leader in battle might be captured, assuming the losing army even had a leader. Even in the case of Retreat, there's a chance the retreating forces might have their leader captured. This can have very serious or very fun consequences.

If the loser was trying to defend a landlocked territory (ie had no neighboring provinces to retreat to), the chance of capturing the ruler of that province is nearly 100%, except in the case of Eselred, who is extremely difficult to capture until you take his final territory, if it's even possible. However, taking a family's very last territory always results in capturing the ruler of the family.

As long as the captured leader is not the ruler of the family, the captors will be forced to try and put that vassal up for ransom. That ransom will either be gold or food, food always being a higher price. I have yet to figure the formula for determining ransom prices.

If the ransom is paid, the spoils will go to winning army's territory. If the ransom is refused, this will bring up three new choices. If a family leader is captured, they will forego the ransom procedure and go right to these choices.

- Recruit

Recruit works just like Defection. If successful, the conquered vassal will join the player's ranks. It should be noted that Recruit has a much higher rate of success than Defection. Don't be afraid to try it. If the newly recruited vassal was attacking from a different territory, his territory will become property of the player as well.

Successfully Recruiting a family leader immediately puts all of his territories, vassals, and armies under the player's control. Needless to say, it's a huge score if that happens.

- Release

This simply gives the vassal back to his or her family without a struggle or ransom. Banish isn't always better than Release. A spared life could still become the player's vassal one day.

As a side effect, releasing a vassal causes his military strength to go down. (Thanks to "i like cheeze" for pointing this out.)

- Banish

Simply put, the vassal is exiled from Ishmeria, never to return. Taking enemy leaders out of the game can be fun, but it can also be overdone. Banish has the most impact if it's used on heirs and family rulers. If the ruler of a family is banished, one of his heirs will assume the throne. All of the qualified heirs are listed in the Non-Default Ruler section (8.3).

If there are no heirs in the family (or they've all been banished), the family will disband. When this happens, that family's Gem(s) will transfer to whomever banished the ruler. Any lords that were in charge of one of the family's remaining territories will declare supreme rule of that territory and start their own family. Any territories that were controlled remotely by the Home territory will become unclaimed. So technically, any character in Gemfire can become a prince or princess. The player just won't be able to control any of those families.

=====
6.0 5th Units

5th Units are as their name implies. All the soldiers in a battle are divided into four units, but another 5th unit can be provided by the player. These are either Gem guardians, hired units, or the Pastha which is neither. They all behave very differently, and some are very clearly better than others.

Rather than having a number of men, some 5th Units (including all the Gems) have a single unit that instead has a specific amount of Strength. Strength functions the same way as having a number of men. The higher the Strength, the more damage that unit does. If the number gets too low, the 5th Unit dies or runs away. Gems cannot die.

6.1 Explanation of Ranges

All 5th Units (and all regular units as well) have an attack range that fits into one of four types. Their area of attack can be illustrated with the

following diagrams.

"." marks the location of the attacking unit.

"X" marks the squares within the unit's attack range.

"o" marks a square that cannot be attacked.

- Long Range (Same as an archer)

```
ooXoo
ooooo
Xo.oX
ooooo
ooXoo
```

Note: All long range units do less damage but do not take damage when attacking

- Short Range (Same as a knight/horseman)

```
ooooo
ooXoo
oX.Xo
ooXoo
ooooo
```

- Circular Range

```
XXXXX
XoooX
Xo.oX
XoooX
XXXXX
```

- Largest Range

```
XXXXX
XXXXX
XX.XX
XXXXX
XXXXX
```

6.2 The Gems

The ultimate collectible items in the game are the valuable Gems. The Gem guardians are usually the first choice for 5th Unit to bring into battle. The only reason not to is either because the player doesn't possess a Gem, or because the Gem has been used in a recent battle.

If a Gem is used in battle, it needs to rest three months before it can be used again. If a Gem is defeated in battle, it needs to rest five months before it can be used again. As such, it is very advantageous to have multiple Gems, or at least backup 5th Units.

The big downside to Gems in battle is that they lose Strength with every attack

they use. It's always 10% Strength lost per attack, even if they're just taking out a single archer. The Strength loss is also unlike the backlash damage that short range characters take, in that the direction the victim unit is facing does not change the amount of strength loss the attacker receives back.

- Dragon

Strength: 160

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Largest

Default Family: Lankshire (Scenario 1-4)

The Dragon is easily the best 5th Unit in the game. There are some others with better a better move rate, but there isn't a more raw destructive force than this.

- Pluvius

Strength: 160

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Circular

Default Family: Lyle (Scenario 1-4)

Pluvius is possibly the best unit the player can start with. For an old wizard, he sure does pack a punch. One of only three 5th Units that starts with 160 Strength.

- Zendor

Strength: 150

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Circular

Default Family: Blanche (Scenario 1-4)

The slight drop in strength is made up for by his exceptional move rate. Zendor arguably can be considered the best unit in the game, although I still think the Dragon is better.

- Empyron

Strength: 140

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Short

Default Family: Coryll (Scenario 1), Tate (Scenario 2-4)

Empyron is completely outclassed by the Dragon, Zendor, and Pluvius. He essentially has the move rate and attack range of a normal knight or soldier, although he has the strength of a Gem guardian. He's more than capable of holding his own against any foe once he finally gets in position to attack.

- Scylla

Strength: 130

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Short

Default Family: Flax (Scenario 1-3), Tudoria (Scenario 4)

Scylla is essentially a weaker version of Empyron. Same move rate and attack range, but less strength. I don't know if the game is trying to make her feel inferior because she's a female and Empyron's a male, but she's still not terrible Gem. She's just not a spectacular one either.

- Chylla

Strength: 120

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Short

Default Family: Chrysalis (Scenario 1-2), Lyle (Scenario 3-4)

Well, she has good move rate. At this point though, low strength really makes a big difference, and her attack range isn't helping her. Chylla is sure a lot better than many hired 5th Units, but she won't be taking down the Dragon

by herself in most battles.

- Skulryk

Strength: 110

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Circular

Default Family: Molbrew (Scenario 1-2), Blanche (Scenario 3-4)

I actually have a soft spot for Skulryk. He's the only Gem in the game besides Zendor that can boast a maximum move rate AND a great attack range. Plus, his attack is a whirling cloud of poison with a skull in the middle, which is one of my favorite attacks. However, his low Strength KILLS him. The difference between 160 Strength and 110 Strength is a lot in reality, but I'd still take him over Chylla any day.

6.3 Hired 5th Units

When there are no Gems available, or the player doesn't want to waste one on a battle where it isn't needed, hired 5th Units come into play. Unlike Gems, the player can't use a single hired monster in any territory he or she wishes. Hired monsters stay exclusive to a single territory, like troops. 5th Units can be transferred from the territories in which they were bought with the Move Troops command.

The biggest downside to hired units is that they cost gold every three months to maintain their upkeep. The gold spent every quarter is equal to their hiring cost, so it's okay to be cheap. If they don't get paid, they'll run away.

Also note that some of the best 5th Units in the game are humans. Humans, however, seem to be prone to deserting a territory for no reason though.

The commentary written below the units is just opinion, not fact. Keep that in mind.

- Bugbear

Strength: 100

Price: 30

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Short

The Bugbear is a singular unit, some kind of Bigfoot-type creature. He's so ugly that he's almost adorable. Almost. If nothing else is available, the Bugbear isn't the worst choice for his reasonable price tag, but he never lit up my world.

- Fachan

Strength: 100

Price: 40

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Largest

Well, the Fachan is not strong, and he's not the cheapest guy. He does have great move rate, and he has the Dragon's rare attack range. He personally never "did it" for me, but I've gotten feedback from multiple people saying that he's one of their favorite units. Give it a shot.

- Gargoyles

Strength: 120

Price: 40

Move Rate: 3*

Attack Range: Short

The asterisk is because Gargoyles have flying ability. Essentially, Gargoyles are weaker, cheaper versions of my personal favorite hired 5th Unit, Wyverns. Read more about Wyverns to see why flying is so great, but for Gargoyles specifically, the price-to-strength ratio doesn't really satisfy me.

- Gunners

Strength: 150

Price: 40

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Long

I cannot tell if there's an in-battle difference between Gunners, Shooters, and Spearmen. What I do know is that Gunners cost twice as much as Spearmen. Gunners are still a great unit, but the price is iffy. If Spearmen become available, hire them and fire the Gunners.

- Lancers

Strength: 180

Price: 50

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Short

No, that isn't a typo. Lancers start out with more strength than even the Dragon. Although I doubt in a head-on contest that the Lancers would actually prove to be stronger than the Dragon. Still, they're an insanely powerful unit, with good move range. These guys are right up there with Wyverns for their usefulness as top hired 5th Units, but they're not cheap.

- Lizards

Strength: 110

Price: 60

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Short

Lizards wouldn't be all that bad, if they weren't so expensive. They're not even close to being worth the 60 gold price tag.

- Ogre

Strength: 100

Price: 50

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Short

To put it bluntly, the Ogre is a ripoff. The Ogre is a gimped Bugbear that costs more, basically. Nowhere near that price tag.

- Olog-Hai

Strength: 110

Price: 30

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Short

Olog-Hai are like Orks but slightly stronger and more expensive. Like Orks, the Olog-Hai stink.

- Orks

Strength: 100

Price: 20

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Short

Extremely cheap and extremely weak. Orks stink. There's also a bad event where a hired monster will destroy part of a territory, and 90% of the time that happens, it's Orks. Something about them likes to rampage. So honestly, don't buy them. Skeletons are just as cheap and crappy, but won't rampage as much.

- Pastha

Strength: 160

Price: 0

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Short

The Pastha is not actually a "hired" monster, but he's not a Gem either. He's somewhere in between. The Pastha is the only monster that is totally on par in attack power with the Dragon. These guys are very strong. Unfortunately, for some reason they also have the Gem guardians' one weakness, the 10% strength penalty for every person they attack. They have minimal move and attack range, which essentially makes the Pastha a stronger version of Empyron.

Obtaining the Pastha is easy enough. Simply develop territories until good events start happening. Eventually a Pastha will agree to come to one of the player's territories. I accumulate a lot of these guys, which is good because they're gone forever after using them in just one battle. On the positive side, they don't cost anything to hold onto, and they will never abandon their territory. Pasthas are REALLY, REALLY good. Hold onto them.

- Pikemen

Strength: 150

Price: 40

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Short

Pikemen are like lancers, but weaker and cheaper. All in all, Pikemen are great 5th Units, but if money is no object, there are a couple better choices.

- Skeletons

Strength: 100

Price: 20

Move Rate: 2

Attack Range: Short

Well, Skeletons are... cheap. They're definitely easy on the pocketbook, so for the player that can't afford to buy a decent anything, these guys are a lot better than having nothing, but they're also incredibly lame.

- Shooters

Strength: 150

Price: 35

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Long

Shooters are like Spearmen and Gunners in Strength, range, and move rate. Shooters are also cheaper than Gunners, but more expensive than Spearmen. All in all, they're still great to have around. Dump them if Spearmen become available.

- Spearmen

Strength: 150

Price: 20

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Long

For a mere 20 gold, Spearmen are the best cheap unit in the game, bar none. They're also in the running for the most useful 5th Unit, period. If there are some up for grabs, take them. They, like archers, do not take damage when they attack other units. They're basically an extra set of archers, but with a better move rate.

- Warriors:

Strength: 180

Price: 60

Move Rate: 3

Attack Range: Short

Warriors are essentially lancers but more expensive. They're still great units though. Get them if it's affordable and lancers aren't available.

- Wyverns

Strength: 150

Price: 60

Move Rate: 3*

Attack Range: Short

The asterisk by move rate is because Wyverns have a movement ability unique to only them and Gargoyles. They can FLY. They fly over obstacles like fences, trees, and rivers. Sneaking up on enemies is a pinch with Wyverns, and they're quite strong too. In short, I love Wyverns. They're quite pricy though, so I usually can't hold onto them forever unless I'm in a very wealthy territory. On the plus side, Wyverns lack the rebellious nature of human 5th Units, which are the only other hired 5th Units that really stack up in usefulness against the Wyverns.

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7.0 Events

7.1 Good and Bad Events

To the first-time gamer, Events may look like random occurrences with minor bonuses or demerits. However, while the effects are somewhat randomized, the frequency of events is not that random, and the player's control on these events can be harnessed to his or her advantage.

The almighty Develop command, which should be used regardless of its effect on events, encourages good events to happen. Development is the sign of moral rulers in Gemfire, and morality is rewarded. Constant development across the player's many territories will have good things occurring on a constant basis.

Bad events sometimes are not avoidable. Sometimes they are. The Protection stat decreases the frequency of bad events in that territory, as well as lessens the negative effect of those events. A high Protection stat has its uses, in other words.

Events that affect the lord of a territory that occur in a province controlled by "You" actually affect the ruler of the family. This provides the only good reason in the game to NOT have a vassal in charge of a territory. Having remotely-controlled territories developing like machines is the fastest way to pump a ruler's stats.

Here's a list of the good and bad events, and their effects.

Good Events

- "Kind redcaps cast good spells in (territory)."

The territory's Cultivation stat increases.

- "A unicorn empowered the ruler of (territory)."

The lord of the territory gets a boost in his or her Domestic and Military

stats. One of my favorite events.

- "A Pastha offered to fight for (territory)."
The Pastha becomes an available 5th Unit in that territory. See the 5th Unit section for details. (6.3)
- "An elvish troubador sang praises of (territory)."
That territory's Loyalty stat inceases.
- "A Leprechaun left a small pot of gold in (territory)."
The territory gets an unimpressive amount of gold.
- "A Far Garta gathered food for (territory)."
The territory gets an unimpressive amount of food.
- "A fairy rounded up troops for (territory)."
The territory gets an unimpressive amount of troops.
- "A Gwraig brought a charm to the ruler of (territory)."
The lord of the territory gets a boost in his or her Charm stat.
- "Aerial calmed stormy winds headed for (territory)."
Increases Protection.

Bad Events

- "Durahan rode through (territory) with the Shadow of Death."
The territory's Protection stat falls. Same as a Banshee.
- "Black Annis frightened the people of (territory)."
The territory's Loyalty stat falls.
- "A Banshee brought an evil omen to (territory)."
The territory's Protection stat falls. Same as Durahan.
- "Mischievous pixies dug up the fields in (territory)."
The territory's Cultivation stat falls.
- "The (5th Unit) went on a rampage, ravaging the land in (territory)."
The territory's Loyalty, Cultivation, AND Protection falls. Mega ouch. This seems to happen most often in states with hired Orks, although I've also seen Olog-Hai go on a rampage many times.
- "Hobgoblins stole from (territory.)"
The territory loses a small amount of gold.
- "Auguskiegies gobbled up food in (territory)."
The territory loses a small amount of food.
- "A shrieker scared troops in (territory)."
The territory loses a small number of troops.
- Heavy Snow
Randomly affects the northern territories. Occurs once per year in the month of December. Causes damage to Permanent State Stats.
- Flooding
Randomly affects the Eastern and Southeastern territories. Occurs once per year in the month of June. Causes damage to Permanent State Stats.

- Fire

Randomly affects the Western territories. Occurs once per year in the month of September. Causes damage to Permanent State Stats.

- Earthquake

Randomly affects the Southwestern territories. Occurs once per year in the month of March. Causes damage to Permanent State Stats.

- Plague

Much like the other seasonal bad events, except Plague occurs every season, and can affect any territory. It strikes in December, March, June, and September. States are affected negatively. Damn that plague.

7.2 Death

One special event that does not occur randomly is family death. When a character reaches the ripe old age of 75, they die. Sometimes they die a few months sooner, sometimes a few months later, but they die.

Character stats will increase slightly each year until the age of 60. After 60, a character's stats will start to decrease until they die.

(Thanks to Black Turtle for pointing this out.)

Death can technically be prevented. When a character is scheduled to die, there is a small chance they won't die that particular month, but the likelihood of death does not decrease on a monthly basis. So to keep someone alive at the age of 75, the player would have to save the game every month and reload at the end of a turn if the vassal in question dies.

So what happens when a family ruler dies and there are no heirs left? Well first of all, there is no chance in Hell that this event could occur unless the player were blatantly manipulating the game to make it happen. The game would have to go on for almost 30 years for something to happen, when it takes 7-10 years to win the game.

The same rules apply as if all the heirs had been Banished. The lords become rulers of their own new families, and remotely ruled territories become unclaimed. What happens if that family had a Gem? That, I'm not sure of. Since no family would be directly responsible for the crumbling of the family, I am not sure where the Gems would go.

8.0 Additional Things to Know

Game mechanics aside, there are a few tips and strategies to keep in mind.

8.1 General Tips

- Defect early and defect often.

Almost as soon as the player starts the game, it's possible to obtain one or two new territories simply by defecting unloyal lords. Some lords are rather stubborn but might change their mind later after the player has obtained more power. Try to defect people at least once every other year.

- Check food prices every month.

Unless the player wants to make the game harder for himself, there's no

excuse for not checking the Trade prices. Sell most of the food when prices are high and spend most of the gold when prices are low. It fluctuates from month to month sometimes, so don't miss a crucial price change.

- Don't attack a territory unless there will be enough troops left to defend. Gemfire is like a game of chess. Knocking off another chess piece just because the player can isn't always the best idea. Being left vulnerable is worse than not attacking. Make sure there are enough troops built up to defend the territory they're coming from and the territory they're going to.
- Bide time to develop the land. There should almost never be a turn wasted in Gemfire. Cultivation and Protection only cost 10 gold each, so if there's nothing better to do, keep developing. The extra return from food come September will be worth it.
- Don't deal with the enemy Gems if it can be avoided. The reason other 5th Units in the game exist is because Gems have to take time to recharge between battles. If possible, wait until the enemy has already been in a battle with another player. Eselred's army is a lot easier to deal with the month after he uses his Dragon Gem to fend off an attack from someone else.

8.2 The ROM Glitch

Anyone playing Gemfire on their SNES console can skip this section.

For those playing on an emulator, there is a particular part of the game that makes Gemfire glitch and can freeze gameplay. It is not the fault of corrupt ROMs, simply an error that can occur. There is an easy fix for it though, so anyone can play Gemfire normally on an emulator as if they were playing on their console.

Anytime a computer player attacks another computer player, the sound may stop on some emulators. While the loss of sound may not seem like a big deal, it signifies that the glitch has kicked in. While the sound is frozen, if the player either tries to attack another family, or another family attacks him or her, the game will freeze. That is to say, the screen will go black before battle starts and there's no way around it but to reset the game.

There's are two simple ways around this though.

If the game has already glitched, but the player is about to enter battle in one way or another, save the game using the in-game save feature. Save Stating will NOT fix it. Then, reset the game. Load the game manually, and the sound should be back the way it's supposed to be. Voila, the player will be able to attack his enemies once again.

An even easier way around it is to simply turn off the sound before the game glitches, using the in-game sound option on the pause menu. That is, turn off the sound while it's still working. Don't wait until after the sound has frozen to turn the sound off. Otherwise, the glitch needs to be fixed with the first method. Turning off the sound at the beginning of the game means the game will never freeze. However, the player will also be deprived of any of the game's music and sound effects. Keep that in mind when choosing a method.

8.3 Beat the Game with a Non-Default Ruler

Finally mastered the game? Tired of playing with the same old people? Try this nifty little trick. It's possible to beat the game with someone other than Erin, Ander, Garth, Lars, Erik, Leander, Terian, Gweyn, Loryn, or Eadric.

If the ruler of a family is banished from Ishmeria, a successor will then become the ruler of said family. There are only a select number of people who are eligible to take over a family. This is signified by small icon on the character's profile that resembles a branch of a family tree. This means they are related by blood to the ruler of the family. If the ruler of a family is banished when there are no successors, however, the family disbands, and new families will rise up in its place, headed by a former vassals. If this is the player's family, that means Gameover.

So all one needs to do to get a new ruler is have their leader banished. The problem with this is that the computer almost never banishes people they capture. The solution is to start a two-player game. Have player one be the family that has the person you want to control. Have player two be some other family, hopefully one that's very close by. Save the game right when player two is next to player one's home province. With player one's leader, attack player two with ONE soldier. Then let player one lose the battle. If player one's leader isn't captured in the process, load the game and try again. Once the ruler is captured, banish him. Player one will then be asked to select a new leader from its list of successors. After that, have player two quit the game. Then, the computer will take over for player two, and the player will be once again playing a single-player game, except with a brand new ruler.

The following people can be used to beat the game with this method:

- Wolfen (Lyle family, Scenario 1-4)
- Keyla (Lyle family, Scenario 2-4)
- Randal (Lyle family, Scenario 3)
- Pender (Blanche family, Scenario 1-3)
- Anselm (Blanche family, Scenario 1-2)
- Karl (Blanche family, Scenario 1-4)
- Arkin (Blanche family, Scenario 2-3)
- Elgis (Chrysalis family, Scenario 1)
- Sarthe (Chrysalis family, Scenario 1)
- Fuster (Molbrew family, Scenario 2)
- Bryan (Tate family, Scenario 3)
- Anise (Tate family, Scenario 3)
- Alex (Tordin family, Scenario 3)

So for all the equal opportunists out there, Gweyn isn't the only female capable of reuniting Gemfire. Keyla and Anise are also up for the challenge, even though Anise is only 15 years old at the start of her game!

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9.0 Miscellany

9.1 Legal Stuff

This FAQ is Copyright 2004-2005 by me. Any use of this FAQ without my explicit permission will be in a world of trouble, and I will find out if that happens. Gemfire is the Copyright product of KOEI and distributed by Nintendo. I am not in anyway affiliated with KOEI or Nintendo. This FAQ is solely for non-profit use.

9.2 Emailing Me

I'd love to hear any commentary or questions about the FAQ. I can be reached at tasteless@gmail.com

If there is something missing or wrong with the FAQ, please feel free to email me and I'll try to fix it. Also if you have a question that is not addressed in the FAQ, I will try to help you answer it. Also, if you wish to post this guide somewhere besides GameFAQs, please email me and ask permission. I'll probably say yes.

Do NOT ask me where to get a copy of the ROM. These emails will go straight into the trash.

9.3 Version History

- 12/24/04 - v1.0 First edition of the FAQ is submitted to GameFAQs
- 12/30/04 - v2.0 Big update so soon after publishing. Fixed a bunch of typos. Reworded some of the intro. Added four more events. Added the "Captured Leaders" section. Added the "Death" section. Made a big correction on the Loyalty stat. Added an important footnote to the Search command. Fixed info on changing Home Province in both the Attack command section and the Change Lord command section.
- 11/15/05 - v2.1 Based on feedback, I've made several important corrections. I've added facts about releasing vassals and aging. I also finally have the list of Searchable items, which is the most important omission from the FAQ. With that added, I am now considering the FAQ to be complete, the ultimate source for how to master Gemfire. This means this could be the last update.

9.4 Special Thanks

Thanks to Black Turtle for giving me some corrections on remotely controlled provinces and the Red Cap event. Also thanks for telling me about aging stats.

Thanks to "i like cheeze" for telling me about how releasing vassals lowers their military strength.

Thanks to the MANY people who emailed me about the Searchable items.

Special Thanks goes to KOEI for making such a fantastic game.

Thanks to Blockbuster Video for first introducing this game to me 12 years ago. I have played this game to death since then, and this FAQ would not be here if it weren't for that franchise.

Thanks also goes out to GameFAQs for being one of the greatest resources on the internet.